



International Summer School in Medical Anthropology  
Methods and Analysis Training for Planetary Care

## From Disasters to Planetary Care:

What the August 2017 mudslide in Sierra Leone can teach us about accountability, postcolonial urban experiences, and healthy cities in the Anthropocene

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Fourah Bay College in Freetown (Sierra Leone)

February 4 – February 14, 2019

Funded by the Volkswagen Foundation “Knowledge for Tomorrow”

### **Organizers:**

Sung-Joon Park (Martin-Luther-University Halle-Wittenberg, Germany)

Sylvanus Spencer (Fourah Bay College, Freetown, Sierra Leone)

Susan Erikson (Simon Fraser University, Canada)

David Kananizadeh (Martin-Luther-University Halle-Wittenberg, Germany)

### **Theme**

The international summer school “From disasters to planetary care” is concerned with the August 14 mudslide disaster that occurred in Freetown in 2017. After the experiences of civil war (1991-2002) and the recent Ebola epidemic (2014-2016), the mudslide is seen by Sierra Leoneans as yet another major national tragedy in which over 1000 fellow citizens died. Unlike the Ebola epidemic, it was a man-made disaster resulting from the massive degradation of natural and cultural landscapes in and around Freetown. Sierra Leoneans were not surprised that the mudslide took place, but they were quite surprised at the unprecedented scale of the disaster and they generally agree that it could have been prevented. How prevention is to be achieved in postcolonial African cities like Freetown, though, poses what urban planners have called a “wicked problem” (Rittel and Webber 1973), and is the subject of the proposed short course.

The challenge – future prevention of natural disasters – is inextricably tied up with issues of the wider urban contexts. Future prevention will not happen without addressing the interlinked issues of impoverished infrastructure, rapid population growth, land shortage, and environmental destruction. In this respect, the mudslide even urges us to radically rethink taken-for-granted assumptions about the ways disasters, postcolonial urban lifeworlds, and

infrastructures hang together. This rethinking furthermore requires an engagement with people inhabiting the city as well as with interdisciplinary scholars of urban studies, public health, and the social sciences.

The summer school suggests that pressing theoretical and practical questions about disasters can be answered by ethnographic evidence. Ethnographic sensibilities and method help us see how inhabiting and living with contradictory urban realities contribute to post-disaster response and care. As Mary Douglas argued, we may not be able to anticipate if anthropogenic transformations of nature, like global warming, will lead to the entire collapse of the planet's ecosystem or not. The more pressing questions must address "what kind of society can be envisaged that will be able to deliver the care" (Douglas 1992b, 259) in response to environmental risks and disasters. Keeping with this proposition, we aim to explore everyday practices of human and non-human becoming during and after disasters to illuminate ideas of human and planetary care.

In taking the mudslide as a case, we want to investigate how practices of precarious becoming are accounted for through the production of scientific evidence. In particular, we will interrogate how scientific accounts of the mudslide disaster have been shaped by methodologically and theoretical divergent modes of producing scientific evidence. Here questions arise like What counts as evidence? How is the credibility of scientific authority constructed? How do ethnographic methodologies and sensibilities illuminate disaster metrics?

## **Program**

Over the two weeks we will pursue these questions by following the iterative nature of anthropological inquiry. Anthropological inquiry does not proceed in a linear fashion but in cycles:

- ① Developing the Research Question;
- ② Designing the Research Inquiry;
- ③ Fieldwork/Exploring the Question/Data Collection,
- ④ Analyzing Data/Experience;
- ⑤ Write Up/Present Knowledge

In the first week of the summer school we will start our field exercises with a set of ethnographic guiding questions through which we engage the topics of the summer school from different angles. Site visits, lectures and seminar sessions provide a frame for continuously revising and reworking the guiding questions, the choice of methods, the analysis, etc., and finally reflecting upon the conditions under which each step has contributed to the production of knowledge. The cyclical pattern of anthropological inquiry is also a precondition for the production of relevant knowledge. Relevancy is a highly controversial term. It often limits knowledge to its instrumental dimension to solve certain problems in a certain context—without asking who determines what counts as a problem in the first place. By moving in cycles, we might find out that our initial definition of a problem does not resonate with those matters of concern put forth in social situations under scrutiny. The iterative nature of anthropological inquiry makes us sensible for such moments and by reflexive calibration we get to learn how social actors problematize, inquire and theorize in these situations.

<b>Meet Freetown Week</b> organized by <i>D Kananizadeh, L Matt, Susan Erikson, SJ Park, and S Spencer</i>					
Time	Day 1 / Feb 4 Mon Arrival	Day 2 / Feb 5 Tues	Day 3 / Feb 6 Wed	Day 4 / Feb 7 Thurs	Day 5 / Feb 8 Fri
10.00-11.30		① Students meet in the morning by Question Group (Facilitated by <i>D. Kananizadeh, L Matt, SJ Park, and S. Spencer</i> ) Talk through interest in Question. Modify Question if desirable. Build by-in to Question (important).	③ Site visits (DK will identify a site when in Freetown from Jan 16 onwards)	② Reflection on site visits based on fieldnotes in the groups	④ Workshop “First reflections about ‘communities’, the urban condition, and knowledge production in Sierra Leone” Convener: <i>SJ Park, S Spencer, S Erikson</i>
11.30-13.00		<b>Group 1</b> “How did the mudslide affect people’s lives?” <b>Group 2</b> “How do people organize care, how get people organized by the response” <b>Group 3</b> “Sensing the urban landscape through story tellings” <b>Group 4</b> “How to build a viable home?” <b>Group 5</b> “How to design a resilient city in the future”		③ Meeting with governmental and non-governmental agencies (DK will arrange this when in Freetown from Jan 16 onwards)	
13.00-14.00		LUNCH (all)			
14.00-15.30	Welcome Speech <i>S Spencer</i>  Introducing the program and key objectives Convener: <i>D Kananizadeh, SJ Park</i>	①-⑤ The Iterative Nature of Anthropological Inquiry Convener: <i>S Erikson</i>			
15.30-17.00	Dinner meeting for Sierra Leonean student participants and international student participants (all)	④ Keynote lecture “The mudslide and the degradation of cultural landscapes of Freetown” by <i>J Alie</i>	③ Keeping an ethnographic record / writing fieldnotes (individually)		<b>Time-Off</b>
		Dinner (all)			

Summer School "From disasters to planetary care: The August 2017 mudslide in Sierra Leone and what it means to become accountable in the Anthropocene"						
Time	Day 6 / Feb 9 / Sat "Knowing disasters"	Day 7 / Feb 10 / Sun "What difference does ethnographic Evidence make?"	Day 8 / Feb 11 / Sat "Politics and Disasters"	Day 9 / Feb 12 / Mon Policy Futures: Recommendations to Public Stewards	Day 10 / Feb 13 / Tue Policy Futures: Recommendations to Public Stewards	Day 11 / Feb 14 / "Presenting ethnographic evidence on care, accountability, and disaster"
10.00-11.30	④ Lecture: "How do catastrophic events become disasters: Different ways of knowing disasters" by <i>M Guggenheim</i>	② Lecture: "Urban ecologies of care and affliction" by <i>AM Simone</i>	④ Lecture: "Governing the city: between accountability and care" by <i>S Shepler</i>	⑤ Workshop "Presenting ethnographic evidence to the publics" Convener: <i>U Beisel</i>	③ Visiting communities and meetings with governmental and nongovernmental agencies involved in the mudslide response	Lecture: "Notions of Future" by <i>A Farman</i>
11.30-13.00	②, ④ Seminar: Studying Sovereigns Convener: <i>S Shepler</i>	② Seminar: Methods of Critical Ethnography: Ethnographic methods and research ethics in engaging human, environments and postcolonial history Conveners: <i>S Erikson</i> and <i>S Spencer</i>	②, ④ Seminar: From matters of fact to matters of care: Everyday preparedness in urban lifeworlds Convener: <i>D Kananizadeh</i>	③ Visiting communities and meetings with governmental and nongovernmental agencies involved in the mudslide response		Seminar: "Designing Futures, Making Evidence" Convener: <i>R Rottenburg</i>
13-14.00	LUNCH (all)	LUNCH (all)	LUNCH (all)			LUNCH (all)
14-15.30	②, ④ Seminar: "The production of evidence: numbers, story tellings, and other forms of knowing" by <i>SJ Park and A Mari-Saez</i>	④ Seminar: "Does Science de-politicize Accountability?" by <i>M Burchardt</i>	Group time to organize key insights into questions. Prepare 10 min presentation of key insights.			Review Roundtable: "Planetary care and anthropology at Fourah Bay College" Conveners: <i>S Spencer</i>
15.30-17.00	Group time to think through Question	Group time to think through Question				
19.00	Dinner (all)					Dinner (all)

## Venues, Transport, and Numbers

We booked the following two hotels.

- 1) Lacs Villa Guesthouse, 3A – 9 Cantonment Road, Off Kingharman Road, Freetown.
- 2) Jam Lodge, 18B Off Motor Main Road.

The specific room allocation will follow soon. Lacs Villa Guesthouse provides a pick-up service taking you from Lungi Airport to the hotels. In case you miss a connection, please, let us know, so that we can rearrange the pick-up schedule.

The lectures and seminars from in the second week will take place at

- 1) *Miatta Conference Center.*

A useful map of Freetown can be found on <https://www.openstreetmap.org/>.

Please note the following local numbers

- 1) Sung-Joon Park: +232 78 02 92 18
- 2) David Kananizadeh: +232 30 39 44 47 / WhatsApp: +49 177 93 80 959
- 3) Lacs Villa Guesthouse: +232 76 60 17 62

## Participants

Name		Arrival	Departure
Abdelwahed, Inas	Participant	02.02. (01.10)	13.02 (01.55)
Alie, Joe	Lecturer	resident	
Baann, Cecilie	Participant	03.02.	15.02.
Bangura, Augusta Musa Kabba	Participant	resident	
Beisel, Uli	Lecturer	?	?
Burchardt, Marian	Lecturer	07.02. (19.15)	15.02. (17.10)
Dost, Franziska	Participant	01.02. (17.45)	17.02. (19.10)
Erikson, Susan	Organizer/Lecturer	03.02.	15.02.
Farman, Abou	Lecturer	09.02. (00:30)	14.02. (21.05)
Götzelmann, Thomas	Participant	03.02. (17.45)	17.02. (19.10)
Guaita, Lucia	Participant	02.02. (19.15)	16.02. (21.05)
Guggenheim, Michael	Lecturer	07.02. (19.15)	14.02. (21.05)
Hanson, Tommy Matthew	Participant	resident	
Höpner, Kim	Participant	03.02. (17.45)	15.02. (19.10)
Kabba, Mohamed	Participant	resident	
Kamara, Ishmael	Participant	resident	

Kananizadeh, David	Organizer	03.02.	15.02.
Karim, Abdul Jalloh	Participant	resident	
Kayumba, Jean-Paul	Participant	03.02. (16.25)	16.02. (07.50)
Koroma, Alpha	Participant	resident	
Mari-Saez, Almudena	Lecturer	08.02	14.02.
Massaquoi, Mambu	Participant	resident	
Matt, Laura	Organizer	03.02.	15.02.
Metz, Jasmin	Participant	03.02. (17.45)	17.02. (19.10)
Ndawa, Samuel	Participant	resident	
Otto, Bettina	Participant	03.02. (16.25)	18.02. (07.50)
Park, Sung-Joon	Organizer/Lecturer	03.02.	15.02.
Plowman, Christina	Participant	03.02. (17.45)	17.02. (19.10)
Preusser, Florian	Participant	03.02. (16.25)	15.02. (07.50)
Puyvallee, Antoine de Beng	Participant	02.02. (19.15)	14.02. (21.05)
Rottenburg, Richard	Lecturer	08.02. (16.25)	16.02. (07.50)
Shepler, Susan	Lecturer	08.02. (17.45)	15.02 (19.10)
Simone, AbdouMaliq	Lecturer	08.02. (17.45)	15.02. (19.10)
Spencer, Sylvanus	Organizer/Lecturer	resident	
Spyropoulou, Despoina	Participant	03.02. (17.45)	15.02. (19.10)
Walter, Rebekka	Participant	01.02. (17.45)	17.02. (19.10)