



Panel's title: Research Posture and Strategies in the study of Asian communities

Titre du panel : Posture et stratégies du chercheur dans l'étude des communautés asiatiques

Coordinator (Affiliation, University...) : Julie Remoiville (GSRL/EPHE) et Simeng Wang (CERMES3, CNRS)

Language : English

Topics : (Interdisciplinary panel)

Panel presentation :

This panel is part of a set of four panels dealing with methodological issues. To conduct fieldwork in the Asian communities (in Asia or elsewhere) implies several implications for the researcher and its place within the studied community. It could lead to numerous tensions and goad the researcher to reconsider his/her posture and its relation with interlocutors. Language barrier, cultural differences, gender questions or ethical issues could be regarded as a difficulty, or in others cases, turn into advantage. In this sense, this panel aims to examine how the researcher can deal with these issues in Asian communities. How the researcher could challenge language or gender issues when he is making fieldwork in Asian communities? Which strategies could be invoked to face ethical issues or cultural barrier? Last but not least, this panel seeks to highlight the specificity (if any) of fieldwork in "Asian field" or "Asian communities". Does it make sense to speak of fieldwork in "Asia" taken as a whole? Which specificity implies the "Asian field"? The panel will be focused on practical and theoretical feedbacks from young researchers, and will rely mainly on Indian field, Chinese field and Chinese community in Paris.

Key words : Asia ; concept ; ethnography ; ethnicity ; fieldwork ; nation symbols ; cultural transfer ; India ; political autonomy.

Participants :

1) Name(s) (Affiliation, University...) : Ma Bin (Ph.D Candidate, University of Paris 8)

Communication's title : « Ethnicité » appliquée par migrants originaires de Wenzhou à Paris

Language : English

Presentation :

En faisant la recherche sur les migrants originaires de Wenzhou qui vivent à Paris, le terme d'ethnicité nous aide à comprendre leurs perceptions et leurs comportements, mais en même temps, cette ethnicité appliquée fortement chez eux, nous bloque, dans une certaine manière, les démarches de la recherche. Emily Hong et Pang Keng-Fong ont analysé respectivement les phénomènes des « gens du nord de la province du Jiangsu » (*subeiren*) à Shanghai et des quelques milliers de Musulmans du sud de l'île de Hainan en faisant référence aux théories d'ethnicité, ma recherche, après des années d'observations et d'entretiens auprès des migrants de Wenzhou, est orientée également vers cette notion qui n'est pas encore très développée en France. Surtout quand moi-même est *out-group*, cette ethnicité du groupe Wenzhou se manifeste, malgré la confiance déjà établie, par des propos comme : « Pourquoi fais-tu cette recherche ? Quel est ton objectif ? » « Es-tu espionne ? Vendras-tu les informations recueillies au gouvernement français ? » « Je ne vais pas vendre notre communauté Wenzhou. » Rendre la recherche « légitime » aux yeux de la population



étudiée est une des premières tâches obligées à effectuer au commencement de ma recherche. Viennent ensuite clarifier les frontières entre les Wenzhou-ville et les Wenzhou-campagne, analyser l'importance d'être Wenzhou pour la structure des hiérarchies sociales à Paris et à Wenzhou et enfin, trouver les modalités qui font que les frontières entre « in-group » et « out-group » se déplacent. Mon article se divisera en conséquence en quatre parties : En tant que chercheur, quelles sont les difficultés rencontrées à cause de l'ethnicité du groupe et quelles sont les solutions ? Qu'est-ce qu'un individu originaire de Wenzhou (*wenzhouren*) pour ces migrants eux-mêmes ? Quels sont les avantages et les inconvénients d'être Wenzhou dans la communauté chinoise à Paris et comment les hiérarchies sociales se structurent au sein de cette communauté ? Où se situent les frontières entre « in-group » et « out-group » et pourquoi ?

2) Name(s) (Affiliation, University...) : Kristina Garalyté (Ph D candidate, Department of Social Sciences, Vytautas Magnus University (Kaunas, Lithuania)

Communication's title : Researching and representing the Dalit student movement in India

Language : English

Presentation :

In the paper I discuss theoretical and methodological challenges of the ethnographic fieldwork based PhD dissertation “Dalit student movement in India: from identity politics to counter culture movement”. Firstly, I focus on the research problems encountered in the field. How the complexity of the Dalit student movement should be tamed? How one is to define and delineate the boundaries of the versatile and fluid phenomenon? The Dalit student movement represents Dalit cultural and political autonomy. However, it constructs its ideology and repertoire in constant interaction with other prevalent political cultures (i.e., Hindu right wing and communist). Initially, the movement was constructed and enacted as the caste identity politics based movement. Yet, in recent years the Dalit student movement has been transforming into the broader anti-establishment (anti-Hindu right wing) revolutionary counter culture movement. As the counter culture movement it challenges not only the Hindu right wing politics, but also strives to take the place of the radical politics up until now represented by the communist movement. With the shift from identity politics to counter culture framing strategies, the Dalit student movement has been attracting diverse participant base, outreaching Dalits or other lower castes. I will discuss the applicability of the social movement framing theory (Snow et al. 1986; Snow & Benford 1988; Snow & Benford 1992; Benford & Snow 2000) while analysing the ideological and participatory complexity of the Dalit student movement. In the second half, I delve into the question of academic representation. The controversy over the Navayana publishers' edition of B.R. Ambedkar's *Annihilation of Caste* with the introduction of Arundhati Roy, the world famous novelist and human rights activist, has brought into the spotlight the growing radicalization among the Dalit intellectuals and movement leaders. They criticize any critical engagement with the Dalit question and assert that only Dalits can truly represent their community. This poses the double challenge to a researcher. What language should be adopted and how one is to position oneself among the representation critical research subjects? Another difficulty relates to the movement's pressure to reproduce its ideological discourse.

3) Name(s) (Affiliation) : Jérôme Doyon (Ph.D Candidate, SciencesPo/CERI and Columbia University)

Communication's title : **Factions, cliques, and clubs: beyond *informal* politics and Chinese exceptionalism**



Language : English

Presentation :

The literature on *informal* ties is important in how it pushes the researchers to go beyond the institutions' face value and get into the Chinese Communist Party's internal struggles. However, the implicit logic presenting *informal* practices as resilient traditional behaviors which impede the modernization of the political system, is problematic. Briquet, in his study of clientelism in Corsica showed that far from a traditional practice, it is both shaped by the evolution of the political system and shapes it. Furthermore, an approach in terms of *informal* politics is often tainted with culturalism, especially in the Chinese case. The *formal* and *informal* aspects of the Chinese system cannot be studied separately but in their mutually interaction. Instead of seeing these ties as an obstacle to the functioning of the State, I argue in the case of political mobility that the multiplicity of crosscutting ties officials develop throughout their career strengthens their political loyalty. The complexity of officials' careers, continually rotating from one position to the next in various locales and administrations, creates heterogeneous networks which link the officials to the Party-State and make exit costlier. These networks are highly diversified depending on personal trajectories, and are not large unified factional blocks, which could organize against the State itself. This communication is based on my doctoral research regarding the Communist Youth League as a promotion channel within the Chinese system. Focusing on the Youth League allows me to question the development of a unified Youth League faction put forward by numerous China watchers. Using biographical data and a snowball sample of interviews, in Beijing and two provincial capitals, I reconstruct the trajectories of CYL cadres in order to follow the networks they develop during the first steps of their career. By reflecting on the fieldwork itself, this communication methodologically questions how to study personal ties in an authoritarian context. Interviewees recommended me to their colleagues and friends, who in turn introduced me to their own relations. Introduction often took place in rather informal settings, such as dinners, giving me a glance of how these relationships are shaped. I had to enter the networks in order to study them.