Geographies of affect in places of death and disaster: Tohoku, Japan, after 3.11
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CHAPTER 7

MIRACLE BOATS AND OTHER WONDERS: LOCATING AFFECT IN THE NARRATIVES OF RECOVERY AND REMOVAL OF JAPANESE POST-DISASTER DEBRIS
7.1 INTRODUCTION: HOMECOMING
On April 22, 2015, an empty fishing boat washed ashore on the coast of Alan Davis Beach, in O’ahu, Hawai’i. The nameplate on the boat identified it as the Daini Katsumaru, a 20-foot vessel from Japan. The boat reached the Hawai’ian shore four years after the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami, which devastated the coast of Japan on March 11, 2011. Upon learning of the ship’s discovery, the Japanese government and the Department of Land and Natural Resources of Hawai’i, instead of dismantling the vessel, arranged for it to be shipped back by a larger vessel, the Miyagimaru. ‘We’re thrilled that the Miyagimaru is able to take this boat back to Ogatsu in Miyagi Prefecture’, said Suzanne Case, chairwoman of the Department (Devera, 2016). The return to the town of Ogatsu, heralded by the media as a miraculous event, was orchestrated to coincide with the fifth anniversary of the disaster, March 11, 2016. The boat is now an integral part of the memorial display at the Ogatsu Cultural Centre (Miyagi Prefecture).

The Daini Katsumaru is just a minuscule portion of the 5 million tons of debris washed away in the Pacific Ocean on March 11 (Norio et al., 2011). While most debris was lost at sea, sunk, or destroyed, from time to time an item would reach foreign coasts and be traced back to its origin place and owner. Since September 2015, 64 items have been found and identified on the coasts of the Japanese island of Okinawa, in the United States, and in Canada. However, just a small fraction of these displaced items is brought back to Japan to be memorialized.

In our paper we consider media narratives of the 2011 debris, to investigate processes of spatialization of affect and their role in memory and heritage-making in post-disaster Japan. In addition to this, our article encompasses a focus on the political uses of affect for heritage-making purposes (see Closs Stephens, 2016; Curti et al., 2011; Edensor & Sumartojo, 2015; Tolia-Kelly, 2006). We illustrate how discourses around the spatiality of debris and its use for heritage
and memory, forage national political discourses on reconstruction and resilience, of which such items become catalysts, instrumental to reaffirm political motives promoted by the Japanese institutions and media. We borrow from geographical and cultural theories of affect (see Gregg & Seigworth, 2010; Lorimer, 2008; Massumi, 2002; Ngai, 2005; Thrift, 2008), atmospheres and their political charge (Anderson, 2006; 2014; Edensor, 2012; Edensor & Sumartojo, 2015; McCormack, 2008), and affective heritage (see Blackman, 2012; Dixon, 2016; Tolia-Kelly, Waterton & Watson, 2017). We support Sianne Ngai’s definition of affect as distinguished from emotion in its intensity, not quality (Ngai, 2005). We contend, as supported by Divya Tolia-Kelly, Emma Waterton, and Steve Watson’s edited book Heritage, Affect and Emotion: Politics, practices and infrastructures (2017), that processes of heritage and memory-making frame narratives, practices and material remnants in a complex affective performance, that in our case study mimics the allegoric journey of post-disaster recovery undertaken by Japan. By extolling the affective potential carried by these narratives, we claim that textual and visual media narratives are imbued with affect through the repetition of specific spatial movements that form the strenuous travel of certain items from displacement to return home, and culminate with the spatial re-inscription of the object in its origin place, or in a place of meaning, where it is crystalised as heritage. The performances and narrations involved in this final act of re-implacement create a resting place, a centripetal affective field for memory and heritage, a localized space in which the value of the debris reaches its affective peak and is crystallized as vessel of hope. Conversely, the larger, undifferentiated mass of debris is removed and the landscape is cleaned to hide the daunting remnants and make space for new buildings and new lives.

The materials for this paper have been collected as part of a wider project conducted in the Japanese North-eastern coast across 2016 and 2017. For the purpose of this paper, we focused on archival and media materials collected during and after the fieldwork. Such materials include newspaper articles, both Japanese and international; Japanese and American official reports; blog entries; and other social media such as Facebook and Twitter. The data has been analysed following narrative analysis, non-representational methods and inventive methods (Anderson & Ash, 2013; Lury & Wakeford, 2012; Thrift, 2008; Vannini, 2015).

This article is divided in four parts. First, we review literature that has proved influential to define affect and its spatiality (Ansaloni & Tedeschi, 2016; Edensor & Sumartojo, 2015; Gregg & Seigworth, 2010; Thrift, 2004; Tolia-Kelly, 2006). We frame the ever-changing affective atmospheres with which these narratives are imbued, and the subtle political value of affect in designing and interpreting post-disaster landmarks and practices. We follow work on atmospheres (Anderson, 2006, 2014; McCormack, 2008) and emphasise on the existence of diverse active intensities in affective endeavours (Martini & Minca, 2018). In this context, we elaborate on the implications of spatiality of affect in memory and heritage creation (Curti, 2008; Till, 2005; Tolia-Kelly, Waterton, & Watson, 2017). Secondly, we offer an overview of the 2011 Great Eastern Japan Disaster, focusing on how both the Japanese and United States governments have partaken in policies on the management of the debris both on land and at sea. Third, we describe the methods of data collection and analysis used to extract moments of affect from textual sources, and we reflect on the use of non-representational, inventive and creative methodologies. Finally, we analyse media discourses on debris to show how, while the general debris mass narratives focus on removal, certain special items are elevated and popularized by politically-oriented narratives as affective symbols of the 2011 disaster.

7.2 AFFECT, SPACE, HERITAGE
The affective turn has been prompted by advancements in critical studies related to issues of gender, power, and representation. It developed in a broad range of fields such as geography (Anderson, 2006; Davidson & Bondi, 2004; Edensor, 2012; Pile, 2010; Thien, 2005), political sciences (Cooper, 2011; Massumi, 2015), feminist and postcolonial studies (Ahmed, 2004; Clough, 2007; Liljeström & Paasonen, 2010), anthropology (Richard, & Rudnyckyj, 2009;
Rutherford, 2016; White, 2017), urban studies (Ansaloni & Tedeschi, 2016; Bille et al., 2015), psychology and psychoanalysis (Sedgwick & Frank, 1995; Tomkins, 1962; Wetherell, 2015). In geography, it refers to a shift to genuine considerations of emotions, feelings and affects, connected by fluid networks constantly moving and becoming (Dixon, 2014). It focuses on ‘how life takes shape and gains expression in shared experiences, everyday routines, fleeting encounters, embodied movements, precognitive triggers, practical skills, affective intensities, enduring urges, unexceptional interactions and sensuous dispositions’ (Lorimer, 2005, p. 84). These volatile yet ordinary moments ‘give no advance notice of what it will become’ (Simpson, 2014, p. 329), but they make critical differences to our experiences of space and place (Thrift, 2004). In line with Ben Anderson’s definition, we understand affect as ‘a transpersonal capacity which a body has to be affected (through an affection) and to affect (as the result of modifications)’ (Anderson 2006, p. 735, emphasis in the original), a moment of unformed and unstructured potential realized beyond or outside of consciousness (Shouse, 2005). It involves an array of ‘modalities, competencies, properties and intensities of different texture, temporality, spatiality and velocities. These act on the body and are transmitted by bodies and produced through bodies’ (Lorimer, 2008, p. 552).

In some accounts affects have been separated from emotions relying on the idea that the volatile, abstract topological space of affect can find temporary stability and actualization in an emotion (Massumi, 2002; Pile, 2010; Simondon, 2001), as a sort of translation process (Curti et al., 2011). As Steve Pile (2010) accounts, there have been attempts to generalize affect as pre-personal, other-than-conscious expression of intensity not easily defined through language and representation (Massumi, 2002), while emotion as personal, conscious and sociocultural expression of this felt intensity (Davidson & Bondi, 2004). Others recognize affects as intertwined and inseparable from feelings, emotions, actions, practices and bodily responses (Ahmed, 2004; Bondi, 2005; Davidson et al., 2005; Edensor, 2012; Wetherell, 2013), or differing from emotion in degrees of intensity, rather than essence (Ngai, 2005; Richard & Rudnicky, 2009). We believe that the fuzzy border of affects are not a limitation of affect itself, but of certain Cartesian approaches to knowledge (Martini & Buda, 2018), and align with a number of academics who believe a distinction is not possible or useful (Ahmed, 2004; Anderson, 2014; Gregg & Seigworth, 2010; Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos, 2016; Wetherell, 2015).

We support Siânne Ngai’s analysis that the not-yet-formed potential of affective intensities escapes articulation, and could be considered akin to Raymond Williams’s definition of ‘structures of feelings’, which do not ‘await definition, classification, or rationalization before they exert palpable pressures and set effective limits on experience and action’ (Williams, 1977, p. 132). As affective intensities lie ‘at the very edge of semantic availability’ (Williams, 1977, p. 132), they create difficulties for materialist analysis, nonetheless remains analysable in or as effect (Massumi, 2002, p. 260), as social transmission of intensity across human and non-human bodies (Clough, 2010), and thus holds the potential to be contextually spatialized and located. Far from being inherently inaccessible, affect embraces the ‘relational and political because it is always dependent on differentiating interactions, or affections, between (different) bodies’ (Curti et al., 2011), as when affect impresses on a body it gives way to a perceivable locus of contact at the intersection of potentiality and material actualization.

A focus on processes of affective place-making allows for studying the materiality and potentiality for dis/connectedness (Berlant, 2012) occurring in the momentary relatedness of a wide array of human and non-human elements that affect and are affected (Ahmed, 2006). Such relatedness is spatially situated, relentlessly negotiated, and emotionally expressed, depending on the outcomes of a specific encounter (Ansaloni & Tedeschi, 2016). The spatiality of affect has been conceptualized as constitutively plastic (Angerer, 2014), a transmission of intensity that implies a place of origin and a destination, a distribution across different, multidimensional understandings of space (Massumi, 1995), through virtual and habitual practices (Bissel, 2015). To consider the grounded, perceivable, material charge of affect in/on places, we draw on the concept of affective atmosphere,
which has been applied in a number of fields, including geography (see Adey, 2010; Anderson, 2006; 2014; Edensor, 2012; Edensor & Sumartojo, 2015; McCormack, 2008), media studies (Ash, 2013; Hollett & Ehret, 2014; Pink & Leder Mackley, 2016), and social psychology (Wetherell, 2013, 2015). The word atmosphere recalls to an intuitive physicality that could be of descriptive use in affective analysis of space, as in common imaginary it is already framed as situated at the intersection of potentiality and materiality, opening up to possible generative moments and contextual actualizations. Atmospheres are ‘corporeal expressions in bodily feelings’ (Anderson, 2006, p.736), that ‘point to a broad array of phenomena, including transpersonal intensity, environment, aura, tone in literature, wave of sentiment, sense of place’ (Closs Stephens, 2016, p.182). In atmospheres, affects are brought to the forefront and, at the same time, they are recognized as inherently inseparable from bodily responses, emotions, and perceptions, and always charged with historical, political, and ethical elements (see Adey, 2010; Anderson, 2014; Closs Stephens, 2016; Edensor & Sumartojo, 2015; McCormack, 2008). Affective experiences can be, indeed, anchored in historical, political, and processual interactions between human beings and place (Tolia-Kelly, 2006; Kobayashi et al., 2011) to which bodies attune through agency, expectations, habits, and objectives (Duff, 2010).

In heritage studies, affective analysis can offer a perspective to extol the subjective, fluid relationships to place, and the political charge with which such places are imbued. Moreover, affective analysis of heritage offer a critique of the predominance of representational thought, and the recognition of a broad relational spectrum between heritage and their recipients, which subjectively engage with heritage and the memories associated to it (Waterton & Watson, 2013). Work on the felt domains of heritage creation, management and experiences it’s still in its inception, but in recent year a growing number of publications (see Byrne, 2009, 2013; Crang & Tolia-Kelly, 2010; MacDonald, 2009; Waterton & Watson, 2013) has generated challenges to ‘the format, engagements and paradigms through which we articulate heritage at sites, in scholarship and in practice’ (Tolia-Kelly, Waterton & Watson, 2017). Affective heritage requires ‘an ethos that apprehends the world less as a series of sites from which to extract representational meaning, but as a field of processes and practices through which the ethical sensibilities of thinking may emerge’ (McCormack, 2003, p. 489).

There is an apparent contradiction between the non-representational order of affect and the representational order of memorialization and ideology, but precisely in the ‘transmogrification’ (Dixon et al., 2016) of one into the other, lies the key of this essay. As Jacob Miller and Vincent del Casino note: ‘Memorial sites [...] are actively fashioned as experiential and textual devices to shape a particular affective response and emotional reaction from the visitor’ (2018, p. 2). Attempts at transferring affective intensities into dialectical structures often provoke an array of dissonant effects, ranging from affirmation to negation, from identification to obliteration. Bridging between extremes, the work of storytelling (re)signifies space, time, and political Others (Ivy, 1995, p. 42) through the mediatization of the disaster’s aftermath, following the ‘concentration on key affective sites [and the] magnification of the small details’ (Thrift, 2008, p. 65). Such heritage is apprehended subjectively and performatively, as people can respond differently to a heritage site. However, ‘these feelings, their affects, may in part be framed by the way that site is conjured and evoked discursively, visually or popularly’ (Waterton & Watson, 2013). There is also an effort to understand the dynamics of engagement with heritage, as ‘the idea of performativity positions our practices, actions, relations, memories, as emerging contexts too’ (Blackman, 2012, p. 21).

In the case of the Japanese post-2011 debris and its memorialization, the first means of relation with the event is through global media. Media and technologies wean an inextricable net of affects that become available for manipulation (Clough, 2008) at a sort of ‘infra-empyrical’ state (Hansen, 2004), where constantly performing sets of relays and junctions (Thrift, 2004, p. 172) provide the background of generative moments of intensity. As Blackman (2012) suggests, technologies of attention, of listening or of memory are indeed ontologically part of affect, but this raises the question of how the infra-empirical materiality of affect is transmitted. We contend, following Clough (2010) that the
potential materiality of affect can be conceptualized as in-formational, ‘moving from the cybernetic conceptualization of information to in-formation conceptualized as intensity or force immanent to matter’ (Clough, 2010, p.225), localized in a specific space when peaks of intensity are attained. These peaks are more affective than conscious, as mediatized experiences are felt but not lived. In fact, in the context of post-disaster media, visual witnessing facilitates ‘the deframing of disastrous events in a way that tethers global engagement and attention directly to the flow of affect’ (McCosker, 2013).

After the 2011 disaster, the incessant ominous and highly emotive media coverage favoured the development of an attunement between the audience and the disaster narratives and images flowing on their screens (Massumi, 2011). Such attunements involve suggestibility, subliminal and supraliminal (un)consciousness (Blackman, 2012). The significance of affect in these omnipresent narratives, ‘rests upon the fact that in many cases the message consciously received may be of less import to the receiver of that message than his or her nonconscious affective resonances with the source of the message’ (Shouse, 2005). In fact, as cultural critic Eric Shouse asserts, the power of media lies ‘not so much in their ideological effects, but in their ability to create affective resonances independent of content or meaning’ (in Leys, 2011).

The fascination with disasters and tragedies rests on a desire to confront what is in excess of signification (Doane, 2006, p. 213), as well as invoking ideologically and politically oriented narratives of hope, empathy, and of an imagined community (Cottie, 2009, p. 51) that can be discursively materialized in heritage sites. Memory is always constructed, interactive and inter-relational, and cannot be separated from affects (Curtis, 2008). Heritage, as a materialized social memory, is constructed not only by physical landmarks, but ‘through the nodal points of the body and its being and doing in a world that is both felt and expressive’ (Tolia-Kelly, Waterton & Watson, 2017). By engaging in cultural performance and memory-making, the past and the present exist in a dialectic flux, a topography of memory to make the connection between past and present seem permanent, tangible, and spatially situated (Till, 2005). The debris selected for memorialization is infused with politically-designed narratives that express a message to the community historically, politically and emotionally connected to them (White & Frew, 2013). In this process, affect could resonate and be perceived as matter and materiality that are not stiffly grounded and bounded, but ‘lively, elemental, excessive, forceful, interrogative, distributed, more-than-solid, more-than-earthly, emergent, and in process’ (Merriman & Jones, 2017, p.3). The atmospheric networks created by heritage landmarks and memories, moreover, emerge and dissipate in contexts that account also for the historical and political (Edensor & Sumartojo, 2015).

7.3 THE JOURNEY OF JAPANESE DEBRIS AFTER MARCH 2011

Before 2011, Japan was held to example as a golden standard of excellence for prevention and recovery policies in case of natural disasters. Then, on March 11 at 2.46 pm, the country was violently rocked by a magnitude 9.0 earthquake, the third highest ever recorded in history (Norio et al. 2011, p. 34). Thirty minutes later, the relentless aftershocks of the earthquake caused a tsunami that rose over 30 feet high in some areas, washing away buildings and people alike, taking around 20 thousands lives. The earthquake damaged the structure of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant, and the subsequent tsunami flooded it, causing a failure in the cooling system and a nuclear meltdown three of the six reactors. The toll, as reported by the Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai – Japan Broadcasting Corporation, or NHK, accounted to ‘190,000 buildings damaged, among which 45,700 were totally destroyed. The damaged buildings in Miyagi, Iwate, and Fukushima were 29,500, 12,500, and 2,400, respectively’ (NHK World, 2011). Millions of tons of rubble and debris were produced in Japan because of the earthquake and tsunami, of which 5 million tons are estimated to have sunk or still floating at sea (Norio et al., 2011, p. 36). Since 2011, the Japanese government has committed more than 25 trillion yen (around 250 billion US dollars) for the recovery of the Tohoku region, establishing a 10-year national Reconstruction
In the days after the disaster, 470,000 people were displaced either in evacuation centres or elsewhere, and many have yet to return or cannot. As the tsunami receded, it carried with it a staggering amount of wreckage. The assemblage of buoyant materials was initially captured by satellite imagery and aerial photos of the waters surrounding Northern Japan immediately after the tsunami (NOAA, 2013). In the following months, this mass became a problem not only for Japan, but for the countries that became the involuntary recipient of the so-called Japan Tsunami Marine Debris (henceforth JTMD). JTMD ‘ranges from derelict vessels and large floating docks to small household items, with fishing gear and construction items of various sizes and compositions in between’ (NOAA 2013).

Marine debris is an important threat to ocean diversity and health (Sutherland et al., 2010), as it impacts wildlife, human health, aesthetic values, and the economy (Criddle et al., 2009). According to the United States’ National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (henceforth NOAA), which monitored the quantity and trajectory of the debris, the JTMD such as fishnets or small boats can have numerous adverse impacts on both the physical and biological environment, affecting fish habitats, beaches and migratory species (Murray, Maximenko, & Lippiatt, 2018). This concern has become relevant especially for the United States, as the predominant drift in the North Pacific moves eastward toward the Pacific Coast of North America and Hawai’i (Howell et al., 2012). Indeed, the country recorded an astonishing 100,000 items of cumulative debris landings to North America in four years (Murray, Maximenko, & Lippiatt, 2018).

In the aftermath of the disaster, the Japanese government found itself in a difficult situation in relation to waste management, which marine debris technically is a part of. Waste management is dealt with at the municipal level, with possible financial help from the Prefecture or the national government. Nevertheless, most coastal municipalities of Tohoku were devastated and entire towns were wiped off by the tsunami. Municipal workers were either dead or traumatized. Moreover, the national government had to mobilize so many financial, human, and technical resources, that marine debris was simply considered not as important as the effort in the immediate recovery and revitalization of the hit communities and the country.

The first notes giving guidance on how to confront the debris issue came on 16 May 2011 from the Ministry of the Environment, detailing guidelines on how to dispose of the debris on land and on the coast. The municipalities started devising plans on how to retrieve and dispose of the wreckage sunk within the port facilities area (UNEP Report, 2012). However, there was no response on what to do with the debris lost at sea, which within days was so large, patches of it were visible on satellite images (UNEP Report, 2012). The official website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet offers a Q&A page in which all issues relating to the 2011 JTMD are detailed. In fact, the priorities of the Japanese government are listed as such:

1. Investigation of the drifting conditions of buoyant materials by collecting information from navigating vessels;
2. Estimation of the total amount of offshore drifting objects;
3. Prediction of trajectories of offshore drifting objects;
4. Information sharing and exchange of opinions among Japan-US related organizations and experts. (Q&A on Oceanic drifting materials, 2013, translated from Japanese).

Mathematical models have been developed, correctly predicting that most of the floating debris would hit the North American and Canadian coasts. The Japanese government created a 6 million dollars fund, which was used by NOAA and the Canadian government to partly cover the expenses of the debris removal. In fact, NOAA had to provide funds to help the removal of a dock, which landed within the Olympic National Park along the coast of Washington state. Its dismantling required an astonishing $628,000. Alaska and Hawai’i even received direct funds from the Japanese government to survey and assess the scope of the problem. The state of Alaska alone spent over $200,000 on aerial surveys (NOAA, 2013).
The wreckage had an impact also on collective imaginary. Sensationalistic American media created ad-hoc headlines with the terrifying possibility of radioactive materials turning up on their shores. The same news were reported by Japanese media with a tone akin to stupor and wonder at the idea that living organisms could live so long and be transported so far from Japan, but radiations are usually not mentioned in Japanese accounts. At the moment of writing, the majority of the debris on Japanese land has been removed to make space for new buildings, new tsunami walls, and new infrastructures. While American media seems to favour sensationalistic narratives, Japanese discourses on removal are peppered with the idea of ‘turning a new leaf’ or ‘starting anew’. As we will contend in our discussion there is a purposeful juxtaposition in which performances and narratives on removing the sight of the debris overlap with the erasure of the trauma and pain the Japanese population was subject to. Nonetheless, one small part composed of some items recognized as special, has become the subject of narratives and has been charged with an affective value that encompasses the personal stories of the previous owners of the objects, becoming stand-in for affective politics of resilience and hope.

7.4 METHODS
The materials for this paper have been collected as part of broader individual projects that the authors conducted in the Japanese North-eastern coast of the Tohoku region, across 2016 and 2017 (18 months). The extensive fieldwork conducted has proven useful in getting acquainted with the post-disaster area, the issue of heritage and memory-making in post-disaster Japan, as well as some informal, preliminary information about the debris situation and its memorialization. However, for the purpose of this article, we focus on archival material collected at the IRIDeS (International Research Institute for Disaster Studies), the Archive for the 2011 Disaster, at Tōhoku University; on recognized news sources (15 international newspaper and magazine articles and 10 Japanese newspapers and magazine articles, list available at the end of this chapter); official reports on the 2011 JTMD, compiled by American sources (NOAA, Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources), United Nations organizations (UNEP), and Japanese government-related institutions (Reconstruction Agency, Kantei Cabinet of the Prime Minister); Japanese and American television news on the debris; comments from social media such as Facebook and Twitter; blogs and forums.

We favoured a narrative approach, identifying textual patterns in newspaper articles, and social media outputs (and, with minor incidence, also in reports and archival material) that referred to practices, responses, actions that we could relate to moments of affect. In fact, the dissemination of news through social media facilitates feelings of engagement (Dean, 2010; Karatzogianni & Kuntsman, 2012; Van Dijck, 2013). To frame such dialectics we use Sarah Ahmed’s (2004) ‘emotionality of text’, which investigates how emotions are invoked, performed and defined in the text (Ahmed, 2004). A wide array of inventive, creative, and non-representational methods has been published (Macpherson, 2010; Angel & Gibbs, 2013; Lorimer, 2008; Lury & Wakeford, 2012; Sumartojo & Pink, 2018; Vannini, 2015), which focus on the mundane, sensuous, relational, affective aspects of encounters. An analysis of affect and atmospheres done on textual materials dictates a shift in understanding the role of text, not as fixed set of rules, but as processual, enactive, performative sensibilities, which incessantly move, relate, and become (McCormack, 2003; Sumartojo & Pink, 2018). They are transmitted between bodies, and exist as autopoietic movement that generates and is generated (Adey, 2015), as the media texts produced reverberate affectively with an audience and activate fear, solidarity, hope, pain. We recognize that labels such ‘hope’ and ‘pain’ can never fully capture atmospheres, but as they are inherently elusive, an analysis requires an approximation that directs to ‘the categories by which people might understand their experiences as atmospheric in their own terms’ (Sumartojo & Pink, 2018). It is ‘the way that people feel about things that make atmospheres perceptible: anticipation, foreknowledge and pre-existing views of different material and immaterial elements play a crucial role in how atmospheres are co-constituted and perceived’ (Sumartojo, 2016).
When we talk about atmosphere, we acknowledge that media output, written and visual, have a powerful role in determining affects and even atmospheres, as they mediate people’s experience with disaster and other news, creating anticipations, expectations, opinions (Edensor, 2012; Papacharissi, 2015). The knowledge produced by these heterogeneous methodologies is contextual and non applicable to all situations. Nonetheless, we contend that by using Ahmed’s emotionality of text, as well as giving attention to the rhythms, keywords, tones, metaphor and other linguistic features that can carry emotional and affective value, we can gather an understanding in moments of affect, and in instances of engineering and creation of ad-hoc atmospheres aimed at stimulating certain reactions in the readers and viewers. These narratives evolve with time, as the articles collected refer to different years and elaborate on different parts of the disappearance, retrieval and return home of the debris, possibly impacting audiences in different ways. An analysis grounded in the specific case study of spatialization of affects in heritage-making processes can give us new insights in the affective moments unconsciously or with intent, traces of agency and rhythm that are often hinted at or evoked just under the surface of texts (Martini & Buda, 2018b).

7.5 DISCUSSION

7.5.1 FRAGMENTS OF ANGUISH: REMOVING AND FORGETTING

In 2012, during a visit to the Japanese island of Hashima, a visual artist (Carl Lavery), a geographer (Deborah Dixon), and a performance theorist (Lee Hassall) enacted a ‘dialectical exorcism’ in order to preserve the island’s tragic past against the whitewashing de-historicization of the perspective registration as a UNESCO heritage site. Hashima has been a wartime Korean forced labour coalmine and prison, and what now remains of it is scattered debris squeezed between buildings in ruin. ‘If an exorcism rids us of monsters’ Hassall explains ‘then a dialectical exorcism aims to reverse the process [...] [I]t seeks to deify the monstrous, to make it visible, to give it consistency’ (Lavery et al., 2014, p. 2578). Much in the same vein, the debris left to fill abandoned spaces after the 2011 disaster needed to be made sense of, interpreted with a ‘dialectical exorcism’ to unravel the trauma and pain, to materialize – and localize – the affects lingering around what is left of the disaster.

During the dozens of earthquake aftershocks and the relentless, returning waves of tsunami that washed the coast and the inland for hours, the landscape opened up like a bleeding wound. As collapsed buildings, boats, exposed wires, cars and all sorts of everyday broken objects were found covering the whole Sanriku coast. The orderly, common landscape mutated in sudden, violent absence, which became affectively charged as space lost its cohesive structure. As the tsunami penetrated inland, towns and roads became a chaotic assemblage, emergent, indeterminate, and provisional: the socio-spatial formation of ‘debris’. The singularity of objects was lost, and places collapsed back into spaces, laden with scattered, but omnipresent, reminders of the unsettling physical and psychological trauma caused by the disaster.

In these circumstances affect emerges as a durational, relational process (Gregg & Seigworth 2010) through which the juxtaposition of ‘the space as it was before’ and the ‘meaningful meaninglessness’ of the debris creates ‘fragments of anguish’ (Lavery et al. 2014, p. 2581) where the unthinkable is materialized. In the case of the Japanese debris floating towards American shores, such materialization brought to attention by American newspaper articles and newscasts, situates the affect of fear and terror into objects that invade the national and personal intimate borders. Sensationalistic media fuel the atmosphere of danger around these items. The Daily Star titles: ‘Lost Fukushima ghost ship washes ashore in Hawaii with MUTANT creatures on board’ (McKeown, October 12, 2017). This materialization of fear has an affective quality, as it can move in and between bodies to actively create associations between cusps that exist within materialities (Abrahamsson & Simpson, 2011), as there is ‘no definable limit to the penetration of self onto world and world onto self, no place where one’s identity neatly ends and the social environment obdurately begins’ (Katz, 1999, p.16). On the receiving
side, Internet users comment on sensationalistic articles. Comments such as ‘The US Government in cooperation with some west coast states would be wise to start burning this mass at sea’ and ‘I hope the beachcombers have geiger counters!’ show affective reactions, all enveloped in a confuse fear of invasion by radiations, mutant creatures, and unwanted masses of items.

In Japan, on the other hand, the removal of the debris mass is a distinctively spatial process underlined by narratives of getting rid of the pain, ‘making space’ for recovery and reconstruction, erasing any visible memento of both the disaster and the difficult emotional and affective traumas experienced by the Tohoku people. Affects, as potential flowing between bodies, bleed into places in unpredictable forms and with unexpected intensities. Places of disaster negotiate painful pasts, ethically problematic situations, and strong emotional and affective reactions from locals and audiences alike, whose intensity in the interaction with space resonates in in unexpected and sometimes contradictory ways.

An example is provided by the ship Kyōtokumaru, which belongs to Kesennuma (Miyagi Prefecture). The Kyōtokumaru, a 360 tons tuna trawler, was lifted by the waves and travelled 750 metres inland, before landing on a bed of debris in what once was a residential area. The undifferentiated, scattered, mud-drenched remnants of houses, cars, less fortunate boats, trees and other materials were promptly removed. The ship resisted, as it was simply too far away from the coast to be brought back to the sea, and remained as an ominous silhouette, heavy and burdensome – some would say viscous (Saldanha, 2006). It unexpectedly became a landmark, which travel agencies would include in their programs (Reiji, 2014), and locals would pray at (Associated Press, 2013). The mayor of Kesennuma himself considered it ‘a visible symbol of what happened here’ (McNeill, 2013, emphasis ours).

When an object surfaces from the debris mass and it is separated and given meaning, its removal becomes a politically contested and highly emotional and affective affair. In 2013, a referendum to decide whether to definitely memorialize it as a jarring witness of the sea’s unpredictable might, or dismantling it to peacefully forget and move on. The 70,000 residents couldn’t agree on a course of action. Out of 14,000 votes, the vast majority of 70% voted for the removal of the ship, while a 30% favoured its memorialization (Andō, 2013). This discrepancy between the voters could be interpreted, we contend, as an affective concern. The ship, visible and localized, shaped the atmosphere of Kesennuma, imposing its presence as constant reminder of the disaster and its destruction. For the majority of the locals, the affective charge of the ship resonated with the pain and fear experienced on March 11, 2011. Getting rid of the pain emerges as a paramount concern for the locals: ‘Omoidashitakunai’ (I do not want to remember), ‘Miru no ga tsurai’ (It is painful to look at) where some of the most common comments (Ōta, 2013). For a minority, however, the same affective charge was perceived differently, as potential for hope, a reminder not of a tragic past, but of a hopeful future. As Tolia-Kelly recognises, affect moves in a world that is always and necessarily politically-oriented: affective charges do not always translate into emotions in the same way and with the same intensity (Tolia-Kelly, 2006). Within the same context and the same group of people - Kesennuma’s residents- the potential for affect found purchase in two polarized expressions, one that privileges emotions of pain and the political action of removal, another that privileges hope and heritage-making politics.

The disquieting and ominous debris causes even more intense affective reactions when radioactive materials are involved. After the Fukushima Daiichi accident, three out of six reactors have been classified as hazardous for human and environmental health, and the area around the power plant was hastily evacuated. The media, as well as the international community, were concerned about the radioactive waste from Fukushima, and all debris washing ashore was perceived as invasion. In 2013, the Japan Times reports, 300 tons of wood chips in sinister black bags were spotted in the town of

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28 According to the International Nuclear Event Scale, https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/news/fukushima-nuclear-accident-update-log-47.
Takashima (Shiga Prefecture). The chips (measures by different agencies ranged between 12,000 and 3000 Bq/kg) were just a fraction of a 9,000 tons shipment of irradiated chips – 8,700 tons still missing, lost in a maze of fraudulent bureaucracy. Apropos the thorny matter of radioactive soil from the Fukushima Daiichi, Japanese Government disclosed that ‘the waste will be moved out of Fukushima Prefecture in 30 years for final disposal, although it remains uncertain how and where the waste will be disposed’ (The Japan Times, 2014).

7.5.2 ‘MIRACLE BOATS’ AND OTHER WONDERS: MEMORIALIZED DEBRIS AS POLITICAL EXPRESSION OF POST-DISASTER TERRITORIALITY

If (re)moving debris proved to be troublesome, the oceanic current also transported significant items, charged with the spectral remains of their previous lives. Among the unwanted and hazardous alien fragments impacting the foreign coasts, a precious few items were separated from the rest, and became the foci of narratives of resilience, gratitude, loss, and recovery. Specific items have been transported back to Japan with great fanfare and much media coverage. In the following section, we draw on geographical theories of space and affect, as we follow examples of special debris items that have been memorialized, and note how the narratives around them follow three broadly defined movements: (a) the displacement of the object, its disappearance from home on March 11, 2011; (b) the discovery of the object years after, on the other side of the Pacific; (c) the return home for the purpose of memorialization.

7.5.2.1 DISPLACEMENT

What global audiences know about a disaster is dependent on intricate flows of information, which regulate the ways people respond to such events (McCosker, 2013). In 2011, in particular, the disaster was captured by professionals and amateurs and spread throughout Internet and institutional programs alike, providing a space to collectively make sense of the disaster. It is in this common, shared space that someone else’s pain is perceived as ‘complex cases of affect where action is never actualized and where affect remains at the level of the virtual’ as a form of empathy or sensation that signals an intimate corporeal recognition of another person’s state of being (Colebrook, 2006, p. 54). People can attune to a ‘vibe’, a mood, an atmosphere’ (Ash, 2013) and create associations between various entities that exist within materialities. ‘Affect’ as Kavka says ‘is material that matters’ (Kavka, 2008, p. 33). Heritage can then deliberately be built so that material remains, narratives and reproductions of tragic events are assembled in a coherent, powerful way that creates an atmospheres in which the affects are perceivable (Anderson, 2014). Heritage sites are constructed and made fruible through routine practices that are engineered to make visible how you are expected to read the place (Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos, 2016). In this first bout of information, media focus on death, disturbance and horror, to ‘relay the scope and quality of the violent and painful forces, and convey the sensations and experiences of those who suffer’ (Pantti & Wahl-Jorgensen 2007, p.10). Ultimately, media facilitate the deframing of disastrous events in a way that tethers global engagement and attention directly to the flow of affect (McCosker, 2013).

In the case of Japan, plenty of material has been broadcasted. Five years after the disaster, drawing on the NOAA reports, CNN published ‘Five remarkable stories’ on Japanese floating debris (Paterson, 2016). It recounts five stories about debris lost and found again after years, on the other side of the ocean. In our analysis, we identify the debris, from the moment it is washed away to when it is found, as a movement of displacement. The debris, first uprooted from its original, designated place, disappears. The CNN piece opens with a very significant quote: upon finding the remains of a fishing vessel offshore the Canadian coast, the marine conservationist Marcus Eriksen observed: ‘That is when everything changed. This belonged to someone, this is someone’s property’ (ibid.). The doubling of the outpouring (‘this belonged to someone, this is someone’s property’) highlights exactly the accountability this right of property granted the former gareki.

In the media narratives of the trip back of these debris items, the first step is a recounting of the disaster and its blind fury which, in
its spatial ramifications, creates a void, a violent, threatening absence of place in which the affective value of one’s own town changes from safety to trauma and horror. These narratives of debris, produced years after the disaster, re-open a wound and bring back to the surface affects that were set aside in favour of moving on. The scope of these stories yields a direction towards which a space moves and unfolds, offering closure, a political, institutionally-oriented version of the disaster and the recovery efforts, packaged to integrate the trauma by actively creating affective associations between various material ‘cusps’ (Dawney, 2011).

These cusps, materialities inside materialities, punctuate points in a wider movement that we recognize as the journey of displacement of objects caused by the violence of the tsunami. As these objects disappear, mixed with the dark waters and the bodies of 20 thousand people, the loss intertwines with a sense of absence and void. As the buildings are washed away and the dead disappear underwater, what was once one’s hometown has become foreign and inhospitable. This violent displacement scatters people’s personal properties as well as one’s hope of normalcy. Years later, as the process of reconstruction advances slowly, and people are ready to move on and forget, some items suddenly resurface, bringing with them affective nets of painful remembrance.

7.5.2.2 DISCOVERY

The second step media narratives take concerns the discovery of the special debris in a foreign place. As the general recovery process after the disaster recomposes place in a way that becomes home again, the narrative of the objects proceeds towards a symbolic rebirth. Among the five JTMD items recovered and identified in the CNN story, the Kamome (Seagull) rowboat is probably the one that sparked more interest and international consequences. Come ashore in California in April 2013, it belonged to the Takata High School of Rikuzentakata, as the characters written on it became visible after removing the many barnacles infesting it. After cleaning it, the pupils of a local high school organized its return to the Miyagi Prefecture, establishing a mutual bond between the two schools. The story of the little rowing boat is told in a bilingual illustrated book, The extraordinary voyage of the Kamome (Dengler et al. 2015), and the press glorified the ties built between the two institutes during the return procedures, which developed in a yearly summer exchange program. The so-called ‘miracle boat’ (kiseki no bōto) ended up in the Iwate Prefectural Museum, as after two years of drifting in the ocean it became unusable. The director of the museum concluded a report on the Kamome declaring how ‘The exchange between the Del Norte High School and the Takada High School built a bridge of friendship across the Pacific Ocean’ (Nakayama, 2015, p. 3). The acquisition of the boat on part of the Prefectural Museum is in turn significant, as since then the main concern of most Sanriku museums centred on the recovery and conservation of exposed artefacts damaged by the tsunami, while scrap and salvage items were mainly collected by local private groups, often within neighbourhood memorialization projects. After the object is found, it is separated from the debris’ shapeless mass and it becomes an allegory, the stand-in for all people who were washed away by the tsunami. As a person stranded in a foreign, alien place, the object needs to be taken back home, so it can find a final resting place. The moment of discovery starts with great coverage and metaphoric narratives. When the previously mentioned boat Daini Katsunmaru was retrieved, media attention focused on Ogatsu resident Sanae Ito, daughter of Kiyoshi Ito, the last registered owner of the Daini Katsunmaru. Although her father had died in 2003, long before the disaster, she had kept the boat until all the family belongings were washed away by the tsunami in 2011. When the boat was found in Hawai’i, she felt the unexpected occurrence could be a message from her father to ‘not forget the earthquake’ (Azambuja, 2016). ‘I feel that my father is guiding his boat back,’ (Azambuja, 2016) she added. Daini Katsunmaru, it is not just the boat that has been brought back to Japan, but also Sanae Ito’s father. Her moving story has been used to push to the forefront a coherent narrative that re-orients and artificially organises the event of death or disaster to be available to audiences. It has also been made stronger by
the physical discovery of the boat. As a travel blogger commenting on this story, writes: ‘a real feeling of the tsunami’s fury cannot be realized only by letters and images’. The reappearance of a tangible object creates a vessel for the confused affective intensities of the locals and the spectators witnessing the story through media. Such attunements are not mute, but grounded in corporeal expressions that act in social context and accounts for ethical, political, cultural, performative aspects of the interactions between people and place (Anderson, 2014; McCormack, 2010), and are channelled through social and culturally specific tropes (Hizi, 2015) localized in the discovered item. The added value of locating these affective intensities in a physical object lies in its use as politically-oriented tool for recovery and to propel certain sentiments towards reconstruction.

It is when affect impresses on a body that there is a duration in time, and this duration can influence and give shape to something perceivable, an intensity passing from body to body, in the resonances that circulate about, between and that sometimes stick to bodies, transpires within subjects, accumulates across relatedness and interruptons (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010).

7.5.2.3 RE-IMPLACEMENT
The Daini Katsumaru’s physical journey ended on March 11, 2016, when the small boat was finally returned to Ogatsu, in Japan, by the vessel Miyagimaru, whose captain declared be gladly took the boat on board as an ‘act of charity’ (Azambuja 2016). Among the four dozens of vessels washed ashore in the Hawai’i (Azambuja 2016), the Katsumaru was the second piece of JTMD to be returned to its original site, the other being a large wooden sign for a residential district on Tanohata Town, Iwate Prefecture (Fuji 2014). More recently, this year, the Miyagi’s local newspaper Kahoku announced the completion of a storage facility to conserve and exhibit the Katsumaru (Kahoku Shinpō, 2018), with the boat at the centre, surrounded by pictures, maps, and explanatory panels. The construction of the small exhibition facility was coupled with the publication of the booklet Kaettekita Kofune, translated as ‘Small boat coming home’ (Ishinomaki Kohaku, 2017). The president of the Daini Katsumaru Preservation Society, in a speech to the volunteers and benefactors who raised the 1.5 million yen necessary for the facility, said: ‘I think this [referring to the Katsumaru] holds a different value from the other remnants of the disaster’ (Ishinomaki Kohaku, 2017). Indeed, by making such objects ‘special’ and elevating them as locus of memory and heritage, the aura that surrounds these objects becomes entrenched with an atmosphere that emerges as a medium for the inscription of various dispositions (Barnett, 2008), which are not passively received, but actively accepted, refused, reconfigured by the feeling subject.

Memory, in fact, ‘poses questions to history in that it points to problems that are still alive or invested with emotions and value’ (LaCapra, 1998). In dealing with a past that has not passed away, history tests memory, while memory is important to history because of the centrality of trauma and the importance of traumatic events in the construction of identity. In fact, places of memory are created by individuals and social groups to give shape to felt absences, fears, and desires (Till, 2005, p. 9). The affective atmospheres of such places, as Tolia-Kelly contends, coalesce in places of heritage, including physical landmarks, as ‘material precipitates of affective memories’ (Tolia-Kelly, 2017, p. 35). Here memory crystallizes in heritage, and is constructed by the stakeholders to frame its story and meaning politically through memory. More often than not, the meaning of such places are consciously manipulated and framed to enhance felt reactions (Weaver et al., 2017). Memory simultaneously forms and is formed by the recreation of spaces and places, through entangled and overlapping emotions and affects, and as such it may be understood as performative (Curti, 2008). The memorialization and museification of the JTMD heightened it, upon building around the items not only a physical shelter, but also a network of meaning, including naturally the virtues of spontaneous cooperation and donation: those very acts of charity already evoked by the Miyagimaru captain. As the Preservation Society’s president aptly stated, the Katsumaru came to mean not only a different value,
but a vastly wider one. Memory is indeed not simply a matter of ‘episodic compartmentalization, meaningful representation or … conscious retrieval but also chains of associations of the (pre- and post-conscious) body’ (Curti, 2008). Indeed, ‘materially, affective flows, responses and power can be inspired, can circulate and can shape the narratives, political meanings and life of heritage sites and spaces’ (Tolia-Kelly, 2017; p.35).

A last, significant example of memorialized *gareki* is one missing return narratives, as the piece did not, in fact return to Japan. In the April of 2012, in Canadian British Columbia, a Harley-Davidson motorbike was found in a shored container. Its owner (Mr. Yokohama), tracked shortly after, did not accept the manufacturer’s offer to refurbish and ship back his bike thought, but expressed his wish to have it exposed in the Milwaukee, Wisconsin Harley-Davidson Museum, ‘to be preserved as a memorial and a reminder of the tragic event’ (Joslin, 2012). The Harley quickly became a sensation as ‘the motorcycle that rode the tsunami’ (Billock, 2016), and even more resonance had the owner’s poetic reaction to a further offer of a brand new bike from Harley-Davidson: ‘According to the museum, Yokohama respectfully declined the gift, saying that he didn’t want to be “a tall blade of grass among a shorter lawn” [...] He lost pretty much everything [...] members of his family, all his possessions’ (ibid.). The rusty and salt-encrusted Harley is now the centrepiece of a permanent exhibition at the museum. Here memorialization, materiality, and branditisation uncannily blend in a process of inscription that creates topographies of memory to make the connection between past and present seem permanent and tangible. As the curator of the Harley-Davidson Museum said, “Objects communicate things that sometimes words don’t do justice for” (Billock, 2016).

### 7.6 CONCLUSION: STUBBORN SUSPENSIONS

In this paper we discussed the potential of the debris lost at sea in the 2011 disaster in Eastern Japan to form spatialized configurations of affect. Empirical cases on processes of spatialization of affect are still underdeveloped, and this article aims at giving an insight in how the virtual, fast-changing affect can collapse into the infrastructural materialization of heritage. We do so by discussing how media narratives infuse debris object with certain affective atmospheres, negotiated by the political context in which such stories and atmospheres are inscribed. We saw that in our analysis the debris is received and memorialized into place as affective expression of hope or removed to ensure recovery from the emotional trauma of loss. Such response (from Americans afraid of the dangerous mass washing ashore, or from local Tōhoku residents festively welcoming back special items) fosters the potential to translate affect into embodied, place-grounded heritage constellations.

In the stories analysed in the previous pages, debris items are either charged with affective qualities (e.g. the Daini Katsumaru, whose journey was covered by the media as a tale of loss and recovery, symbolizing the bond between a daughter and her father), or become the reification of human connections framed by the processes of relief, reconstruction, and restoration of the North-eastern Japanese coast. And regarding the remains that did not move after the tsunami washed away everything, they are characterized not by movement of oceanic currents, but by fixity. The things which stubbornly stuck to the levelled geography of the coast – those things that were either too huge to move, or too minute to filter out – constituted, as opposed to the memorialized treasures, unwanted memories, and landmark thorns in the sides of those who wanted to forget and move on, for whatever reasons. In the lack of everything else, from houses to railroads, to cars, and to loved ones, the things that stayed assumed the ambiguous role of a reminder. They became a material qualifier of the historical riskiness of the land, and of the only un-erasable consequence of March 11, 2011, the Fukushima meltdown. For many of those items, removal became a vital issue to local authorities. In both cases, temporality played a pivotal role in the transformation of meaning in the objects.

Our article, by offering a first step into the possibilities of analysis into spatialization of affect, and into affective memory and heritage-making processes enacted by media and in place (or into
the erasure of unwanted narratives and objects), also opens up the possibility for future routes of research. One path to further knowledge in affect-spatialization could lead to analysis of what Massumi calls the ‘momentary hiatus of humanly unbearable, unspeakable horror’ (Massumi, 2011). The ‘momentary hiatus’ circumscribes not the spatial, but the temporal dimension of affect, the so-called missing half-second described in cognitive sciences (see Angerer, Bösel & Ott, 2014).

Since the original traumatic event, both floating debris and the remains which remained ashore, the temporal hiatus between disappearance and re-inscription charged them with significance, a significance which resonated with the contexts framing the environs in which such objects became embedded. Indeed, in his article for The Guardian on the 2011 disaster, Massumi asserts that it takes some time after a global scale disaster before language—and narratives—regains their descriptive traction, or the ability to make sense of events.

Another route of future research concerns the potential to extol issues of politics and how affect can be caught up in relations of capital. In regard to the relevant, special debris, such as the Harley-Davidson motorcycle case, a tension was visible. On one hand, the material value of the object was almost immediately suspended and they assumed a new, immaterial worth, directly connected to the degree of their wholeness and a specific source to which they could be back-tracked—a city, a school, or even an individual person, as in. In the occasions those objects where returned to their sources, they were never welcomed back as pieces of private property, but memorialized as material epitomes of the interactions which took place during the process of recovery. On the other hand, the motorcycle has been brought not to its Japanese owner, but to an American Museum owned by the brand. The debris becomes not a means to resilience and recovery, not part of the journey home, but gains a new value as descriptive element of the capitalist brand ‘Harley-Davidson’.

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