

Uncertain Lives: Everyday Politics in Iraq

Responsable

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(EHESS, CETOBaC /
IC Migrations)

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14h30-16h30
Salle Athéna 047

Intervenants

Loulouwa Al-Rachid
(Chercheuse indépendante,
ERC DREAM)

Mélisande Genat
(Stanford University)

Isadora Gotts
(King's College)

Mairead Smith
(Brown University)

Résumé de l'atelier

Most work on post-2003 Iraq has focused, from a political science perspective, on the nature and role of the state, the American invasion and foreign military interventions, and the discourse of actors in power. This has fueled analysis in terms of fragmentation and sectarian divisions, categories that this body of literature has participated in constructing. Following recent studies on the social dynamics of daily life in the context of conflict and insecurity (Das, 2006 ; Beck, 2012), the objective of the present panel is to bring together researchers whose work, resulting from long-term investigations in the field, propose bottom-up approaches, thereby detaching themselves from the context to better understand the situation in which the Iraqis act.

Communications will address different aspects of what would make up the ordinary life of the inhabitants, paying particular attention to experiences, subjectivities and affects. This methodological and theoretical bias will allow us to question the practices, capacities and logics of action of individuals, while reinvesting common themes in political science through that which is familiar, close, and intimate.

La majorité des travaux sur l'Irak post-2003 se sont intéressés dans une perspective de sciences politiques à la nature et au rôle de l'État, à l'invasion américaine et aux interventions militaires étrangères, ainsi qu'aux discours portés par les acteurs de pouvoir. Ils ont notamment alimenté des analyses en termes de fragmentation et de divisions sectaires, catégories qu'ils ont eux-mêmes participé à construire.

En se rapprochant du champ d'études ouvert depuis une vingtaine d'années sur les dynamiques sociales de la vie quotidienne en contexte de conflit et d'insécurité (Das, 2006 ; Beck, 2012), l'objectif de l'atelier est de réunir des chercheurs et des chercheuses dont les travaux, issus d'enquêtes de terrain au long cours, proposent des approches par le bas se détachant ainsi des contextes pour mieux saisir les situations dans lesquelles les Irakiens agissent.

Les communications aborderont différents aspects de ce qui composerait l'ordinaire des habitants en portant une attention particulière aux expériences, aux subjectivités et aux affects. Ce parti pris méthodologique et théorique nous permettra de nous interroger sur les pratiques, les capacités et les logiques d'action des individus tout en réinvestissant par le proche, le familier et l'intime les thématiques portées par les sciences politiques.

Programme

Loulouwa Al-Rachid

"Liquid" Iraq? Violence as the ultimate vector of social mobility

Since the US invasion and subsequent overthrow of the Ba'athist Leviathan in 2003, the Iraqi state seems to have lost its monopoly on legitimate violence to a host of old and new armed actors. As a result, social life has become "liquid" (Zygmunt Bauman), precarious, and full of worries. Iraqis of all ethnic and sectarian affiliations are indeed subjected to constant mobility and change: power relationships, identities, and hierarchies appear to be unable to keep any shape or any course for long. This article outlines not only the challenges but also the opportunities of daily life under such conditions of violence and uncertainty. It focuses, in particular, on the transformative effects of violence on the distribution of power and resources between and within social groups with a special emphasis on the rural-urban divide. Ultimately, it aims to better characterize the new social classes that have come to dominate Iraq since 2003.

Mélisande Genat

The Return of "Daesh Families"

In 2020-2021, the Iraqi government closed most IDP (internally displaced persons) camps established during the crisis associated with the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Displacees who do not face prosecution by the state are required to return to their area of origin. Many of them have a perceived ISIS affiliation.

Although Iraq's legal framework enshrines the principle of individual liability in legislation, perceptions in local communities of what constitutes ISIS affiliation does not mirror a legal understanding. These families face complex barriers to both return and sustainable reintegration due to the perception that one or more members had a real or rumored affiliation. A broad spectrum of responses exists: from complete rejection of "Daesh families" to relative acceptance of their return. The intricate nature of affiliation adds a layer of complexity to post-war reconciliation as ISIS drew its members from all large Sunni tribes across Iraq.

The magnitude of the crisis triggered by ISIS along with current state paralysis have led to a protracted stalemate. Tribes are grappling with limitations of customary mechanisms to address the vast demands for justice associated with ISIS violence. They must adapt customary practices and devise new mechanisms to lessen prospects of revenge acts. Regular tribal mediation channels – conciliation and blood money – have mostly become irrelevant. Despite instances of acceptance and growing space for reconciliation, a more common experience for "Daesh families" is that of public shaming, stigma, and other forms of collective punishment.

This research draws from extensive field work conducted in Ninewa, Salahaddin and Anbar provinces between 2020 and 2022.

Isadora Gotts

Enduring conflict and emerging constellations of order in post-war Mosul

This research aims to understand why and how conflict endures after war ends, creating "no war no peace" settings. Looking at Mosul, Iraq, it will study the legacies of war as a process through which urban spaces are re-shaped and renegotiated, politically, economically, socially, and materially. Protracted conflict literature tends to focus on the drivers of conflict, the effectiveness of peace accords and political settlements, or post war violence. What it fails to account for is the transformative and generative potentials of war, how it restructures the very way in which a place functions. Cities have the particularity of experiencing massive physical transformations through rampant destruction during wartimes. To account for this urban specificity, this project will use post-war reconstruction to better understand how the built environment and socio-political dynamics co-produce one another. Applying a spatial lens to this research will help unpack the mechanisms and practices through which emerging forms of urban order perpetuate, (re)produce, and embed conflict in post-war Mosul.

Mairead Smith*Chronotopic Kinship: Action and obligation in post-land reform Sinjar*

This paper outlines the impact of land reforms on social rhythms and time-maps within Sinjar society following land reform and the dispossession of land and the effect on a specific form of kinship relation in the area. The kirîvatî tradition is an important system of protection engaged in by minority groups deemed vulnerable to persecution and oppression in the Kurdish mountainous region and a means of making kin out of diverse ethnic and religious groups that would otherwise be unattainable due to religious proscription. Initiating obligations of support and dependence, kirîv kin can be called upon for economic and political support for each family's mutual advantage and provides a chronotopic formulation of place, time, and personhood that assist in ordering social beings (Blommaert, De Fina, 2017 ; Rutherford, 2015 ; Agha, 2007). Through exploring the establishment of collective farms following land reforms in the 1970s, this paper outlines the impact on avenues for labor and labor relations and how these interacted with kin relations. I focus on the heterochrony of capitalist time as narrated in the oral histories of diverse groups from Sinjar district and Al-Ba'aj, portraying the multiple temporal rhythms at play in order to explain the withering of kirîv obligations and their replacement with a diversity of chronotopes constituted by acts of labor as "temporalizing practices" (Munn, 1992). Understanding the production of antagonistic temporalities (Negri, 2003) that frame social action is critical to understanding how acts of violence become possible – something particularly pertinent to understanding post-genocide Sinjar.