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Analysing affects and emotions in tourist e-mail interviews: a case in post-disaster Tohoku, Japan

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ABSTRACT

This paper contributes methodological discussions on collecting and analysing international tourists' affects and emotions. The method of data collection used is electronic mail interviews, in some instances corroborated by participant observation in the field, whereas the methods of data analysis employed are *affective mapping* and *emotionality of texts*. Such methods of analysis capture the on-flow and contingency of the tourist's experience in post-disaster places. E-mail interviews are becoming an increasingly widespread method of data collection. In post-disaster contexts, the potential of email interviews allows researchers to conduct fieldwork even when they cannot obtain face-to-face interviews, or in cases in which participants feel more at ease answering from their home and can take their time to respond. Twelve semi-structured e-mail interviews have been conducted in 2016 with international tourists who visited the Tohoku region, Japan, hit in 2011 by a triple disaster: an earthquake, a tsunami, and a nuclear meltdown at the Fukushima nuclear power plant. To explore and better understand participants' affective and emotional experiences, we exemplify *affective mapping* and *emotionality of texts* drawing on tools like linguistic features of e-mails, imagework, short stories and anecdotes.

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Introduction

Places associated with death, suffering or danger have, more than other places, the potential to produce strong and immediate affective responses among visitors (Buda, 2015; Light, 2017). These places are now part of the mainstream visitor economy and packaged as such (Stone, 2012), propelling a strand of academic research on motivations for such visits that ranges from voyeurism, to commemoration, contemporary pilgrimage, desire for thrill and excitement (Biran, Poria, & Oren, 2011; Buda, 2015; Buda, d'Hauteserre, & Johnston, 2014; Lennon & Foley, 2000; Seaton, 2009; Stone, 2012; Stone & Sharpley, 2008). More recently, affect- and emotion-focused analysis of post-disaster case studies have been developed (namely in the work of Buda, 2015; Buda et al., 2014; Pocock, 2015; Picard & Robinson, 2012; Tucker, 2009, 2015). However, a body of work that focuses on qualitative methods and strategies available to understand the affective and emotional experiences of the tourist, especially in contested and ethically sensitive places such as post-disaster areas, is still underdeveloped.

In this article, we claim that, in addition to ethnographic methods such as participant observation and on-field data collection methods, engaging with the affective and emotional features gathered in

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electronic mail interviews, hereafter e-mail interviews, can shine a light on an often overlooked facet of tourists' experiences in disaster areas. We circumscribe our analysis to settings that were subject to a disaster because most places of death, disaster and atrocities negotiate painful pasts, ethically problematic situations, and strong emotional and affective reactions from locals and visitors alike. Such analysis allows a deeper understanding that goes beyond conscious motivations, and complement it by recognizing the subtler, more nuanced emotions and affects that underlie decisions to visit and marketplaces in proximity to death and disaster. Dark places, on the one hand, might deeply unsettle visitors, enhancing their awareness of the flows of affects and emotions in and around them. On the other hand, places of immense grief and devastation, especially those that received considerable media attention, become familiar to the tourist (Buda & McIntosh, 2013). This creates a valuable environment for inventive and creative methods applied to e-mails, and text in general, as the contrast between the desire to visit and the engagement with death and its representations with which such sites are saturated can be a vehicle for reflection on the affective and emotional world of the tourist.

We propose that, to frame the analysis of textual dialectic of emotions and affects in e-mail interviews (Gibbs, 2007), one of the tools to explore emotions is *emotionality of text* (Ahmed, 2004), and to explore affect is *affective mapping* (Flatley, 2008). In geography, the term has identified the affective aspects of maps and of the process of physical and cognitive map-making (Flatley, 2008). However, we borrow the concept of affective mapping from aesthetic methods, where the affective map narrates the production of its own writer (Flatley, 2008), in a contextual and contingent way. It is used by Flatley (2008) in his work on melancholia, and applied to literary materials to map in specific the historicity and political aspects of melancholia as an affect, but at a broader level can offer a frame for strategies to recognize moods in texts, and the ways affects are evoked and brought to the surface in textual analysis (Gibbs, 2007).

Furthermore, we use 'emotionality of texts', which investigates how emotions are invoked, performed and defined in the text (Ahmed, 2004). In e-mails and other such online methods, in-depth investigations into emotions and affects are often overlooked, and limited to theoretical discussions, or analysis applied to literary works, newspapers (Colm Hogan, 2016; Flatley, 2008; Kølvraa, 2015; Vernay, 2013), to blogs (see McKercher, Weber, & du Cros, 2008; Morrison, 2011), to the style of texts produced by researchers (Gibbs, 2007). In tourism, studies are still uncommon to find analysis of texts produced by non-professional writers, in our case international tourists.

In the following sections, first, we articulate how email interviews can give an insight into the emotions and affects experienced at post-disaster sites. Secondly, we introduce the fieldwork context and our tourist sample. Finally, we analyse excerpts of the interviews collected, using emotionality of text and affective mapping as a wider frame to investigate certain linguistic features of texts, imagework, stories and anecdotes. The purpose is to understand how the felt aspects of the experience in these places are evoked in the text, and how text is reorganized in narrations with beginnings, plots and endings to transmit certain emotions and affects experienced by the participant. Moreover, a focus on emotions and affects highlights how studies on tourist decisions and motivations often barely scrape the surface of the tourist experience in post-disaster settings.

Emotions and affects in email interviews

E-mail interviews, have become an increasingly widespread method of qualitative data collection (Bampton & Cowton, 2002; Bowden & Galindo-Gonzalez, 2015; Houston, 2008; Meho, 2006; Northcote, Lee, Chok, & Wegner, 2008), albeit in most cases subsumed under the broader umbrella of online methods (Fielding, Lee, & Blank, 2008; Meho, 2006) or netnography (Hall, 2010; Kozinets, 2002, 2015). In fieldwork contexts where participants cannot engage in a face-to-face conversation, e-mails secure an interview that would have been lost otherwise. E-mailing overcomes constraints of time, place, money and interviewee's convenience (Opdenakker, 2006), and constitutes a robust research method when context, aim and chosen sample allow it. In regard to the textual analysis

of emotions and affects of tourists through email interviews, we focus on (i) linguistic features of emails, (ii) imagework and (iii) short stories and anecdotes.

Being aware of the complex networks of emotions and affects that are part of every tourism performance can assist the researcher in uncovering deeper layers of meaning and motivation at the core of tourism experiences (Biran et al., 2011; Buda, 2015; Buda et al., 2014; Picard & Robinson, 2012; Tucker, 2009). Emotions are defined as conscious and representable projections of an individual feeling (Davidson & Bondi, 2004), while affect as a mood or an atmosphere that is not always perceived clearly, and not easily representable (Pile, 2010). Even though some researchers separate emotions from affects, many recognize that they are always intertwined and occur as a flow in which it is not always possible to distinguish them (Anderson, 2014). Such differences are still debated, and there is no straightforward, absolute distinction of the terms (see Davidson & Bondi, 2004; Pile, 2010; Shouse, 2005).

Emotions and affects deliver representations of the tourist experience in dimensions that are always emergent, and in many cases unnoticed (Laurier & Philo, 2006). Despite a growing interest towards affect (Anderson & Smith, 2001; Davidson & Bondi, 2004; Gregg & Seigworth, 2010; Massumi, 2002; Thrift, 1996) and how to represent it (Lury & Wakeford, 2012; Vannini, 2015), debates on affective methodologies are still marginal (Faullant, Matzler, & Mooradian, 2011). Some work has been published in which the focus is on discursive, relational and sensuous practices and encounters, such as non-representational methods and inventive methods (Lorimer, 2008; Lury & Wakeford, 2012; Vannini, 2015). These investigations can be effective if academics recognize the specific knowledge that can be produced about affects and emotions, which is not applicable in every situation. For our specific research on e-mail interviews, we propose that an affective analysis of texts and writing, when concretely linked to specific bodies with a strong situational specificity, in our case the visit to disaster sites, can enhance studies on motivations and tourist behaviour (Gibbs, 2007; Knudsen & Stage, 2012). Such methods can be applied to further affective and emotional analysis of other textual outputs such as blogs, social media posts and other texts written by the target group studied by academics.

Researchers' engagements with online methodology are growing steadily (Bampton & Cowton, 2002; Hine, 2000, 2005; Longhurst, 2016; Mann & Stewart, 2000; Reich, 2014), as well as interest in alternative, inventive methods. Non-traditional, inventive methods and tools are heterogeneous; they need to be combined, modified and transformed to fit a specific context or problem (Lury & Wakeford, 2012). By analysing e-mail interviews conducted after visits in post-disaster places using affects and emotions, we add to emerging discussions about creative, emotional, performative approaches to methods of data collection and analysis in tourism research (Knudsen & Stage, 2015; Lury & Wakeford, 2012; Vannini, 2015). Narratives, stories, anecdotes, imagework and features of texts, all direct us to the affective and emotional charge often hinted at or evoked just under the surface of texts.

Online methods, including email interviews, can be also favoured by researchers for reasons of logistics and resources when there is not enough time to have an in-depth face-to-face interview during or right after the trip. In addition to that, it can allow the participants more freedom and fewer inhibitions (Ward, Gott, & Hoare, 2015) in what they want to narrate and represent, and gives them time to own and organize their story. E-mails are a familiar means of communication for most international tourists. They can disclose more to a computer (Wallace, 1999), and can feel less judged and more comfortable answering privately and in written form (Joinson, 2001). In e-mail interviews we do not expect a complete account of the experience, but that the participants enact a process of organization of their thoughts and feelings about the visit that includes their dispositions, moods, emotions, affects, judgments and cultural sentiments (Maynard, 2002). Emotive meanings are negotiated and mutually interpreted by the participant and the researcher, that can perceive the emotional reactions and images that the tourist wants to invoke (Bowden & Galindo-Gonzalez, 2015).

As affects tends to be perceivable as vague atmospheres and intensities (Anderson, 2014), affective mapping as a frame to apply to linguistic analysis allows the researcher to recognize and map out one's affective life and connect it to a wider sense of how 'one's situation is experienced collectively by a community' (Flatley, 2008, p. 4). It expresses 'a nugget of affective experience for the reader, one with direct historical resonance and relevance, and then also tells the reader something about that experience within the narrative itself' (Flatley, 2008, p. 7), a movement from imaginary to text that will be explored in practice with imagework.

Inventive methodological approaches such as e-mail interviews together with 'affective mapping' applied to textual analysis creatively show how, in specific contexts, a moment of affect, emotion, remembrance, can be evoked through writing. All these styles and methods draw attention to the importance of apprehending connective sensibilities as processual and enactive, as modes of performative moving and relating rather than as sets of codified rules (McCormack, 2003). It requires a rethinking of the use we make of all our tools, and the way we incorporate the voices of our participants in our research. It combines a multiplicity of relational, non-systematic efforts, where the researcher has to confront the unexpected and the contextual (Gibbs, 2007). The process of writing has been scrutinized as too reductive to express feelings (Gibbs, 2007). Nonetheless, it is possible to write 'as a methodology both for attuning to and creating rhythm … a "form of historicisation, a form of individuation"' (Meschonnic, 2011; as cited in Mitchell & Joelly, 2012, p. 162). Traces of corporeal action and agency that are usually associated with oral transmission of knowledge can be seen and used also in a written context (Gibbs, 2007). This is what we continue to show in the discussion section.

Research context: touring the March 11, 2011 disaster

On March 11, 2011, a magnitude 9.0 earthquake hit Japan. Its epicentre was 72 kilometres east of the Tohoku region, which covers most of the coastal part of Northern Japan. The earthquake provoked a large-scale tsunami, much higher than the tsunami walls along the coast. The waves reached a height of 30 metres in some areas, and swept up to 6 kilometres inland. More than 15,000 people lost their lives, and at least 2500 are still missing (Yamamoto et al., 2015). Entire towns were almost wiped off the map. This tragedy is defined as a triple disaster: the first one is the earthquake, the worst in Japanese history. The earthquake caused a second disaster: the tsunami. The tsunami water, consequently, caused a third disaster: the cooling systems at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant short-circuited, and four of the six nuclear cores melted. Radiations spread both in the water and inland, to the point that in a 20 kilometres radius all the population was evacuated (Gill, Steger, & Slater, 2013). Most people, six years after, still have not returned and do not plan to do so in the future (for more information, see Iuchi, Johnson, & Olshansky, 2013; Karan & Suganuma, 2016).

The disaster resulted in an immediate dramatic downturn of international tourists, who cancelled their trips after the news and the fear of being affected by radiations as soon as they would set foot to Japan (Imaoka, 2013). The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) recognized the consequences this disaster had on tourism in the whole area, expressing condolences and concern for the damage caused to 'the beautiful tourism destinations' (Imaoka, 2013, para.1).

Fieldwork

Between March and September 2016, 60 interviews were undertaken, half with international tourists, half with local tourism workers in the coastal towns of Tohoku, in Northern Japan, affected in 2011 by a triple disaster: an earthquake, tsunami and nuclear meltdown. The broader aim of the fieldwork was to collect information and then analyse the negotiations of affects and emotions when visiting places of disaster The focus of analysis in this article, however, are 12 e-mail interviews collected with international tourists, collected in three ways: (1) by the first author during tours, in which the author was also a participant; (2) their contacts were given by common friends through snowballing technique

and (3) or through online searches for keywords and tags on Facebook, Twitter and on Japan travel forums, to ascertain who visited certain disaster towns recently. Participants were recruited during tours, and through snowballing technique locals, tourism workers and tourists were asked to assist the researcher in identifying other potential participants. Each participant received a list of 19 open-ended questions. Most of the participant sent back answers that varied from 1500 to 4000 words in total.

The response could vary from a set of structured answers, to essays that grouped all answers together. Participants were free to skip questions they did not feel like answering. If the researcher needed further clarifications or information, she would follow up with one or more e-mails. The questions avoided the direct use of words like 'emotions', 'affects', 'feelings'. This was a deliberate decision to avoid as much as possible response directed answers (Mitchell & Joelly, 2012, p. 285). Instead, participants were asked to detail the most poignant moments while visiting the area, their impressions, anecdotes, the pictures they took, if and what they knew about the disaster and the area before coming, and if it was different from what they expected. Regardless of the absence of emotion-related words in the questions, feelings emerged in their account.

The interviews considered for this paper were collected from international tourists aged 20–50 years old, from, the United States of America (USA), Canada, Italy, Trinidad and Tobago, Germany, and the United Kingdom (UK). As these tours have, in most cases, an educational purpose and are aimed predominantly at college students, we included interviews with five college students from a university in New York, and the professor who accompanied them. The other interviewees were selected to cover a wider range of ages and nationalities, also as the participants showed a specific interest to visit such towns because of the disaster. In addition to that, tours tend to last from two hours to a full day. We found this group of participants to have provided information coherent with the total number of interviews collected during the fieldwork. Some towns in the area promote educational exchanges and actively invite school and college students to visit. In fact, around 40% of the participants visited Tohoku as part of a college educational tour, or an opportunity offered by their university, or high school. The remaining 60% of the participants reflect a tendency noted in the broader fieldwork: they either have a strong history and connection with Japan (Japanese significant others, distant relatives and such like), they have a specific interest in Japan, or they have already visited Japan at least once. As most of these tourists do not speak Japanese, the easiest way to tour the area is by booking a free guide service offered in Sendai, the main city of the region and departure hub of such trips, or hire a guide in the disaster town chosen. Both these services offer tours which have the purpose of educating about the disaster and promoting the rural lifestyle and traditions of Tohoku.

The fieldwork area considered for this article includes towns in the Fukushima, Miyagi and Iwate Prefectures in the Tohoku region of Japan, most notably the municipalities of Rikuzentakata and Ishinomaki, and the exclusion zone close to the Fukushima nuclear power plant. These places were chosen for the research because they all are already subject to a flow of tourists, and have plans to implement tourism activities related to the 2011 disaster. The tsunami-hit towns were all severely damaged, and had some of the highest casualty rates, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA, n.d.). Rikuzentakata and Ishinomaki are located more than 150 kilometres north of the Fukushima Daiichi power plant, and were never considered at risk of high levels of radiations. The exclusion zone covers a 20-kilometre radius around the power plant and includes several towns, which have been hit by the tsunami and abandoned because of high levels of radiations. From 2012 onwards, these towns have developed projects to transmit tourists (domestic and international) what they had 'really' witnessed, and created activities for tourists interested also in volunteering while visiting. These towns were never touristic, but now they consider tourism as a viable form of resilience for the region, and are actively involved in inviting Japanese and foreigners to visit so that the disaster and all the death and pain are not forgotten (see also Amujo & Otubanjo, 2012; Kato, 2018; McMorran, 2008; Ritchie, 2009).

Analysis

Linguistic features of emails

The ways in which emotions and affects are incited and invoked in texts are manifold. Texts can generate rhythms, effects, affects and emotions (Ahmed, 2004). In accordance with the emotionality of text, we recognize that these signs, charged with affects and emotions, cannot be directly accessed by the researcher (see Ahmed, 2004). Nonetheless, specific language features, like adjectives, adverbs or figures of speech, and the rhythm in which they are used in the text, can offer valuable insights. In the 12 interviews analysed here, we focus on adjectives to exemplify our claim. However, other feature can offer understandings into affects and emotions in text, which we briefly mention here, such as capitalized words and punctuation. This analysis, though, can be undertaken with other parts of the written text. As we isolated the adjectives that participants used to write about the feelings evoked by the disaster, we identified some trends and patterns. First of all, a high percentage of adjectives has very strong valence. Out of 127 adjectives found in the emails that specifically refer to the disaster, 79 of them have a strong, absolute valence. The incidence of 'astounding', 'amazing', 'massive', 'powerful', 'enormous', 'heart-breaking', 'horrifying', 'ominous', 'apocalyptic' greatly outnumbers the incidence of mellower terms like 'tough', 'angry', 'beautiful', 'hard'. The word 'shocked' alone is iterated 22 times.

One participant, while recalling part of his experience, uses the word 'horrendous', and repeated the word 'shocking' twice to capture the magnitude of what he perceived:

> I thought that the disaster area was horrendous, and the way everything around the power plant was so deserted and empty, but the shocking part was that it was almost as if they'd left yesterday, everything was untouched, perfectly still. We went to an outdoor event, a sort of community gathering of some kind (an event) and everyone was so happy, it was in the giant arena that they used as a shelter after the explosion. For me that was the most shocking part that the whole community was having a wonderful time, there was no one crying, or mass shock or anything like that, the Japanese people had really recovered, and the Tohoku area seemed just like a normal place in Japan, as if nothing had happened. (Sam, United Kingdom, 29 August 2016)

Sam's passage reveals a contrast present in other email interviews: what he defines as 'the most shocking' aspect of the experience is the contrast between the expected negative aura of the place, and the realization that, for the locals, life moves on. This understanding can be perceived at an affective level, as a volatile feeling that cannot be put into words. As he adds, referring to the locals he encountered at the festival he attended:

> … you could see behind their eyes, and see that it had an effect, but their faces wouldn't show it. I don't know how to explain it. (Sam, United Kingdom, 29 August 2016)

Adjectives are here used as an example, but a similar analysis can be undertaken with other parts of the text, to offer information on the tone the participant wants to transmit in the emails. One person, for example, emphasized some parts of her answers by capitalizing some words, as well as adding an exclamation point at the end:

> The first thing I noticed was how quickly the clean-up process was. This surprised me quite a bit because my only point of reference for dealing with any kind of natural disaster is from my own country (Trinidad & Tobago) where it takes FOREVER to get anything done! (Radica, Trinidad and Tobago, 16 August 2016)

Emphatic linguistic features, like capitalization of words, adjectives or punctuation, can give an insight about the object of feeling, but also on the subject who feels. The 'landscape' becomes 'a shared 'object of feeling' through the orientation that is taken towards it. As such, emotions are performative and they involve speech acts, which depend on past histories, at the same time as they generate effects' (Ahmed, 2004, p. 15). The mystery of how our touring bodies will respond to the environment is undeniably part of the attraction of disaster places. Most discussions on fear and horror assume that the outcome must be negative, but it often elicits an adrenaline rush that is not painful (Bantinaki, 2012). Tourists visiting the tsunami area experience this elusive nature of an

intense sense of awe, fear and excitement at the same time, a mix of feelings that the tourist can enjoy (Bantinaki, 2012, p. 390). Fascination with disaster is expressed through the use of positive adjectives in sentences that would call for adjectives of negative meaning. Many participants use the words 'amazed', 'surprised', 'powerful', 'astounding', when talking about the destruction they were seeing during the tour. It is not so uncommon, and, at the same time, offers a clear example of how feelings of horror and fascination can coexist in such places.

As two of the American university students said:

> I was most amazed by the size of the area that was devastated. (Justin, United States, 5 August 2016)

And:

> It is amazing to see the power of a natural disaster as towns and landmarks had disappeared from its wrath. (Susumu, United States, 12 August 2016)

Imagework

Some questions in the e-mail required the participants to do some imagework, that is, to imagine themselves in a specific situation and describe what they would do and how they would feel. Imagework requires participants to construct a coherent story in their mind. Such stories open the possibility for an active imagination, visualisation, guided fantasy, and to interpret one's own feelings. One of the questions asked to participants is 'Imagine what would happen if something like this [the 11 March disaster] would occur to you. What would you do?' This question brings to the surface culturally constructed knowledge and self-identities beliefs, and combines rational with affect and intuition (Edgar, 2004). Imagework is a largely nonverbal activity. It is particularly powerful a tool for accessing the unarticulated embodied views of individuals and groups in the research process (Edgar, 2004). These views are then verbalised, and become a field text for the researcher, a negotiated narrative (Edgar, 2004). Affective mapping as a method draws from tools like imagework or analysis of stories and anecdotes, to delimitate a territory of feelings and revisable orientations towards a context. Such context, in our case, is the post-disaster experience, that we asked to describe in emails with imagework, as a method to observe what subjective but culturally informed emotional and affective patterns are represented.

When asked 'What would you do?', six participants stated that they would not know, which emphasize the horror and impossibility to capture the scope of the destruction. One says:

> I personally have never faced such adversity, and can't begin to imagine what my reaction would be. I hold a large amount of respect for the individuals affected by the tsunami, because I cannot comprehend what they must have felt. (Justin, United States, 5 August 2016)

Coherence and predictability are given also by mimicking the stories assimilated by watching television, using the Internet and more in general, consuming media. When asked to talk about it, the stories tourists express during the e-mail interviews either align to what is portrayed by the media, or oppose it but still complement it. Our acts of remembering are cast in an anticipated argumentative context (Middleton & Brown, 2005). As an answer to the previous 'What would you do?' question, a woman detailed the social and environmental situation in her home country, Trinidad and Tobago. Her account does not revolve around her imagined personal experience, but it is a reflection and a half-concealed critique on the environmental and social situation of her country:

> If something like that were to happen here there won't be many survivors. We are a small island and many people live near the coastline. We have no emergency system put in place so we have no idea what to do. There have been attempts to START educating the population about disaster preparedness, but I have never been exposed to it so I honestly don't know the status to date. … If a tsunami were to hit the west coast of Trinidad, it would be a disaster as the western part of the island is flat land. (Radica, Trinidad and Tobago, 16 August 2016)

It also delineates a common tendency to refer to experiences that they feel a stronger connection to, or happened close to their own country. One Canadian participant, recalls:

> … it was a lot like watching the airplanes crash into the Twin Towers during 9.11. There was a sense of disbelief that was very similar. The Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Plant issue was absolutely terrifying. (Norm, Canada, 27 August 2016)

Another participant explains:

> I went to college at Tulane University in 2005 when Hurricane Katrina hit Louisiana. The images of the levees flooding the 9th ward and city, and the aftermath in New Orleans and its personal effect on my family are very similar to the images of the tsunami I watched on TV as it happened, and I have a hard time watching images or videos of either due to that. I tend to turn the TV off or I get depressed and upset. (Jessica, United States, 10 September 2016)

Experiencing the disaster in Japan allows an understanding that is perceived as a resonance, an affective bridge between the place visited and the personal experience of the participant. They confront what they see with something they experienced in their home country.

Short stories and anecdotes

The answers in the collected e-mail interviews are narratives that do not interest us in terms of 'true or false' events. The purpose is to gather insights in the life-world of the interviewee and interpret the meaning she or he gives to the tourist experience as a culturally structured performance (see Edensor, 2000, 2001). Narratives can carry ambiguities and open up spaces for negotiations of meaning, as they are an abstraction act, in which the narrator extrapolates a meaning from experience. There is an effort to shape meaning, to construct patterns and connect events that might have occurred randomly (Stenner, 2012).

The tourist creates a logical order that is not always consequential in reality and juxtaposes different viewpoints (Jefferies, 2012). This is an unconscious reflex that emerges powerfully in writing, when tourists have the time to reorganize their memories, knowledge and experience, and suppress that which does not line up in such a way (Middleton & Brown, 2005). By giving short written stories, the tourist also establishes a 'contact with others, a contact that is imaginary in one sense. But inasmuch as it is based on the shared historicity of that affective life, it is quite real' (Flatley, 2008, p. 84). Most of the towns hit by the tsunami are undergoing major construction works to elevate the whole sea area and make it safer. It is a long-term project that will take more time than initially expected. For this reason, the whole area close to the sea is still, after five years, completely barren. The incongruity between the apocalyptic scenario participants saw in media reports and what they saw during the visit, which is empty space, created a felt space where expectations were not met. Thus, in almost all the interviews this incongruity is recognized and expressed: '[t]he area looked completely different than it did on television' (Justin, United States, 5 August 2016).

In the email of an American woman visiting Tohoku with her husband, there is an undertone of frustration at what she might have felt as misinformation spread by the media, or generalizations coming from people who are not as interested as her in the disaster:

> When I told people in the US where I was going, quite a few asked if I was going to visit the reactor. The same happened when I came back and was giving a presentation on my trip. Although I said I had not been to Fukushima, people continued to ask questions about the nuclear disaster, which I was not prepared to discuss as learning about it was not part of my trip. (Shasta, United States, 16 June 2016)

Participants also remarked about the difference what they knew about the area from media and experiencing it as a tourist:

> (Before the visit to Japan) I had searched the Rikuzentakata area on Google maps to see its condition. To my surprise buildings and stores were listed on the map, however after zooming in I had realized that those facilities were no longer there. (Rishab, United States, 2 September 2016)

These stories and impressions evoke a network of negotiations, mediations and practices that create an affective map that is neither fixed nor stable (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Affective

mapping is an aesthetic technology that represents the historicity of one's affective experience and attunes it to the atmosphere where intentions are formed (Flatley, 2008). No affect is ever experienced for the first time, but is contained in an archive of its previous objects. In other words, the context of our article we use the term affective mapping to highlight that in texts written by participants we can find textual patterns that are culturally oriented, and inserted in the email as a way to make the reader understand the emotional and affective capacity of the experience, as it is perceived and felt by the post-disaster tourist.

In post-disaster places tourists engage with death, negotiate issues of 'imagination as the creation of images of things that have been present in the past but are absent now' (Robbins, 2010, p. 312). Death requires us to recall from imagination something that is situated in the past and will never be present in the same way again (Robbins, 2010). As one of the university students narrates:

> The entire time I was trying to image how the locals felt when the tsunami came into their town. Did they run to upper ground? Were they were I am standing, submerged in water that day or was a home built here? Did families see their loved ones get washed away before their eyes? Such thought would run through my head while touring the town. (Rishab, United States, 2 September 2016)

In this excerpt, it seems obvious that while visiting the area, the tourist was intertwining the 'real' experience, lived in the moment, with images from the past. As supported by the e-mail interviews the first author conducted, these multiple spaces exist for the tourist at the same time and multiple times exist in the same place. Tourists expect an apocalyptic landscape and are instead presented with a space that looks empty, but is instead filled to the brim with affective forces flowing and interacting in different times/spaces.

Conclusions

The approaches outlined in this paper analyse some of the ways in which affects and emotions can be evoked by tourists in post-disaster places. Far from wanting to cover all tools available to explore emotions and affects in e-mails, this paper offered a selection of tools that have been connected to inventive and non-representational methods, and provide further examples from the email interviews collected in the disaster-stricken towns of Tohoku. We proposed two such tools: emotionality of text and affective mapping.

In this article, we applied affective mapping and emotionality of texts to analyse linguistic features of emails (in particular of adjectives), imagework, as well as analyse the narratives and anecdotes participants detailed in their interviews. From the material collected, we can infer that the valence and intensity of the adjectives used to describe the disaster area, hint at the affects and emotions that originate in the participants and are experienced in such places. Such affects and emotions are subjective and personal, and yet, imagework, short stories and anecdotes show that some patterns are repeated, such as comparing the Japanese disaster to disasters closer to their own context and home country. Such is also the necessity to try to recompose the image of the catastrophe experienced as the audience from the screens of their televisions with the complex landscape of Japan six years after the disaster, where recovery and reconstruction dampen the image of apocalyptic destruction they expected.

It is impossible to offer an 'objective' representation of how people feel about and experience places of disaster, but a lot can be analysed from images and stories in their narratives. Accepting the partialness and contingency of this kind of research effort offers an opportunity to widen the scope of traditional methodologies, reinterpret them and complement them with ways 'that transcend the anxious culture of critique which has marked so much of the turn towards the cultural' (Latham, 2003). To do so, researchers should use strategies that in the appropriate context can offer a different insight, amongst which are included 'the collection of often overlooked forms of existing textual material or development of new approaches to texts and writing in order to grasp their affective dimensions' (Blackman & Venn, 2010, p. 9). Side-lining affects and emotions limits

understanding of the complexity of the tourist experience (Pritchard, Morgan, & Ateljevic, 2011), and the reasoning behind tours to post-disaster places. In this sense, borrowing from methods like imagework, emotionality of texts and analysis of stories and anecdotes brings to the surface aspects of the tourist's experience that in academia are often relegated to the background (see Buda, 2015; Pritchard, Morgan, & Ateljevic, 2011).

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