



Societies in the face of environmental vulnerabilities

International Thematic School
organised by Université Côte d'Azur's Society & Environment Graduate
School.

8-12 January 2024

○ Presentation

The International Thematic School (ITS) "**Societies facing environmental vulnerabilities**" is one of the scientific activities proposed by the Society & Environment Graduate School in order to treat human, social and environmental issues as a single object (<https://odyssee.univ-cotedazur.fr>). Supported by Université Côte d'Azur, it is open to all students in humanities and social sciences, regardless of their nationality.

Following the success of the first thematic school in January 2022, the ITS2024 aims to strengthen the individual and collective reflections of researchers, doctoral students and Master's students from different countries and different disciplines of human and social sciences. It provides a framework for exchange, cooperation and training.

The ITS 2024 differs from other training courses for Masters and PhD students by its resolutely multidisciplinary positioning and by its desire to consider research as an integral and inseparable part of the public debate. By encouraging exchanges between participants and supervisors from different disciplines and academic backgrounds, the International Thematic School aims to help young researchers to progress in the formulation, scientific positioning and practical implementation of their own research project.

○ Scientific objectives

Behind the apparent transparency of its etymology ("character of that which can be injured"), the notion of vulnerability, which the social sciences took hold of in a scattered manner from the 1970s onwards, hides a great complexity that the adjective environmental, itself polysemous, seems to accentuate. However, the very fluidity of the idea of environmental vulnerability(ies) reflects the



complexity of the interactions between societies and their environments, and it invites us to think about them in an interdisciplinary way.

Vulnerability can first of all be considered as a social reality, as an objectifiable - and therefore partially measurable and predictable - state of fragility in the face of natural hazards¹. Its corollary is the ability of societies to recover from injuries (resilience) through technical, political and social responses that can sometimes strengthen their defences. This long-standing approach has shown that there is nothing 'natural' about 'natural' disasters. The extent of the damage is largely the result of the society's vulnerability conditions and therefore of choices made prior to the occurrence of the natural hazard, whether in terms of occupation and development of space or access to and exploitation of resources. Moreover, the "natural disaster" systematically reveals and aggravates other fragilities which can be of social, economic, health and psychological origin.

On the other hand, but inseparably, the notion of vulnerability refers to different representations, to the way in which this notion is constructed locally and to the uses that the actors make of it. Such representations are also representative of the community's perception of its putative fragility in the face of natural hazards and, more broadly, of its environment. Again, these cultural constructs are weighted by other economic and social needs to the extent that certain individual or collective attitudes may have appeared to the expert, observer or researcher as objectively 'suicidal' when they responded to economic needs and/or different representations of the threat. A good example of this is the re-development, generation after generation, of settlements located in areas particularly exposed to environmental risks. In fact, these evolving and socially differentiated cultural constructions of vulnerability combine, in varying proportions, the selective memory of past experiences, the perception of present vulnerabilities and the projection into the uncertain future.

Around environmental vulnerabilities, the thematic school will bring together, in space and in time, many disciplines or branches of discipline: anthropology and sociology of risk, anthropology of disasters, environmental history, archaeology, geography in its multiple positions, social and cognitive psychology, law and political science.

Applications for the ITS 2024 may concern distant time periods - even if the notion is anachronistic and even if the sources of the investigation inevitably differ - our present time where the feeling of vulnerability sometimes turns into eco-anxiety and the operational projections to which the research may lead. They can consider the short time of the disaster, which can reveal fragility, at times a moment of awareness and always a strong moment of production of sources of all kinds. They can also contemplate longer temporalities in which insidious degradation of the environment, whether or not due to human activity, in particular the intensive exploitation of resources, goes unnoticed at first. All scales and methods of analysis can be considered and combined, from a bottom-up approach, as close as possible to the populations directly exposed, to expertise and intervention by States or international organisations. Although no region of the world is favoured, we hope that the school will enable us to compare the perception of environmental vulnerabilities of societies in the North and South. In the latter, voices have sometimes been raised early to challenge the Western dichotomy between the human and the 'natural' and communities have been able to maintain or develop practical and effective responses to environmental vulnerabilities. The active collaboration of the University of Costa Rica in the organisation of this school and the participation of Central American academics in its pedagogical team will help in this necessary decentring of the gaze and decompartmentalisation of disciplines, without which the notion of vulnerability cannot be truly apprehended and criticised.

¹ Some have a completely natural origin: earthquakes, hurricanes, volcanic eruptions; others have a partially natural origin: floods and landslides etc. Technological, industrial and man-made hazards will not be considered.



○ Organisation

Through thematic sessions, workshops, conferences and debates, The ITS 2024 will provide students with conceptual and methodological tools to help them construct their own research objects and develop the most appropriate methods in a reflexive and critical manner. It will consolidate emerging contemporary themes, help students to implement new research, and strengthen the dialogue between students, teachers and researchers in a perspective of mutual training.

- *Thematic sessions*

Three thematic sessions will be organised on the basis of students' research projects. The aim will be to bring together disciplinary issues and case studies from different places and times.

- *Conferences*

To open each thematic session, lectures will be offered. They will present epistemological and bibliographical statements on the subject.

- *Discussion of research projects*

Students will present their research projects during working sessions dedicated exclusively to the discussion of their work. During these sessions, comments from the teaching staff and other students will help them refine their approaches and their theoretical and methodological positions. The research projects will be sent to the teaching staff in advance so that they can read them in detail before the sessions. Debate facilitation will be entrusted to the coordinators.

- *Workshop*

At the end of the meeting, students will work independently to prepare group synthesis papers that will take stock of the progress made as well as the points that remain unclear.

Registration and practical information

Venue : Fréjus (Villa Clythia, CNRS)²

Timetable :

- Deadline for applications: ~~September 17th, 2023~~ extended to **October 1, 2023**
- Publication date of the results: **mid-October 2023**
- Publication of the detailed programme: **end of October 2023**
- Administrative registration for accepted students: **end of November 2023**
- Reception of students: **from January 7th, 2024**
- Thematic school: **8 - 12 January 2024**

Information : eur-odyssee.recherche@univ-cotedazur.fr

Languages :

Students will present their project in English, Spanish or French and questions may be asked in any of these three languages. However, the dominant language of the exchanges, for scientific questions as well as for practical information, will be French: a level of autonomous comprehension of this language (level B1-B2) is thus required from foreign candidates.

Teaching and scientific team :

- Juan José Alvarado, Universidad de Costa Rica, biologist.
- Maëlle Calandra, IRD, URMIS-CREDO, anthropologist.
- Julien Dellaux, Université Côte d'Azur, LADIE, jurist (to be confirmed).
- Stéphanie Dos Santos, IRD, LPED, socio-demographer.
- Dennis Fox, Université Côte d'Azur, ESPACE, geographer.
- Stéphane Frioux, Université Lumière Lyon 2, Larhra, historian.
- Anthony Goebel McDermott, Universidad de Costa Rica, historian.
- Olivier Langlois, CNRS, CEPAM, archaeologist (to be confirmed).
- Thierry Long, Université Côte d'Azur, LAPCOS, psychologist.
- Isabelle Milhabet, Université Côte d'Azur, LAPCOS, psychologist.
- Damienne Provitolo, CNRS, Géoazur, geographer.
- Adolfo Quesada, Universidad de Costa Rica, geographer.
- Mauricio Mora Fernández, Universidad de Costa Rica, geologist and seismologist.
- Quentin Megret, Université Côte d'Azur, UPR LAPCOS, ethnologist.

Organizing committee from our Graduate School :

- Chloé Barranco, communication officer.
- Frédérique Bertoncello, assistant director, archaeologist, CNRS, UMR CEPAM.
- Élisabeth Cunin, anthropologist, IRD, UMR URMIS, visiting researcher at Universidad de Costa Rica.
- Karine Emselem, pedagogy officer, geographer, UMR ESPACE.
- Xavier Huetz de Lempis, research officer, historian, UPR CMMC.
- Nina Ladkani, education officer.
- Myrina Meunier, project manager.
- Christian Rinaudo, director, sociologist, UMR URMIS.
- Monique Verrière, executive secretary.

² <https://www.caes.cnrs.fr/sejours/la-villa-clythia/>



 **To apply**

- Applicants must send a complete application by **October 1st, 2023** in pdf format, under the heading: **CandidateName_ITS2024.pdf**
- to the following e-mail address: eur-odyssee.recherche@univ-cotedazur.fr

The file will include:

- **A CV** specifying the academic background, in particular the honours obtained, the discipline, the level of study (Master or Doctorate), the institution to which the student belongs and the state of progress of the project (start-up, ongoing).
- **A presentation of the research project** (text of about 25,000 characters) with the following content:
 - Title
 - Objectives of the research
 - Research issues, with a particular emphasis on the student's positioning in relation to his/her subject, problem and/or method in the field
 - Links with the international school's theme
 - Indicative bibliography
- **Copies of diplomas**
- **Proof of level B2 in French level will be compulsory in case of selection.**

○ Number of participants

On the basis of the applications sent, the ITS 2024 pedagogical and scientific team will select 15 students.

○ Cost bearing

- The accommodation and food expenses of the selected students will be covered by the Graduate School (from the evening of January 7th 2024 to the afternoon of January 12th 2024).
- Transport costs will not be covered, except for selected students from our partner university in Costa Rica (UCR).

○ Certificate of participation

The Society & Environment Graduate School (Université Côte d'Azur) will issue a certificate of participation for the ITS 2024 that the student may use to obtain credits in the courses of his/her home university. For the evaluation and delivery of this certificate, the active participation of the student in the debates will be taken into account.