



Call for papers International conference

Forms to experience the environment *Theory, experience, aesthetics and political criticism*

International conference organised by the LADYSS (CNRS/Univ. Paris 1, 7, 8, 10) and the CRAL (CNRS/EHESS), with the support of the CNRS, the Labex CAP, the EHESS and the Ministry for Ecology, Sustainable Development and Energy

1st and 2nd October 2015, in Paris

Justification and aim of the conference

Today, the environmental question is proving to be central both in political debates, in scientific work and in everyday life. In spite of this presence and the diversity of approaches depending on actors, scales, and situations..., the way in which public policies tackle the environment still carries the imprint of a desire to control, with the emphasis on management dimensions.

Several examples or notions widely used at international level illustrate this reality: natural capital, carbon offset systems (at global level) or normative assessment grids to which ecodistricts or Agenda 21 are subjected (at local level)... Another example, the notion of « ecosystem services », created by coupling economics with ecology, is now the central conceptual expression of policies for assessing the inputs of nature, both ecological and cultural. Unfortunately, this expression is given a simplistic interpretation, since it tends to subject socio-ecosystem processes to an accounting logic which leads to a purely administrative conception of the environment.





Faced with this instrumentalization of the environment, and in order to accompany contemporary developments and add further substance to alternative proposals which are emerging in our societies, this conference proposes to apprise an expression at the interface of Human and Social Sciences and Earth and Life Sciences :“ environmental form”.

By « form » we mean any momentary (event) or lasting (entity) crystallisation of a proposal of meaning and/or organised life. The forms thus conceived take shape via several processes: creation, reception (perception and appreciation), interpretation. By “environmental forms”, we therefore mean forms relating to environmental questions and the production of an ordinary environment.

Although the term “form” is commonly used and scientifically discussed, when seen in a contemporary perspective taking into account the environmental problems, it could widen the interdisciplinary debate and make it possible to go beyond the aporias created by underestimating the potentialities of the Humanities and Social Sciences when confronted by environmental issues. In the same way, the Earth and Life Sciences could benefit from the manifold considerations of biological and physicochemical forms.

Using environmental forms (such as the Earth, nature writing, the landscape, the urban garden, etc.), the aim of this conference is to propose knowledge modes and modes of assessment and action that are different from those usually mobilized by public environmental action. It involves bringing together culture and environment approaches, at the same time respecting the diversities contained within each of them.

In environmental aesthetics, but also more widely in socio-environmental approaches (environmental humanities), both the questions of creation and reception have been discussed at length. However, there has been a tendency to place them in opposition, as creation is seen as activity and reception as passivity. In fact, the “public” is often viewed in this way, as the passive receiver of a production (artistic, architectural, urban, technical...). It is also this view which is important in the assessment world and, more widely, in the world of action for the environment. Faced with this way of thinking about the processes by which “forms” emerge, it is important to insist on the fact that the receptive process is an active process too, and therefore a creator or re-creator. Indeed, any reception is also interpretation, and any interpretation is a production, by the meaning attributed to it. In a more fundamental way, form is neither only one object/event, nor is it only one creation or one interpretation of this object/event by a subject. Form is the system shaped by the interaction of three clusters: i) the producers, 2) the objects/events, and 3) the receivers/interpreters. It is a system that integrates a multiplicity of actors/producers and knowledge(s). Forms are therefore not just the source or the result; they are the crystallization of a process of possible mediations and dialogues between different systems





for interpreting the inhabited environment, its agents and its actors. They are collective, joint and “negotiated” productions.

Within the framework of this conference, we would therefore like to explore the hypothesis according to which the “public” is as much the producer of forms as the other stakeholders in the “territories”, whether these territories are urban, natural, periurban or rural... This positioning enables us to avoid the usual divisions produced by approaching the subject through the actors and producers of forms, their systems of thought, the knowledge mobilized, etc. The intention of this conference is on the contrary to create dialogue, with the aid of forms, between the multiplicity of discourses and contributors, and to seek to determine where ordinary environmental coproduction is situated.

These forms relating to the environmental question correspond to scales, types of action and multiple types of actors/producers. The types of action extend from narration (narratives by inhabitants, for example) to the production of a living environment (within the framework of a town planning project, for example) via the production of events. The types of actors/producers vary from individual inhabitants to public authorities via associations of various sizes, structures and statutes. The scales of actions extend from the micro-local (often attached to the inhabitants) to the global/planetary.

Themes

The conference will be structured according to four themes:

(1) Forms in question : theories, epistemologies and politics

The notion of form, ancient and plural, provides an opportunity for a cross-disciplinary approach between Earth and Life Sciences and Humanities and Social Sciences. With an operational function in life sciences as much as in social and human sciences, the concept of “form” is a principle for understanding natural life just as much as cultural life. The notion of “form of life”, in particular, is central to understanding the ecology and morphogenesis of the ways in which biological life is organised, just as much as for human communities. Between external conformation and internal essence, between principle of stability and dynamic model, between structure and genesis, and between exogenic print and autopoiesis, it will involve exploring the multidimensional character of the notion of form, understood as a basic concept for any reflection on life.

(2) Forms emerging in a period of transition: experiences and evaluations

This involves tackling a diversity of forms emerging in the contemporary period, produced by environmental policies acting on the territory and/or practices of everyday life inscribed in the territories of the everyday.

Reflections are expected on forms related to gardening, an example of environmental planning, with the aim of enriching cultural approaches. These forms can concern different scales: “planetary garden”, collective garden, blue-green infrastructures, urban garden, private garden..., and correspond to a variety of preoccupations: land issues, free exchange of seeds, self-sufficiency in food... Similarly, this





will be the place for papers which focus on landscape forms, and in particular on shared productions of landscapes, with the exchange of reflections linking different views of the environment (for example, on biodiversity) and reflexions on culture and society (on the question of identity, for example). The Earth, the exemplary form of the global scale, can also be treated within the framework of artistic productions or questions related to environmental policies (e.g. climate change).

(3) Narrative forms and environmental narratives

This involves tackling environmental narratives, from residents and from public action, from research by the scientific world or from the world of Art.

Environmental narratives shape our actions with regard to the environment. Their variety provides a range of ways to comprehend ecological transition: narratives of ordinary life associated with the representation of nature, metanarrative governing some thoughts about climate change, documentary fiction working to represent or denounce environmental change and the inertia of policies at global and local scale.

(4) Aesthetics, a lever for political criticism?

This involves dealing with the relations between aesthetic, sensitive, form(s) and political, at a theoretical and empirical level.

The forms of social mobilization with regard to the environment, the resistances and reappropriations, are due to collectives organized in defence of a planning project, but also to actions working to improve the living environment, or for political reasons. In addition to ordinary aesthetic and sensitive forms, these mobilizations can also be accompanied by artists, *designers*, landscape architects... offering the possibility of another look at this living environment. Social mobilizations are the product of a collective arrangement in answer to environmental situations.

Conference objectives in terms of audience and exchange of views

This conference would like to create **a space for exchange between various approaches** and different areas of expertise (researchers, associations, artists, experts, decision-makers...). It involves bringing together an audience of **contributors and participants from different backgrounds**: scientists working in the field of environmental humanities, and, more specifically, in culture and art, scientists from the field of Earth and Life Sciences, artists, *designers*, spatial designers, operational actors, associations, politicians...

The presentation methods during the conference are varied. We would like to receive proposals for short presentations in French or English.

A selection of articles will be published after the oral presentations. The organisation committee reserves the possibility of calling for proposals from outside.





How to respond to the call for papers?

Proposals for contributions are to be sent in **before 15 January 2015** to the following address:
desformespourvivrelenvironnement@gmail.com

Format of the proposal: between 3 000 and 4 000 characters (in French or in English)

Information required: Title, Surname(s), first name(s) of the author(s) (the name of the corresponding author should be underlined); the name of the institution with postal address, telephone n°, and email address.

Calendar

15 October 2014: Launch of the call for papers

15 January 2015: Last date for sending abstracts. Closure of the call for papers

15 May 2015: Results of the call for papers, information about the submissions selected and not selected

1st and 2nd October 2015: The Conference

15 October 2015: Call for articles for a collective publication

15 February 2016: Closure of the call for articles

15 April 2016: Selection of the articles for a collective publication (work or review)

Conference venue

The international conference « Forms to experience the environment. Theory, experience, aesthetics and political criticism », will take place on 1st and 2nd October 2015, at the EHESS, in Paris.

Scientific committee

Nathalie Blanc (geography - LADYSS)

Patrick Degeorges (French Ministry of Ecology, Sustainable Development and Energy)

Sandrine Depeau (environmental psychology - ESO)

Rainer Kazig (geography - CRESSON)

Olivier Labussière (geography - PACTE)

Agnès Levitte (design - CRAL)

Théa Manola (architecture/urbanism - LADYSS)





Suzanne Paquet (history of art - CRI/Université de Montréal)

Antony Pecqueux (sociology - CRESSON)

Hervé Regnauld (geography - COSTEL)

Aleksandar Rankovic (ecology - BIOEMCO)

Jean-Marie Schaeffer (philosophy - CRAL)

Anne Tüscher (architecture/philosophy - LAVUE/Gerphau)

Anne Volvey (geography - Discontinuités)

Cheng Xiangzhan (aesthetics - Shandong University)

Organisation committee

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Agnès Levitte (design - CRAL)

Théa Manola (architecture/urbanism - LADYSS)

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