

## **Workshop 15**

### **Compassion and Empathy**

#### **(Invited Workshop)**

Convenors:

**Susana de Matos Viegas, University of Coimbra and University of Lisbon**

[SusanaViegas@netcabo.pt](mailto:SusanaViegas@netcabo.pt); [smviegas@ci.uc.pt](mailto:smviegas@ci.uc.pt)

**Édouard Conte, Collegium Budapest and CNRS, Berlin**

conte@colbud.hu, conte@ethno.unibe.ch

This workshop aims to challenge the notions of distance and proximity, conceiving them neither as spatial categories nor as symbolic tools to imagine sociality, but as dynamics of emotions that are constitutive of sociality. Looking at ways of connecting distance and proximity not through spatial metaphors, but through intersubjectivity is the main challenge of this workshop. Taking lived experience as a main temporal measure, how are we to understand the rising and falling of social relationships? Different situations can be addressed: from life crises, to splits developed through quarrels or divorces, fictive kinship, fosterage or adoption, care or intolerance vis-à-vis the disabled, the redefinition of political alliances or migratory phenomena. The diverse moral evaluations of ‘experiencing other peoples’ feelings’, i.e. compassion and empathy as a path to sociality could also be addressed culturally, taking into account regional debates in anthropology.

#### **“Just passing by”: the Dynamics of Closeness and Distance Among Puhépecha Women of Lake Pátzcuaro (Mexico)**

Susana Carro-Ripalda, University of Glasgow

[S.Carro-Ripalda@socsci.gla.ac.uk](mailto:S.Carro-Ripalda@socsci.gla.ac.uk)

Among Puhépecha women of an island in Lake Pátzcuaro, casual visiting (“just stopping by”) appears like a “continuous movement of social interaction” (Sweet 1974: 112). Yet among women in the island, the flow of visiting does not just passively communicate an established order of social or spatial proximity and distance. On the contrary, the dynamics of “stopping by” are perceived by the women themselves as an active, deliberate form of creating and maintaining not just relationships but also modes of relatedness. So, for instance, women constitute relationships of greater or lesser emotional proximity through the frequency of their calls. Through and in their visits, they also interact in ways that create shared emotional (or intersubjective) realities within which aspects of closeness such as intimacy and trust become more dynamic. Conversely, infrequent calls or a lack of interaction do not mean an absence of relationship, but are perceived as deliberate forms of creating emotional distance. In this context “proximity” and “distance” are not conceptual instruments of social or spatial classification, but emotional experiences that are created and recreated by the social agents (in this case, the

women) in and through interaction.

### **The Dynamics of Affect: Transient Women Amongst Tupinambá Indians (South of Bahia, Brazil)**

Susana de Matos Viegas, University of Coimbra and University of Lisbon  
[smviegas@ci.uc.pt](mailto:smviegas@ci.uc.pt)

Among the Tupinambá Indians of Olivença (Southern Bahia, Brazil), who have lived for roughly four centuries in close contact with non-indigenous people, the notion that women, and particularly wives, are potentially transient, assumes central importance. When a couple separates, the general understanding is that the wife has left her husband and not the other way round. Men are, in this sense, more rooted. This reflects a mix between lived experience and the dynamics of affect that must be explored as a gender-kinship context. I argue that these dynamics are dispositions of microhistorically constituted sociality.

### **Ties that Bind: Solidarity and Cooperation**

Zerrin G. Tandogan, University of Ankara  
[zerrin@bilkent.edu.tr](mailto:zerrin@bilkent.edu.tr)

What are the “observable” socio-cultural consequences of “liberalism” in our web of social relations? Liberalism is an ideology that is genuinely Western, however, it did have a considerable influence on the social and cultural codes of non-Western circles as well. By glorifying individualism and the development of individual capacities and potentialities, liberal ideology, in the long run, promoted selfishness, egoism, competition and success, as opposed to the feelings of solidarity and cooperation. It might not be a coincidence that we have chapters on “bystander apathy” in sociology and psychology textbooks and increased number of cases related with this kind of behaviour, mostly seen in urban settings especially in the West. Due to pronouncement of our times as the “end of ideology” by F. Fukuyama, this study aims to contemplate on the questionable future of solidarity, cooperation, empathy and compassion in our web of social relations. And, if there is going to be a future, which type of social ties and relations could be more promising than the others?

### **‘Call them by the name of their father.’ Fosterage vs. Adoption in Arab Societies**

Édouard Conte, Collegium Budapest and University of Bern  
[conte@colbud.hu](mailto:conte@colbud.hu)

While the Coran entreats Muslims to foster orphans, it abolishes rich pre-Islamic traditions of adoption whereby children as well as adults could both acquire the name of their adoptive father and inherit from him or be integrated into a new family through milk kinship granted by adoptive mothers. Contemporary Arab societies are faced with a dilemma opposing the respect of the Revelation, reflected in the prohibition of full adoption in most

codes of family law, and the necessity of caring, in the name of compassion and justice, for the increasing number of children either abandoned or born out of wedlock. Present debate on norms of fosterage and adoption must be analysed in the light of the ongoing reforms of personal status laws. Indeed, the acceptance of full adoption in law would question the keystone of the Arab kinship system, namely the pre-eminence of descent through males. This issue will be addressed by comparing legal reforms and changing social practice in different Arab societies.

### **Early Marriage in Gaza: Dynamics, Perceptions and Sentiment**

Nahda Younis Shehada, Institute of Social Studies, Netherlands

[nahda@iss.nl](mailto:nahda@iss.nl)

In Palestinian society, the increasingly frequent and still unexplained practice of marriage before the legally prescribed age might at first sight appear solely as a possible strategy for escaping life's hardships under conditions of occupation and uprising. It can equally proceed from the individual's realisation that a precocious union brings a better life than further education would. Whereas daughters are more likely to marry young when they are excluded from secondary education, sons tend to do so due to their engagement in the Israeli labour market. This complex practice is thus conditioned by different variables such as political circumstances, locality, refugee status, educational opportunity, and participation in the labour market. Yet, these 'objective' elements intertwine with personally knitted experiences, emotional expressions, political metaphors and moral claims, which this presentation proposes to analyse in the context of the present intifada.