

THE DISASTER & SOCIAL CRISIS RESEARCH NETWORK ELECTRONIC
NEWSLETTER

[D&SCRN Report](#)

Helsinki sessions. Progress is being made on the organization of the Helsinki D&SCRN sessions. The session summaries have been widely circulated (e.g. the D&SCRN webpage, the ESA newsletter, “Unscheduled Events, the IDNDR network etc.). Also, a linkage has been made by the Helsinki conference organizers with the D&SCRN in their first call for conference papers. The conference organizers will soon put out a second call for papers. According to a preliminary report by the D&SCRN session organizers, several people have expressed interest in the Network sessions and some of them have also sent in their abstracts. By mid-December, we intend to do a more systematic review with regard to progress. Decisions will of course be made after the deadline for abstracts (Jan. 31, 2001). Some questions have also been raised by session organizers regarding the procedures (and forms) for abstract submission. I presume this information will be given out by the conference organizers during the second-call for papers. If not, the D&SCRN coordinator will ask for clarification and will inform the session coordinators.

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Editor's Note: All “signed” texts reflect the opinions of the authors and not necessarily those of the D&SCRN or the Anglia Polytechnic University.

Membership application. In collaboration with Maureen Fordham, manager of our webpage, and the Geography Department of Anglia Polytechnic University, an on-line membership application has been established. Full members, with the right to vote and hold office, can become the members of ESA in good standing who meet the ESA membership criteria and who agree with the Network’s objectives. Associate members of the Network can become all of those interested in being kept informed on relevant issues but who do not wish to become voting members. The Board of the Network welcomes all interested colleagues. Members of the Network are requested to increase their efforts in this recruitment drive.

[Link of Network and ESA webpages](#). According to recent information from Prof. Soysal, Member of the Executive Committee in charge of Networks, the ESA webpage will no longer be responsible for maintaining a page for the research networks which have their own webpage. In order to avoid duplication, the ESA webpage will simply make an electronic link to the RN's webpage.

[Call for newsletter materials](#). Readers of the D&SCRN are requested to submit relevant materials (e.g. conference reportage, book reviews, country disaster diaries, examples of good practices, brief reports of research activities, announcements of future conference etc.) for publication in the Network electronic newsletter. The availability of these materials will not only help in the more regular and timely publication of the newsletter, it will also hopefully increase collaborative efforts and contribute to an upgrading of civil protection. Contributors should also provide electronic addresses in case the readers would like further information.

Nikos Petropoulos
Coordinator of D&SCRN
Editor of the Newsletter

Do it Once! Do it Right! Do it Internationally!
(A Conference Report)

This motto, used when the International Standards Organization setting was first introduced, was again used in the context of emergency planning and disaster management at the 5th Asia-Pacific Conference on Disaster Medicine in Vancouver, Canada in which I participated in September. Drawing on some primary research interviews with responders, presentations and documentary evidence, I gave a paper about the lessons learned from the Paddington Disaster last year. It was a good opportunity to highlight contemporary issues in major incident planning and response in the UK as well as tell disaster medicine specialists what we do as disaster sociologists.

Disaster Medicine is a relatively new science; it evolved out of evaluations of the medical emergency responses to the Armenian earthquake in the late 1980s. It has been defined as the delivery of care to victims of disasters which clearly has overlaps with the emerging broader discipline of disaster management. The conference provided a forum for community disaster experts and health professionals as well as local municipal government and non-governmental agencies to explore disaster management techniques and to discuss emergency medical methods, models and technologies.

A key feature of the conference was its multidisciplinary and multiagency approach. Opening the conference, Dr Xavier Leus, Director of the Department of Emergencies and Humanitarian Assistance at the World Health Organisation, praised the coming together of Disaster Medicine and Disaster Management specialists. This, he said, is

now recognised as the optimal way forward for improving emergency response and mitigating the effects of disasters.

The conference included an impressive range of speakers, from organisations such as the WHO (World Health Organisation), PAHO (the Pan-American Health Organisation), FEMA (the US Federal Emergency Management Association) and Emergency Planning Canada, as well as representatives from specialist university centres such as the Disaster Preparedness Resources Centre, British Columbia and the Centre for Disease Control, Atlanta.

Main conference themes included Disaster Coordination & Management, the Application of International Standards to Disasters and Sharing International Experiences of Disasters. Many of the presenters were key coordinators of responses to major disasters such as the earthquakes in Kobe, Taiwan, Turkey and Columbia, Hurricane Mitch, floods in Bangladesh and Venezuela, the Tokyo subway sarin attack, the complex emergencies in Kosovo, bioterrorism in Russia and the discotheque fire in Gothenburg, Sweden last year.

The conference ended with participants developing action plans for the next two years. Our stream – Disaster Management & Coordination - recommended the development of an information and data clearing house on disaster management and further research on incentives and disincentives towards developing disaster preparedness and applying lessons learned from the past. Overall this was a stimulating and productive event and I shall be using a number of the papers to enhance my lectures this year.

I would especially like to thank the organisers of the conference who supported my participation.

For more information regarding the conference proceedings, readers could link up with the Conference web address (www.safety.ubc.ca/5APCDM).

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Local Authorities Confronting Disasters and Emergencies – A Conference Review

The most recent LACDE (Local Authorities Confronting Disasters and Emergencies) conference took place in Reykjavk Iceland August 27-August 30, 2000. There were close to 250 participants from about 30 nations from both developed and developing nations well as representatives of the United Nations (UNEP; UNCHS; ISDR), The World Bank ProVention Consortium and FEMA. For the most part, this attendance reflected the distribution of public disaster investments worldwide. Iceland, with a population of ¼ million people, 80% in Reykjavk, played host to the conference.

The conference was organized along with the LACDE secretariat around the theme of “You are not alone”. There were plenary sessions along with more specific workshops

on volcanic eruptions and earthquakes, avalanches, floods, hurricanes, cyclones and human disasters. In addition, there were workshops on the relationship between local authorities, the media and disasters, risk management and linkage to voluntary organizations. The plenary sessions dealt with such topics as mitigation investment, evaluating local government emergency management and loss reduction. As the conference was aimed at practitioners and representatives of local authorities who had to deal with disaster management, many of the discussion groups focused on practical matters concerning their organizations. The theme, “you are not alone” was used to find a common ground among the divergent attendants from culturally different backgrounds and experiences.

As was to be expected, the majority of the topics reflected the host country’s own particular problems. Iceland, the land of “fire, ice, water and earth,” provided enough types of natural disasters to fill a majority of the workshop sessions. Recent volcanic eruptions and annual ice floods provided the incentives for talks on warning systems, risk assessments and recovery management. Along with the descriptions of Iceland’s disasters came other case studies by local authority disaster managers from a wide range of countries and disaster environments. Bio-terrorism was barely touched on. As one would expect, most of the talks and discussions revolved around the solution of technical and organizations problems. Little was said about preparedness with marginal attempts to link the social/psychological research on disasters to its impact on how local governments could resolve their disaster management plans. Overall, most sessions reported personal experiences, or discussed local programs of either single cities or regions involving disaster mitigation. All were case study presentations with no comparative analysis.

Accompanying the sessions was a local exhibition focusing on Iceland’s particular disaster problems. The conference also awarded the mayors of two local authorities for excellence in disaster management: Zigong, China and Ramat Gan, Israel. The next LACDE conference is planned for Shanghai, China 2002. Any one interested in obtaining more information about LACDE or its upcoming conference should contact its secretariat in Israel: 3 Heftman Street, P.O.Box 20040, Tel Aviv 61200, Israel; Tel. 972-3/695-5024 & 691-9241; Fax 972-3/691-6821 or E-mail: ulais@netvision.net.il
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Publications Received by ERC

The Emergencies Research Center received recently a complimentary copy of *Natural Hazards: the State of the Art at the End of the Second Millenium*. The book was edited by G. Papadopoulos, T Murty, S. Venkatesh and R. Blong and published by Kluwer Academic Publishers. It contains a selection of articles that were presented at the Seventh International Symposium on Natural and Man-Made Hazards (Hazards-98) held in Chania, Crete, 17-20 May 1998 and is dedicated to the memory of Mahammed Ibrahim El-Sabh, the founding President of the Natural Hazard Society who passed away 8.2.1999. Most of the selected articles in the collection analyze “natural” disasters (e.g. earthquakes, tsounamis, tidal waves, El Nino, the Malaysian 1997 smoke problem, storm surges, volcanoes) and are highly technical for the “soft” sciences. However, there are also a number of articles (1) “Risk Assessment, Emergency Preparedness and Response to Hazards: the Case of the 1997 Red River Valley Flood, Canada,” (2) “The Contribution of GIS to the Management of Volcanic Crises,” (3) “GIS and Volcanic Risk Management” and (4) “A Systems Approach to Modeling of Catastrophic Risk and Insurability” which would be of special interest to social scientists and practitioners involved in disaster research and management. The volume also contains a useful summary of the Chania conference papers that includes a summary of a session on the socio-economic aspects of disasters . For more information regarding the acquisition of the volume readers may email their requests: orderdept@wkap.nl .

Activities of the D&SCRN Coordinator and the Emergencies Research Center

1. **American Sociological Association Convention** (Washington, August 12-16, 2000). With funding from the Second Community Support Framework and the Pedagogical Institute of Greece, the coordinator presented a paper on “Protest and Violence in Greek Schools, with Special References the Upper Secondary Schools” in the Collective Behavior Session. An important focus of the paper were the massive school occupations by students in 1998 as a reaction to educational reforms. The organizer of the panel , which also featured interesting papers on the anti-racism movement in Germany (R. Koopmans), the “normalization of the protester” in Belgium (P. Van Aelst & S. Walgrave) and “group size and fatality risk in a fire disaster” (W. Feinberg and N. R. Johnson), was Benigno E. Aguirre. The discussant was Robert A. Stallings. I plan to re-write the paper, concentrating on school occupations, and submit it for publication.

During the convention, I also attended two other sessions relating to disasters. The first of these, “Disasters”, was organized by Dennis Mileti and focused on both “natural” and “complex” disasters. It featured paper presentations on state and civil response to the 1999 Turkish EQ (R. Jalali and S. Gologlu), the prediction of long-term business recovery following an earthquake and a hurricane in the US (G. W. Webb, K. J. Tierney and J.M. Dahlamer), behavioral and organizational challenges ... in a

bioterrorist attack (H. W. Fischer,III), "... a rationale for the Kuwaiti CTSM program" implemented during the Gulf war (F. Al-Naser) and on the long-term impact of a hurricane disaster on the psychological well-being of men and women (M. Van Willigen). Russel E. Dynes was the discussant on this panel.

The second session, "Organizations and Risky Technology: Managing Hazards and Disasters", was co-sponsored by the Sections on "Organizations, Occupations and Work" and "Science, Knowledge and Technology". It was organized by T. D. Beamish and K. Tierney and chaired by Gary Webb. Charles Perrow was the discussant. The panel concentrated on "technological", both sudden and creeping, and featured papers on the safety of the blood supply (M. Tamuz, J. B. Battles, H.S. Kaplan), the role of communicative resources and technology in reducing nuclear power plant risks (C. Perin), the cognitive aspects of organization failure... (L. B. Clarke) and organizational response to a chronic petroleum spill in the U.S. (T. D. Beamish).

Readers interested in the ASA convention proceedings (abstracts, information regarding the paper presentations) could open up the ASA webpage: www.asenet.org.

2. **Scanlon Visit to Athens.** Joseph Scanlon, former President of the ISA Research Committee on Disasters and Director of the Emergency Communications Research Unit at Carleton University Canada, is making a stopover in Athens, following a globe-trotting tour of Australia, Hong Kong and China. During his brief stay in Athens, he will present a lecture, "Basic Principles in Mass Emergency Management", to the new public employees of the General Secretariat for Civil Protection (Ministry of the Interior) as well as to emergency practitioners from other Ministries. Professor Scanlon will also meet casually with the professional members of the Emergencies Research Center before resuming his globe-trotting tour to Canada via Germany.

3. **United Nations International Strategies for Disaster Reduction activities.** In his capacity as Sociology Counselor at the Pedagogic Institute, the coordinator has proposed the conducting of a student art contest in the schools of Greece focusing on this year's theme, "prevention of forest fires." The proposal has been approved in principle by the Pedagogical Institute, and has also obtained the consent of the Director for Forest Protection of the Ministry of Agriculture. However, the contest will proceed to implementation following the necessary approval by the General Secretariat for Civil Protection which is responsible for integrated disaster management and which is also asked to foot the bill for the contest awards. Art contests if preceded by an information campaign, especially in affected regions, could be effective in raising consciousness. Nonetheless, governments should also aim on more long-term educational strategies for disaster reduction, including the systematic cross-curriculum integration approaches.

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NEAT Crisis Intervention

In the context of the International School Psychology Association Colloquium which was held in New Hampshire (July 2000), with the theme, “Many Languages, One Voice for Children”, a day-long special training workshop was organized by the members of the National Emergency Assistance Team (NEAT) for the Colloquium participants. The National Emergency Assistance Team is sponsored by the US-based National Association of School Psychologists and its purpose is to provide assistance to school personnel and to children when a school or community crisis occurs. NEAT members have been on the scene following most of the school shootings that have occurred in the U.S. in recent years but the model they use is applicable to natural disasters as well. The workshop was presented by NEAT members, Ted Feinberg, Phil Lazarus, Bill Pfol, Scott Poland, Kim Tarver and Frank Zenere and featured such topics as the history and objectives of NEAT, dealing with the media, short and long-term reactions to crisis, youth suicide, warning signs and threat assessment for violent behavior, qualities of good crisis responders etc. The workshop was attended by Panos Chinas, School Psychologist and member of the Emergencies Research Center of Athens. In the future issues, we hope to have more information regarding NEAT, its objectives, its application to natural disasters, its effectiveness and its international prospects. For more information concerning NEAT, readers can link up with the National Association of School Psychologists (<http://www.naspweb.org/>)

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Brisbane Update: ISA XV World Congress of Sociology, Brisbane, Australia 7-13 July 2002

We now have some deadlines and general topic themes to pass on to interested persons. The general theme of the Congress is: "THE SOCIAL WORLD IN THE TWENTY FIRST CENTURY: AMBIVALENT LEGACIES AND RISING CHALLENGES". At the plenary level, five more specific themes have been selected, and each will be discussed during three days in three consecutive “thematic sessions.” The themes are as follows:

Theme I: INEQUALITY AND EXCLUSION

Theme II: KNOWLEDGE, CREATIVITY AND COMMUNICATION

Theme III: SEXUALITY, FAMILIES AND FORMS OF INTIMACY

Theme IV: THE AMBIVALENCE OF SOCIAL CHANGE

Theme V: DIFFERENCE AND POLITICS

As far as RC39's sessions are concerned, we are still compiling these. I invite further suggestions for session topics (and moderators of those sessions). We are not limited to work within the selected themes, but it would be of value to link with some of these themes where possible. In addition to the regular sessions, Special Integrative Sessions, linking three to five Research Committees on a common theme, are also encouraged and I invite suggestions for these.

Deadlines

31 May 2001 - session topics and names of organizers to the ISA Secretariat

1 January 2002 - submit abstracts

1 January 2002 - Pre-registration deadline

1 June 2002 - submit accepted papers to the Congress Secretariat

ISA members will receive a more detailed breakdown of arrangements so far in in the next issue of the ISA Bulletin. A Congress website will also be available soon.

If you wish to propose session topics or just want to be kept informed as the planning progresses, please contact:

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