Paris, New York, Madrid, London: The City Responds to Terror (10/18/18)

00:00:25 Alice M. Greenwald: Good evening. Welcome. My name is Alice Greenwald. I'm president and CEO of the 9/11 Memorial and Museum, and it is my pleasure to welcome all of you here this evening to tonight's program, along with any of you who are tuning in live to our web broadcast at 911memorial.org/live. As always, I am delighted to see members, museum members in the audience. We welcome you, and we encourage everyone here to consider the benefits of membership.

00:00:59 You know, the 9/11 Memorial and Museum holds a unique position within the community of sites directly impacted by terrorism. One of the unexpected outcomes of creating the Memorial and Museum is that we developed an unusual expertise in the field of memorialization that other communities now struggling in the aftermath of extreme violence have found helpful.

00:01:25 For example, in the wake of the Boston Marathon bombing, we were called upon to advise the city archivist on what to collect and how best to preserve tribute that had been left all over the city in memory of those who had been killed or injured. Our staff has provided guidance to the planners of the Oslo Government Center and Utoya Island memorials, commemorating the horrific 22 July 2011 bombing and massacre. Members of our team have worked with individuals creating a memorial in Orlando to the victims of the Pulse night club shooting. And we have advised the city of Paris on its communications with victims' family members in the aftermath of November 13, 2015.

00:02:12 This is an expertise we wish would never be needed, and yet, the Memorial and Museum is and I fear, sadly, will continue to be a place for

those affected by terrorism and mass death to turn to for professional advice, understanding, and compassionate partnership. In our historical exhibition, we chronicle the ways in which New York City residents, Americans, and the global community responded to 9/11. And we examined both the geopolitical ramifications and societal impacts of the attacks, including the spontaneous impulse to come together in a spirit of unity, empathy, and mutual concern.

00:02:59 As the world continues to be plagued by the scourge of terrorism, the ways in which we respond to them have both mirrored those after 9/11, and they've evolved. We are truly fortunate to have with us this evening Gérôme Truc to help us unpack the spectrum of these responses. I want to take a moment to express our appreciation to the cultural services staff at the French embassy located here in New York City for their assistance in arranging Dr. Truc's participation.

00:03:31 Gérôme Truc is a sociologist whose work focuses primarily on social reactions to terrorism, paying particular attention to moral and political sociology. He is a tenured research fellow at the CNRS, and a member of the L'Institut des Sciences sociales du Politique, and he teaches at the École normale supérieure Paris-Saclay. Dr. Truc's published works include "Assumer l'humanité Hannah Arendt: la responsabilité de la pluralité," and his most recent book, thank God in English: "Shell Shocked: the Social Response to Terrorist Attacks."

00:04:12 In "Shell Shocked," which we do have available outside the auditorium if you wish to purchase a copy, Dr. Truc examines the complexity of our feelings in the wake of terrorist attacks, and he uncovers the sources of that solidarity that can bring societies together when confronted with such events, a solidarity we truly experienced vividly in the aftermath of 9/11.

00:04:38 And so without further ado, please join me in welcoming Gérôme Truc in conversation with executive vice president and deputy director for museum programs, Clifford Chanin.

(applause)

00:04:53 Clifford Chanin: Thank you. Merci beaucoup, Alice. This is the second program we've done this season on France's response to terror, the terror attacks that France has been subject to in recent years. And it's really striking, going back and looking. There is a list now of attacks of a grand scale or a smaller scale. And, clearly, France faces this terrible challenge.

00:05:27 Gérôme's book is actually written before the main terror attacks. And he's looking at responses in New York, in Madrid and London, to those attacks. And I think you're writing it in the moment of the first of the major terrorist attacks in Paris. So there's a there's a sort of internal commentary within the book of recognizing that France is about to go through these kinds of reactions. And then, in subsequent time, when other attacks occurred, you actually moved from being the scholar of these things to an activist in terms of, you know, preserving and documenting the things that are the evidence of how society responds.

00:06:10 And we'll talk about this, but let me read a couple of little sentences from the book to start our conversation. And here, the... a bit of a paraphrase, but we're talking about terror attacks here. So if the word "attack" comes up, it's in the context of a terrorist attack. So, "The attack is not only an ordeal, but a test. Uncertainty about whether the attacked state can protect its citizens. In striking some of its members, the attack calls into question the link uniting them to those who are not directly affected. In short, it is a moment of truth for social cohesion."

00:06:53 And so, elsewhere, you say, "We need a sociology of terrorist attacks to understand the effects of this type of attack on our societies better, and a sociology of terrorist attacks, rather than a sociology of terrorism." So, talk to us a little bit about what you mean by a "sociology of terrorist attacks."

00:07:19 Gérôme Truc: Well, maybe before answering your question, Cliff, I just want to thank you. Thank you, all, for the invitation, because it's a real

pleasure, but also a big honor for me to be here, you know. Because this book, actually, comes from far away. I may say it's coming from my own experience of September 11 because I think I have to say, being here because it kind of very special and also an honor for me to be here because on September 11, I just turned 20 on December, after September 11.

00:08:04 And it was the very day of my entry at École normale supérieure, where I'm teaching now. And so I have... I had at this time already the idea to become an academic, a social scientist. But I had no idea, of course, on what will be my topic. And so on this very day, it was September 11, and I-I had, and I still have a member of my family working at Manhattan.

00:08:37 So it was very strange, just coming back to my first day at École normale supérieure, to, to hear the news, to see what was going on in New York and to, just like everybody has, I think... someone in New York, being very overwhelmed by what I was seeing on TV. And so I think really that this book is the final result of this experience I had when I was just you know, at the beginning of being an adult, you know, turning 20, very important.

00:09:16 And now I'm working in Paris, you're right, on the Paris attacks, and doing interviews with, with young people who had the same experience with the various attacks, what, what does it mean to have 20 or 22, 23, now in Paris at the time of the attacks we, we have been through. So, you're right. This book is... very embedded in the event.

00:09:47 That's very strange, because I defended my Ph.D. in September of 2014. So, six months before the first attacks in Paris, the "Charlie Hebdo" attacks, just six months after. Actually, if I remember well, I defended my Ph.D. on the 24th of September 2014. So, it was 13 days and 13 years after September 11. And, yeah, you may say November 14 after the Paris attacks. So very symbolic, but...

00:10:26 So, there was the "Charlie Hebdo" attacks in January. And at this time, I was, I was a professor at high school. I decided after dedicating myself during almost a decade to the study of the social response to the

September 11 attacks, Madrid, and then bombings, to take one year. It was, as well, the year where my first child was born.

00:10:56 And so, to take one year working as a teacher in high school and just the event of the "Charlie Hebdo" attacks obliged me to take a first look at the university, and to work directly on the manuscript of the book. And so the book is about that, is combing through my previous sociological work on these previous cold cases, September 11, Madrid, and then the bombings ten years after. And going through this work to answer questions that were raised after the "Charlie Hebdo" and Hypercacher, the January 2015 attacks.

00:11:39 And then again, I put a... a final point to the manuscript on October... October 14, just one month day to day before the November attacks. And so I add a preface about the November attacks after. And the same occurred for the English edition actually, because I was revising the proof of the English edition when the Manchester Arena bombing occurs, and so the preface is referring to that.

00:12:12 So, well, coming back to your questions about the sociology of attacks, sorry. But just to have this context, I think that's important to understand how my research is very well-embedded with what you are saying. Back to being an activist, saying in the very moment of the attacks, that we need to act, to protect, collect, to archive the traces of the social responses to these attacks.

00:12:41 For me, my work is part of my own response to these kind of events. So, basically, doing a sociology of terrorist attacks for me is doing something quite new in sociology. That is to say, work on terrorist attacks, there is not a lot of work from sociologists on terrorist attacks. You have a lot of work from political scientists, for example, on terrorism. But you have also work of sociologists on disaster, for example, in disaster studies.

00:13:16 But I remember well... during my Ph.D., a lot of sociologists just asked me what I was doing. "What are you working on that? What is the point of studying the content of the grassroots memorials, of studying the

messages people are writing in the aftermath. So, basically, doing a sociology of terrorist attacks is to focus on what comes after and not on what is before the attack. We have a lot of academic work on the terrorist organizations, on the radicalization process and et cetera. My work is focused on what comes after.

00:14:04 That's to say, the grassroot memorials, people paying tribute to the victims, so, solidarity display. The mass gathering, mass demonstrations that you may have in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks. And so that's what I'm precisely working on. And, as well, the memorialization process.

00:14:31 For me, everything about commemorative practices, memorial acts, controversies about whether or not built a memorial, for me, everything, all that is part of my work. Because, you see, at the very beginning of the process, in the first hour, days after an attack, you have on the streets, on the sites attacked, grassroots memorials.

00:15:03 And that's memorials. You have memorialization process starting at the very beginning. So for me, working on the memorialization process and doing a sociology of terrorist attacks is more or less the same thing.

Clifford Chanin: You-you... I mean, basically, you're reading how the society responds to this attack and how it interprets it. Now, you know, you start with 9/11, and not just because 9/11 is chronologically the first attack, but, you know, you write here that, you know, 9/11 is essentially the point of departure into an age of terrorism.

Gérôme Truc: Yeah.

00:15:40 Clifford Chanin: And the response that we had here, I think for several reasons-- the scale of the attack, the fact that it was the United States, that this idea of American invulnerability had now been assaulted-- sort of the American response is something that everybody takes part in, in fact. It's not just a response confined to the United States.

00:16:01 So take us to that point of departure. We have the attacks of 9/11. The next day, everybody is still in shock, but then, you emerge into a world where this is now part of the reality. What does that mean? What does that do? And particularly seen from Europe, how does that spread into countries that are far away from where these events happen?

00:16:28 Gérôme Truc: Yeah, yeah, I really think that September 11 was a turning point, a starting point for the book, but because it was a turning point for Western societies and their relationship to terrorism. And specifically to this kind of terrorism, that's to say to Islamic terror. And September 11 was a tremendous event, and something like a... an experience for Western societies we... to which we are always referring to.

00:17:04 What... what was very striking for me doing my work on the Madrid and London bombings, it was there was always this reference to September 11. For example, after the Madrid bombings, directly, you have this expression of Spain, Spanish September 11. And you add that... anew, after the Paris attacks, after "Charlie Hebdo," the newspaper "Le Monde" put "our French... our September 11," our September 11, and you have other commentators speaking about a French September 11.

00:17:48 So that is always... you always have this reference to September 11. And one thing, very important, that changed on September 11 is that, of course, the terrorist attacks on September 11 became a television performance. You had this media impact of the event, and all the journalists, commentators reacting at the same time as a people is to say, there was just that comment directly what was going on, but there was no idea of what was going on.

00:18:32 And so that was very emotional. If you look through the television archive, you can see how on the day of the attacks, commenting the images of the World Trade Center collapsing, they are speaking about 40... 40 hundred people...

Clifford Chanin: 40,000, I think.

00:18:57 Gérôme Truc: Yes, 40,000. Sorry, yeah, 40,000, of course, 40,000 people in the-- maybe in the buildings. And it turned out after a lot of time that there were-- the casualties were 3,000, almost 3,000 people. And so that was very emotional. And you, now, all-- you now all always have this kind of very emotional reaction of the media after each terror attack. And I really think that that's coming from September 11, from this very specific experience of September 11 in the Western society.

00:19:35 Clifford Chanin: It's funny because, I mean, of course I remember watching the television here on September 11, and then subsequently seeing whether French or British TV coverage of the event as it was recorded from the day itself and you're right. I mean, the emotional tone is very similar. There's not that much-- you don't get a national difference in a French or a German or an English commentator, that's very significant from the emotional tone set by the American broadcasters as they're watching this in their own country happen.

00:20:11 Gérôme Truc: Yeah, and, of course, before, before September 11 in Western societies, and speaking just about European societies, you already have an experience of terrorism. In France, for example, we already had terror attacks in the '80s and the '90s. But the media coverage was very different at this time. What changed as well with September 11 is a focus on the... on the victims and on the witnesses.

00:20:42 For example, you have the... all the "New York Times" portraits of the victims. And this was a part of the reaction in the media coverage which, which has been since reproduced in each national media, national newspaper after a mass terrorist attack. You had that on "El País" after the Madrid bombings in "The Times" after the London bombings, and as well in France, after the Paris attacks, and after the Brussels attacks.

00:21:20 And before September 11, the journalists were more focused on the terrorists, just purely on the facts, and there was no-- you didn't have as well at this time, the TV... permanent information program like CNN...

Clifford Chanin: CNN, the 24-hour news cable channels.

00:21:46 Gérôme Truc: Yeah, yeah, exactly. And so all that changed a lot of things in our experience, our reaction to terrorist attacks. Because what is very important also to highlight is actually when a society reacts to terrorist attacks, what this society is reacting at is what they can perceive of the event through the media.

Clifford Chanin: Mmm.

00:22:17 Gérôme Truc: When are you not directly a witness or a victim of the attack, the individuals are reacting to what they perceive... they're perceiving of the attacks through the media. So, the media coverage is like directly embedded part of the event. You can't speak about the terrorist attacks without taking into account this media coverage.

00:22:40 Clifford Chanin: What's interesting and you, your sense of how the message or the impact of 9/11 spreads from our country here, where it happened, to European countries and elsewhere, I presume, as well, is that, you know, there's a tension between an attack on a nation...

Gérôme Truc: Yeah.

Clifford Chanin: ...and an attack on a city.

Gérôme Truc: Yeah.

00:23:05 Clifford Chanin: And somehow, it seems nations are more bounded by their geography, by who is and who isn't a part of a nation. Whereas cities are much more fluid, cosmopolitan places that, in fact, are proud of the diversity and their openness. And so one of the points you make is

that the access to the memory of this, or the emotion of this for people who are not in the country whether they're in Europe or anywhere else, the access to the event is much more focused on the openness of the city...

Gérôme Truc: Yeah.

00:23:37 Clifford Chanin: ...than the definition of a bordered nation.

Gérôme Truc: Yeah, that-- that is very interesting, because we are speaking here mainly about terrorist attacks in major Western cities...

Clifford Chanin: So, London, Paris, Madrid, New York...

Gérôme Truc: Yeah, yeah, but in the case of September 11, you, of course, have the attack in New York, but as well the attack on the Pentagon, and the crash of the United 93 in Pennsylvania.

00:24:05 And very interesting to see the memory of the event in the U.S. and in Europe because here, it's just a view that September 11, it was the World Trade Center, but also these other places. And that's very important, particularly the United 93, in the U.S. conception of September 11.

00:24:27 And, of course, the scale of the event, almost 300 dead, the destruction of a very symbolic building, World Trade Center, leads to this experience of September 11 like a declaration of war. Of course, it was like a new Pearl Harbor. And very different, of course, from... from a European point of view, because in Europe, you have this focus on the World Trade Center.

00:24:59 A lot of people just speaking about the "terrorist attacks in New York," the "New York terrorist attacks," the "World Trade disaster." And very

few weeks and months after September 11, even today, people are referring to September 11, speaking about, yeah, "terrorist... New York terrorist attacks." And you may see the same process now for the Paris attacks, November 14 attacks.

00:25:25 We have a lot of controversies and journalists are being criticized because they are speaking about the Bataclan terrorist attacks, just the Bataclan. The scale is not the same, of course, because the November 14 attacks, you... and if you added the January and November 2015 attacks, you have less than 150 dead. So not the same scale. But in the case of the November 14 attacks precisely, you have the main attack on the Bataclan, and the other sites, which has cafe terraces and the Stade de France. But the same happened in the case of September 11, people are just speaking about the Bataclan attacks.

00:26:09 Clifford Chanin: It's, it's... I actually had this experience. I was over there. It's, you know... and it describes the affinities between people's reactions to this. So, I was over in Paris giving a talk about this, and someone was introducing me and referred to the Bataclan attacks. And someone in the audience actually interrupted this person, right at that point, and the way they did it, I recognized immediately that this was a family member.

Gérôme Truc: Yes.

00:26:38 Clifford Chanin: And they wanted that... the introduction not say, "Bataclan," but also to speak about the first attack at the soccer stadium...

Gérôme Truc: Yeah.

Clifford Chanin: ...and then the sequence of attacks at six or seven cafes along the way, each of which, each of those attacks-- (clears throat) excuse me-- causing deaths and casualties, and, as you say, not willing to have it subsumed under this general rubric of the theater. And this

seemed extremely familiar to me. And, certainly, the recognition that, you know, each of these becomes so important individually, and the families step forward in a way that I don't think was true before.

00:27:17 Gérôme Truc: Yeah, yeah. And, so, we always add this tension, you know, between the scale of the city and the scale of the nation that's particularly, I think, visible in the case of September 11, because from the European point of view, it was mainly an attack on New York City, and New York is a very cosmopolitan city.

00:27:37 In New York you have the world, the world which is living here. And you have people, so after September 11, insisting on the fact in Europe that you just don't have just American citizens among the victims, but people from all over the world.

Clifford Chanin: Exactly.

Gérôme Truc: I think...

Clifford Chanin: 90 countries. More than 90 countries.

00:27:57 Gérôme Truc: Yeah, more than 90 countries, yeah. So, and you may react to September 11 as an attack on the U.S., a declaration of war against the United States, but you may also react as... to September 11 as an assault on the... on mankind, as... to September 11, as a cosmopolitan... a cosmopolitan event. And you always have this tension.

00:28:27 Because, basically, after terrorist attacks, you may have this feeling, this sense of mass demonstration, of solidarity coming from just a mechanic solidarity grounded on the sense of belonging to, to the attacked country, to the attacked society. Just saying, yeah, that's obvious because you're a citizen of the country attacked, you're touched by the event.

00:28:55 But, actually, when you're looking at what people are writing to the victims or what people are saying in the aftermath when you are doing sociology inquiries on that, what you find is a far more complicated story. In the messages I have been working on...

Clifford Chanin: Let me just-- let me just give a little background. So, as we all know, in the aftermath of the attacks here, but certainly on the attacks throughout Europe, you know, places of the attack become shrines, and people leave things.

00:29:29 And one of the things they leave in particular is messages. And, you know, the question of who they're actually writing to and what they're trying to express is fascinating. So this material became a significant part of the base for your research.

Gérôme Truc: Yeah, yeah.

Clifford Chanin: Because it was saved in...

Gérôme Truc: That's a majority of my book.

Clifford Chanin: ...in Madrid, in London.

Gérôme Truc: Everywhere.

Clifford Chanin: So these become documents that are the basis for the research.

Gérôme Truc: Yeah.

Clifford Chanin: So, please.

00:29:51 Gérôme Truc: Yeah, and so when you're looking at these messages, I have been through hundreds of thousands of messages like that, writing after terrorist attacks. And you may find that some people are reacting on a personal way.

After the "Charlie Hebdo" attacks, for example, there was a lot of comments about, "I am Charlie." But in the messages that French citizens sent to the September 11 victims in 2000... in October 2001, letters which are now part of the collection of the memorial.

Clifford Chanin: That's right.

00:30:30 Gérôme Truc: You already have a third of the people who were writing in the first person singular, just...

Clifford Chanin: Meaning "I am, I am."

Gérôme Truc: Yeah, "I am," expressing the solidarity, giving a personal narrative and saying, "Yeah, I am touched. I am overwhelmed because..." and they are explaining their emotions. And so you have that. And because that's very complicated, in fact.

00:30:59 That's not so self-evident that you may think. In these most longest messages, I think the most longest I found was a French citizen writing a letter of 16 pages to, to the victims of the attacks. And why? Why 16 pages?

00:31:22 Because you, you often find this expression of something like a paradox, what I call in my book the paradox of concern. That is to say, people writing, "I do not know any victim. I do not know any victim of the

attacks, but still, I'm touched. I'm overwhelmed as if one member of my family was involved." And that's paradoxical. So, that's to say, normally, I should be more indifferent. And so there is a need to justify our-- why you're so touched by the event.

00:32:03 And so people sometimes give a personal narrative to justify and to express at the same time their solidarity, their compassion for the victims. And so you have messages of this kind, and you have other messages where people are putting forward a "we." A "we" where there was an "I."

Clifford Chanin: So instead of "I," "We feel this."

00:32:30 Gérôme Truc: Yeah, yes, yeah. A French citizen, for example, "We are in solidarity with you." "You are in our thoughts," for example. And what you may find at this... what I found, actually, at this collective level of our different conceptions and scale of the "we" involved by the attacks. Some people are reacting at the scale of "we," a nationalistic "we," for example. "We as Americans," or "We as French." "We are in solidarity with you American victims."

00:33:08 But you also have "we" at the level of the city or "we" at the level of a professional or occupational group. You may have also as well a "we" at the very local level. For example, after the Paris attacks, you had people reacting as inhabitants of the neighborhoods, of the very neighborhoods of the Bataclan.

00:33:32 As here, you may have in New York, people reacting as inhabitants of Battery Park City, Lower Manhattan. And with this feeling, to have relation to the event, very-- almost nothing to have with the relation of those citizens in the United States.

00:33:51 So, actually, the social response, the process of social response to terrorist attacks in our individualized Western societies is about that.

That's the core of my topics. This tension between the "I" and the "we," and the various sense of "we" which are engaged in the process. Because some of this sense of belonging may be conflictive.

00:34:19 You may have people say, "That's an assault on the country." And those who are saying, "No, that's an assault on my city, on my neighborhood." And you're not allowed to say that, "We have to react in the way you are saying." Yeah. For example, you have a lot of documents, in the case of September 11, showing how it might have been very difficult for some New Yorkers to see how there was, after September 11, a very nationalistic response to the to the attacks at the national level.

00:34:54 Clifford Chanin: Well, even that was sort of nuanced, because, yes, there was a sense of, you know, there were people here who were feeling that they didn't want this to be used as a pretext for war or anything else. At the same time, you had this feeling New York, being traditionally, you know, not somewhere-- an island off the rest of the American continent. And, yet, the response of the country at large to what had happened here was overwhelming and felt much closer in terms of those relationships.

00:35:22 So there was-- there was this tension there. You know, it's so interesting, because, you know, you got involved in the actual collecting and protection of these materials because you'd seen their value in terms of the archives that were created around Madrid and London and here at the tribute center, actually. And there was no effort to collect these materials after the first round of attacks in France in January 2015. They were essentially...

Gérôme Truc: You're right.

Clifford Chanin: ...tossed out.

Gérôme Truc: Yeah.

00:35:53 Clifford Chanin: And so in November, when the even larger attack-- January is the "Charlie Hebdo" attack. The November 13 is that series of attacks we just talked about, it really became this sort of grassroots effort to save the grassroots materials, which are now happily in the archive of Paris, you know, in a very professional circumstance. But tell us about, you know, what was the... what was the effort to sort of realize, "Wait a minute, no one is protecting this stuff. This is important material, it needs to be saved."

00:36:28 Gérôme Truc: Yeah. Yeah, you're right, because that's an important part of my work now, to sensiblize, if you want, the public authorities on that topic. Because I really think, on the basis of my sociological work, on the previous cases, that if you, if you lost... if you don't collect these materials from the grassroots memorials, and if you don't take very quickly the decision to do it, you completely shut the access down to a very important material to understand how the society responds to the event.

00:37:14 And so you completely shut the access down to an important part event. For historians in the years after, if you don't have that, you... you really lose something. It is the same with the social networks today. You have a collection of the tweets on Twitter after the attacks, and it's very important to see how people are reacting, as well, on the-- on this other public space that houses social networks because you may find differences in the response in the grassroots memorials in the streets, and on the social networks.

00:37:53 And so, in the Paris case, in January, there was different factors. There was no director at this time at the... for the Paris Archives. And so, there was nobody to take the initiative. And me, at this time, I was working as a teacher in a high school, and I was not involved in the academics. And the event of the "Charlie Hebdo" attack just took everybody by surprise, like September 11 in New York, and so it was very confused at this time, at the city council of Paris.

00:38:34 And so, just in November, the situation was different, and we were more prepared, prepared because there had been the January attacks before, and I was back in the academics, and there was a new director leading

the Paris Archives. And so just two days after the November 14 attacks, I sent a letter to the city council of Paris saying that we have to do that, after... to collect grassroots memorials at this time, and that may help doing that because I have the...

00:39:13 I have this experience, because during my Ph.D. I spent two years in Madrid working with a team, the research team, which collected the grassroots memorials in Madrid and organized as a collection. And I also work on similar materials here at the World Trade Center tribute center, and in London, at the London Metropolitan Archives. So I have an experience of these materials.

00:39:42 And so, very quickly, meet Guillaume Nahon, the director of the Paris Archives, and we worked together, because at the same time, I created a research project on that with some colleagues, some French colleagues. And we have been working together-- the Paris Archives collecting the grassroots memorials, and me and my researcher colleagues working, making ethnographic observation in the neighborhood around the grassroots memorials, and as well as on social networks, and we, we react very quickly to the event, to document it.

00:40:27 Clifford Chanin: May I-- there was a story in the "Times" about this effort.

Gérôme Truc: Yeah.

Clifford Chanin: And it's interesting, because, you know, the archivists literally had to leave the Paris Archives and, you know, you can imagine the centuries of history and documents that they're used to dealing with in the Paris Archives and they're, literally, in the street, you know, picking up papers and other things that have been damaged, that have been exposed to the weather and the climate. And you were involved in the actual collecting as well, as I recall.

00:40:54 Gérôme Truc: Yeah, yeah, yeah. It was very... yeah, very intense for them, and very... something very strange because you have a lot of different people involved in the process. You have people from the cleaning service of the... of Paris. You have, at the same time, working with them are archivists. And you have us, researchers, on the field with them, around the grassroots memorials. And so that was very directly inspired by the work in Madrid, which was also made by researcher walking with archivist.

00:41:38 And so, yeah, that was very... very interesting for them. And the reason why now you have a group, a European group working on that, sharing their experience of collecting grassroot memorials after terror attacks, because it's very overwhelming for them.

00:42:03 And so there is a need to share the experience of this kind of situation. And because after the Manchester Arena bombing in May 2017, and as well in August 2017 in Barcelona, you... as well as grassroots memorials and collections of the contents of the grassroots memorials.

00:42:28 Now, there is something like... that wasn't new because at the start, I think, in the U.S. with the collection of grassroots memorials after the Virginia Tech attack and the Columbine shooting. But at first... the Madrid research team of the "archive of mourning," as it was called, take its inspiration from the work done on this kind of material by the American Folklife Center at Washington.

00:43:15 Clifford Chanin: Yeah, I think, as we and as Alice made clear in her introduction, we've been involved in discussions like this and we're actually thinking about convening a group to talk about this issue, because it is-- it is so important. And it...

Gérôme Truc: Yeah, very important.

Clifford Chanin: It opens up into all of these other things that we've been talking about. But, you know, one of the things that's also interesting, we talked about the difference between, you know, the American response and the European response to these events, is it also reveals tensions within Europe, because the idea of a European community, a European Union as having its own distinct culture is somewhat contradicted by, you know, the national needs of each country as it responds to a terrorist attack.

00:43:45 Gérôme Truc: Yeah, you're right. When you're doing sociological work, you are always... you know, you are always making clearer how this kind of idea we may have of a European culture contrasting with American culture, as a wall, are not accurate, basically, are not accurate. And so it's the same, it's really the same at the national level, you know.

00:44:18 When you many have this variety of the French society reacting as one person to the attacks, that's just a very superficial point of view, that what you may have, that what you may find in, in the political discourse, of course, but because political discourse are from a normative point of view, that's a way of things that we all, as French citizens, we have to react, to be touched by the attacks. That's a way to prevent the stress of division, of tensions, after terrorist attacks in the country.

00:44:56 But that's not a sociological analysis, not a sociological description, accurate description of what's going on in this kind of situation. If you want to see exactly what is involved... at an individual level, you have to see what people are writing to the victims. And when you are just here, when you are seeing stories, stories the visitors are writing at the end of their visit, you may see a very personal, maybe, the relationship of an individual to such a big event like September 11 or the Paris attacks.

00:45:39 And these personal relations involve very various, very various social ties and links. You have the national links... link you to the victims, and... being you... concerned by the attacks. But you... there is a lot of other social links involved as well in this process, as professional-- for example, just one example, people reacting as a member of a specific professional or occupational group as, for example, as the flight attendants, or the

firefighters, or the policemen after September 11. French people reacting to September 11 as firefighters, yeah.

00:46:28 And after the Paris attacks, you have the same with people reacting not as French citizens to the attacks, but as members of... as musicians, or as members of what they call the musician or rock 'n' roll family. And you had the same as well after the marathon bombings, for example, in Boston—in Europe, the individuals most concerned by the attacks, the Boston attacks, were people running the marathon, because there was a feeling of an assault on the marathon family.

00:47:03 Clifford Chanin: If you think about the balance between solidarity coming out of these events and, I don't want to say social tensions, but reinforcement of differences within a society, how does that balance work?

Gérôme Truc: Yeah, yeah. That basically, that occurs as a process, the social process of response to a terrorist attacks is an ambivalent process. You always have these two faces at the same time. You have the display of solidarity and social cohesion, and at the same time, you have social tension, social conflicts, and social discourse.

00:47:42 Basically, because that, that has been very, very well-analyzed by an American sociologist, Randall Collins, which was professor at UPenn, and the staff, my Ph.D., working with him... in working on the case, the specific case of September 11, it shows how you... it's a social response to terrorist attacks, is going through different phases.

00:48:13 And at first, you have just two, three days of total chaos, confusion. And then you have what he calls a hysteria zone. A hysteria zone is two or three weeks of very "I" display of solidarity, of collective effervescence, if you want. And this very specific period of hysteria, of course, is also a period for social tension.

00:48:42 When you have a lot of people saying, "Yeah," after "Charlie Hebdo" attacks, for example, "I am Charlie, and we all have to be Charlie." Of course, that makes social tensions. And that just lasts two or three weeks. But it may, after... have an impact on the society itself. But, still, the event passed, fade away progressively, and so you process the social response to a terrorist attacks, passed down by a third phase of solidarity plateau of two or three months.

00:49:25 And then you have a gradual decline to normalcy. You're just back to-- that does not mean that you have completely forgot event. American citizens didn't have forgotten September 11, of course. But they are back to normalcy, they are living their life, and since a long time. And so, that is the process of social response, and because you are passing through the different phases, you may have these tensions. You always have these tensions.

00:49:53 You may look at the process from just one dimension, because you are involved in that dimension, because if you are very attached, overwhelmed by the attacks, you may have this feeling that we are all in the same state of shock, same state of feeling, and be unable to understand that other people are feeling another way.

00:50:18 But, basically, that's the work of the sociologist, to show how in the same society you may have contrasted reaction to the same event, because we are living different lives, individualized society.

Clifford Chanin: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. You know, thinking ahead and how societies are going to face these kinds of challenges going on, is there a particular approach, you think, that encourages resilience or, a better, if that's the right word, recovery or integration of this reality into the response of a society?

00:50:57 Gérôme Truc: I don't know, but my one idea I have on this specific topic is that collecting grassroots memorials can help, can help on this topic of resilience, because that's interesting. That's important for us as researchers, but that may also very... in very interesting materials to

educate people to resilience. I mean, you may have in this kind of situation hysteria as well, because people are very centered, focused on themselves and on their reaction, and the reaction of the people around them.

00:51:40 And so you have this feeling that you can understand that other people in the same society as yours are reacting in another way. If you are more educated to social sciences, to what we are talking about here, and educated to the gap between what you may have heard about the social response in the media, for example, and what you may find actually in the real folks' reactions and the grassroots memorials, that may be useful to have collectively, a more intelligent reaction, a more intelligent way of acting in this kind of situation.

00:52:25 Basically, for example, I also look... there is a chapter dedicated to this topic in my book, to the values invoked in the messages. The situation... post-terrorist attack situations are very, very marked by the invocation of values in the political discourse. You have always in this kind of situation values invoked in defense, in face of the terror attacks.

00:52:59 But there is a strong gap, dichotomy between the values invoked by politicians in such circumstances, and the values invoked by the citizens, by the people in the messages. After each terror attack in Western societies, you have politicians invoking the defense of liberty, freedom, and in the case of the Paris attacks, republican values: Liberté, égalité, fraternité.

00:53:27 But, in the grassroots memorials, whether in New York, Madrid, London, or Paris, it's always the same, the two values must... you may find most often are peace and love, peace and love. And so you have this really gap between being in war to defend freedom and liberty, and people just reacting to violence, to terrorism, saying, "Yeah, we just have to defend peace, to stay in peace, and to spread love to the world to evoke that." And peace and love, I think that's a very resilient message.

00:54:09 Clifford Chanin: Let's see if we have any questions from the audience here. Looking around-- please. Can you just hang on one second, we'll get you a microphone and ask, so this way, everyone can hear you.

00:54:24 Audience Member: Following up on what you just said, so you're saying the citizens in Paris, New York, Madrid, and London, reacting the same way, in the media, in some ways, reacting the same way. The governments, can you talk a little bit more how the governments reacted in different ways in the different cities?

Gérôme Truc: (clears throat) I think maybe, as sociologists, we used to see more of the common points, you know, than the differences. Because in the case of government and public authorities, what I... what I saw is that you always have the same kind of reaction, focusing primarily on security issues, of course.

00:55:03 Saying, yeah, because, as Cliff reminds, the starting point of my book is that terrorist attacks are a test for society, and at first, a test for the attacked state. So, at first, the governments need to-to prove that they're in the capacity to protect the citizens in their territory, and to ensure peace.

00:55:29 And so the first reaction is always the same, to say, "Yeah, we are in control of the situation." And you also have what I, I evoked previously as well, that's to say, policies to avoid social tension, to avoid backlash against the Muslim communities.

00:55:54 And so particularly in London, you had a major public campaign against racism and to promote unity at the scale of London, precisely of London. In Paris, there was no such public intervention at that level. But where, as the public authorities are very well-involved, it adds a level of a memorialization process, you know.

00:56:26 After such terrorist attacks, you just can't have memorial acts, memorial commemorative ceremonies, and that's always a very crucial moment, to see how public authorities deal with that in relation to their citizens, and as well as to the victims.

Clifford Chanin: Another question? Right here, please. Just wait for the mic.

00:56:58 Audience Member: I don't have a question as much as a comment, having been at the World Trade Center for 20 years on the commodities exchange. And the government happened to have helped a great deal because they stepped in and financially supported us for the week that we weren't working, until our new setup was... we were moved to Queens.

00:57:23 And I think the government taking over and aiding us gave us a feeling of there was someone who was going to help us. Because at the beginning, you didn't feel any help. There was just tragedy. And I thought it made a huge difference when they came in and assisted us.

Clifford Chanin: That is, I mean, it's a way of rebuilding confidence in some way.

Gérôme Truc: Exactly, exactly. Thanks.

Clifford Chanin: Who else? Please. Just wait for the mic. It looks like a friendly face.

(Truc chuckles)

00:58:03 Audience Member: Thanks very much for sharing this with us, Gérôme. So, my question is about the interaction that you referred to among the people who were, who were cleaning the streets in Paris...

Gérôme Truc: Yeah.

Audience Member: The sociologists, researchers, and the archivists.

Gérôme Truc: Yeah.

00:58:22 Audience Member: And they obviously have different ideas about what their mandates are and how they relate to the space. And I'm just wondering if you could elaborate a little bit on that, and whether there were any cross-purposes or, you know, things that you noticed.

Gérôme Truc: It was, it was... all were volunteers, you know, in each service. We asked for who want to do that? So the archivists, the cleaners, and of course the researcher, were volunteers. And they were sharing this feeling of being touched, concerned, by the event. And so we were on that together.

00:59:12 Which is interesting as well is that after that, you know, you may know I'm involved in another program, and we were talking about that just before the event, a very huge research program called Program November 14, where we are interviewing almost 1,000 people about their stories of... their stories of the attacks, of the November 14 attacks.

00:59:46 And in this framework, I then personally, because I created the question... the questionnaires for the interview in this framework, I personally made some interviews included with some of the cleaners who work with me on the grassroots memorial. So there was a part of the process by different way, you know, collecting the grassroots memorials,

but as well sharing their own experience of the event, an experience that involved the very act to collect the grassroots memorials after the attacks.

01:00:25 Clifford Chanin: How do they reflect on that experience? How do they define the meaning of that for themselves?

Gérôme Truc: Hmm, the main point was to be... to be proud, a feeling to be proud to have done that. Because in the streets, people passing in the streets, congratulate them for doing that. And when you're cleaning the streets, that's not usually the experience you have, of the interaction with the citizens. You may be just be invisible, you not existing.

01:01:01 And in a specific case, they are... yes, they have been congratulated. And so they were proud to be part of-- for them, so that was very, very something, very specific and very important, to have been involved in that.

Clifford Chanin: You know, it's, it's... it's so related to, you know, stories we tell here about people caught up, not just in the events, certainly the first responders is the way we think about it, but, you know, so many people after 9/11 in whatever way 9/11 touched them had stories like that, of doing something, wanting to do something to repair this terrible damage in whatever way they could.

01:01:44 So that, too, seems very resonant to me with the stories. I mean, these are fundamentally human stories.

Gérôme Truc: Yeah, yeah.

Clifford Chanin: All... I mean, I don't mean to eliminate the profession of sociology, because that is about the differences.

Gérôme Truc (chuckling): No, you're right.

Clifford Chanin: But at some fundamental level, this is a human story as well, and there are many, many similarities. You know, it's... I would urge you, the book's outside, it's really, really well worth reading. It's got, you know, fantastic gradations of meaning and difference, and yet, a very, very interesting analysis.

01:02:16 So, please, I think Gérôme is willing to sign your book at the table. But, please, before you do that, join me in thanking Gérôme Truc.

(applause)