

Disaster & Social Crisis Research Network Electronic Newsletter

N°. 40, December 2009 – April 2010

<http://dscrn.crc.ensmp.fr/>

Coordinator's Report

Susann Ullberg

susann.ullberg@fhs.se



Dear DSCRN members and colleagues, back in Sweden since a couple of months my vantage point is now in the North. Located far from any of the world's geological fault lines, the risk for earthquakes is low here. The catastrophes striking on the Haitian people, then the Chileans and the Chinese in the last months have been tremendous as always, laying bare the conditions of social vulnerability that produced the disastrous effects of such geological hazards. Then the "disasters-after-the-disasters" not only in these cases but also in many other catastrophes we know of. The striking inequalities in terms of resource allocations between different victims and relocation camps in Haiti makes the possibilities for recovery a very uneven endeavour

(<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/feedarticle/9047203>). The upcoming rains aren't likely to enhance these already scarce possibilities. An example of the "politics of disaster" is that of the 2008 earthquake in the Chinese province of Sichuan after which a group of parents have claimed for justice for their children who were crushed under the poorly constructed school house. The struggle of these parents against Chinese authorities is portrayed in a recent documentary called "China's Unnatural Disaster: the Tears of Sichuan Province" (<http://www.hbo.com/documentaries/chinas-unnatural-disaster-tears-of-sichuan-province/index.html>). Another example of how politics permeate disaster and shape response to it is depicted in a recent book called "Zeithoun" (Eggers, 2009). Here the author tells the story of the 2005 Katrina

disaster in the USA through the eyes of one of the residents in New Orleans. After having rescued several of his neighbours and fellow residents, Abdulrahman Zeitoun is arrested by armed officers for looting – in his own home! Accusations of him belonging to Al Qaeda reveals how political "business as usual" is enacted also in the post disaster context. Business continuity was one of the key issues in the case of the recent flight chaos in Europe due to the Icelandic volcano ash cloud. Indeed a transnational disaster for which long term economic effects are perhaps yet to be seen. This leads me to another scenario where the effects of economic politics are more than visible. The current economic crisis in Greece is yet another striking example of the transnational nature of such phenomena, not only in causality, but also in how it is managed. The issue accountability is burning here - who is responsible for this situation? Depending on whom you ask the answer will of course vary, but just like in the argentine economic crisis in 2001-2002, general strikes are organised by the syndicates and people are out on the streets to protest against their own politicians as well as against the global economic system. Scrutinising the analogy of a non European country the metaphor of all (countries) being in the same (financial) boat begins to crackle however. While the EU and the IMF has just decided on a multi-billion financing plan to help Greece out of the crisis, in Argentina at the time the IMF did the opposite by cutting off the support to this country.

There have been and there are currently numerous crises and disasters that societies have to face and cope with. How do they do that? As scholars we study such processes and as practitioners we are engaged in problem solving. What are you working on? Crises or disasters, sudden calamities or long soaring conflicts? Share your experiences and views with us! Take the example in this issue of several of our members and colleagues (many thanks for your contributions!) and send us your comments, results, publications and reflections. The purpose of the DSCRN is to make contact and share experiences. This newsletter is one of our key arenas for doing this.

Another arena is our biannual conference within the frame of the European Sociological Association (ESA). This year is not a conference year of ESA, but instead the International Sociological Association (ISA) is

meeting in Gothenburg (Sweden) in mid July. The ISA Research Committee 39 ‘Sociology of Disasters’ is arranging sessions the entire week of the conference and have a number of extra activities going on as well, so it promises to be an exciting week. Check out the programme at <http://www.isa-sociology.org/congress2010/rc/rc39.htm>. Hoping to meet you there!

I shall end on a rather sad note because our Newsletter Editor and Web Manager, Eduardo Runte, is leaving this post. He is defending his doctoral thesis next month (to which we congratulate him and wish to hear more about in the upcoming newsletter!) and will be moving on to other commitments. We are very thankful to him for his work with the newsletter and not least with the new web page. We shall miss him but do wish him the best for the future! This also means however that these assignments in the DSCRN organisation are vacant from now on. If you are interested in working more actively for the network, gaining experiences and merits, please contact Eduardo or me directly. For now, enjoy the newsletter and keep track of our webpage <http://dscrn.crc.ensmp.fr/> for further notice!

Your sincerely,

//Susann Ullberg, DSCRN Coordinator

Contents

Coordinator's Report.....	1
Editor's Note.....	2
DSCRN Web Manager report (December 2009 – April 2010).....	2
Resources.....	2
Writers' Corner.....	4
Announcement.....	11
Upcoming Events.....	12
The DSCRN Electronic Newsletter.....	14

Editor's Note

Eduardo Runte

dscrn.news@gmail.com



Dear DSCRN members and colleagues, this is the issue number 40 of our newsletter. You have probably noticed that it has been a while since the last newsletter. In the past few months, I was working on the completion of my Ph.D. thesis, and was unable to dedicate time to the newsletter. I will be defending the thesis in June. In any event, I apologize for the delay.

At this point, I m still looking for post-thesis work, and rather unsure about what will happen once I get back to Brazil. Given this uncertainty, I believe it is in the best interest of the DSCRN to find someone to replace me in the roles of newsletter editor and website manager. The work is not particularly difficult and would be suitable for any Master's or Ph.D. student interested in building a professional network. A basic background in publishing software is required and I would be willing to help the newcomer. Please notice that I will continue to carry out my duties until a replacement is found.

Sincerely,

Eduardo

DSCRN Web Manager report (December 2009 – April 2010)

Eduardo Runte

dscrn.website@gmail.com

1. **New members:** The DSCRN has not received any applications for membership in the period. We at the Coordinating Committee would like to urge you to encourage your colleagues to join us. To forms of membership are available: full membership, for those who are members of the ESA; and associate memberships for those who are not members of the ESA. Visit our website for details. Indeed, one of our colleagues has pointed out to a malfunction on the website's online registration form, which may explain the absence of new members. I will look into this problem and see how it can be solved.

Resources

Books, articles, reports, and recent studies by DSCRN members and colleagues. Book prices reflect prices at the time of survey. The DSCRN cannot guarantee the prices informed. Prices in US dollars.

Scanlon, Joseph, Terry McMahon and Casey Hurrell (2009) “Almost only women: Canadian volunteer response to the 1918-20 pandemic” *American Journal of Disaster Medicine* Vol. 4 No. 6 (November-December) pp: 331-344

By the time the second and most deadly wave of the 1918-20 pandemic struck Canada in October, 1918, many physicians and nurses were overseas with the Canadian Army Medical Corps as Canada was in the fifth year of the First World War. Because so many became ill there was an enormous demand for women to care for the sick both in hospitals, emergency hospitals and private homes. Many women volunteered

and often took on the role of special nurse after as little as an hour of training. Inevitably some became sick and some died. A few – very few – had received first aid training from St. John Ambulance as these were known as V.A.D.'s which stood for the Voluntary Aid Detachment. However there was a limited supply of V.A.D.'s because some of them as well had gone overseas. The article is based on material located while the authors were doing a study of how three Ontario communities dealt with death during the 1918-20 pandemic. The title is based on the fact that while men did perform a few functions such as digging graves the volunteers – especially those in hazardous roles such as nurses – were almost all women.

Gaillard, J.-C., I. Kelman, and M.F. Orillos. 2009.
“US-Philippines Military Relations After the Mt Pinatubo Eruption in 1991: A Disaster Diplomacy Perspective”. *European Journal of East Asian Studies*, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 301- 330.

This paper explores the impact of the 1991 Mt Pinatubo eruption on the US- Republic of the Philippines military relations through the lens of disaster diplomacy. Disaster diplomacy focuses on how and why disaster-related activities (e.g. mitigation, prevention and response) do and do not yield diplomatic gains, looking mainly at disaster-related activities affecting diplomacy rather than the reverse. Disaster diplomacy 'pathways', identified in previous studies, help to explain how the Filipino and US governments approached the negotiations for renewing the lease of the US military facilities in the Philippines in the context of two bases being damaged by a volcanic eruption. The paper further addresses six underpinning questions of disaster diplomacy for this case study. These questions assist in answering this paper's central research question: how much did the 1991 eruption of Mt Pinatubo influence US-Philippines military cooperation due to the concurrent diplomatic talks between the two governments regarding the lease renewal for the US bases in the Philippines? The answer is that disaster-related activities due to the Mt Pinatubo eruption had a short-term impact on US-Philippines diplomacy. This impact was seen in the context of significant connections already existing, through the long-standing US-Philippines military links. Over the long-term, non-disaster factors had a more significant impact on US-Philippines military diplomacy than Mt Pinatubo, adding to the list of case studies for which disaster diplomacy's impact was limited.

Ganapti, E., I. Kelman, and T. Koukis. 2010.
“Analyzing Greek-Turkish Disaster-Related Cooperation: A Disaster Diplomacy Perspective”.
Cooperation and Conflict, in press.

This paper contributes to the disaster diplomacy literature by examining the conditions under which disasters can lead to long-term disaster-related collaboration (e.g., in disaster response, recovery or risk reduction) both at the governmental and non-governmental levels amongst states in conflict. In particular, the paper focuses on the role of the 1999 earthquakes in enhancing such collaboration between Greece and Turkey over the last decade. While acknowledging the diversity and complexity of disaster diplomacy situations, the paper suggests that disasters can lead to long-term disaster-related cooperation amongst states in conflict when: (1) one party providing disaster relief to another party is followed by a similar reciprocal gesture (i.e. tit-for-tat diplomacy); (2) there is a realization and acceptance that neighbors should come to each other's assistance in times of disasters; and, (3) there is an enabling broader context (e.g., a rapprochement process) conducive to sustaining the long-term cooperation.

Kelman, I. 2010. “Tying Disaster Diplomacy in Knots”. **Overton, G.T. (ed.), Chapter in *Foreign Policy in an Interconnected World*, Hauppauge, New York, U.S.A.**

Disaster diplomacy (<http://www.disasterdiplomacy.org>) examines how and why disaster-related activities, such as preparedness before a disaster or response after a disaster, do and do not reduce conflict and induce cooperation. The wide variety of case studies has led to efforts to create typologies for them in order to seek a predictive model indicating the circumstances under which various forms of disaster diplomacy will and will not manifest. The most common outcome is that, for influencing diplomacy, disaster-related factors are dwarfed by non- disaster factors. That is, the main observation is that disaster diplomacy rarely succeeds, leading to the main prediction that disaster diplomacy is unlikely to have many successes.

A key element in the general failure of disaster diplomacy so far, and the challenge of robust predictions beyond the overarching conclusion of the general failure, is the number and diversity of the influences on disasters, on diplomacy, and on their interconnectedness. In particular, disaster diplomacy prior to a disaster tends to fail because the parties dealing with disaster risk reduction prefer to separate their work from diplomacy. That is, they wish to reduce interconnectedness. In contrast, disaster diplomacy following a disaster tends to fail due to too many disaster-related and diplomacy-related players with multiple relationships at multiple levels. That is,

too much interconnectedness exists to permit the development and maintenance of strict links between disaster-related activities and diplomacy.

Overall, hope seems to be misplaced in disaster diplomacy to resolve either disaster or diplomacy challenges. Even so, optimism is still feasible for disaster-related activities providing a useful connection point to pursue long-term reduction of enmity. Foreign policy in an interconnected world means that disaster diplomacy might rarely be at the top of the foreign policy or disaster risk reduction agendas, but the extensive interconnectedness nonetheless leads to opportunities for positive disaster diplomacy results.

Fahrudin, A., and Edward, D. 2009. "Family Characteristics and Traumatic Consequences Associated with the Duration and Frequency of Sexual Assault". *Asian Social Work and Policy Review* 3, pp. 36–50.

The objective of this study was to analyse the relationship between family characteristics and the trauma associated with the duration and frequency of sexual assault on child survivors in the state of Sabah, Malaysia. Eighty children who reported sexual assault through a one stop crisis centre in an urban hospital were studied. The main research instrument used was adapted from the trauma symptoms checklist for children. The results of the study show that there are significant differences between the symptoms of trauma of victims according to the frequency of sexual assault, but not according to its duration. Social workers need both to understand and to take note of the relationship of the variables of family characteristics, frequency of sexual assault and trauma effects on the victims in their intervention work with child sexual assault survivors who report having been abused. The implications of these findings are discussed in the context of providing crisis intervention by social workers in Malaysia for child victims of sexual assault.

Malek, M D. A., Fahrudin, A., and Kamil, I. S. M. 2009. "Occupational Stress and Psychological Well-being in Emergency Services". *Asian Social Work and Policy Review* 3, pp. 143–154.

Sources of occupational stress and their impact on job satisfaction and psychological well-being were examined in a questionnaire survey of 617 Malaysian firefighters. The role of coping strategies and work motivation as moderating factors were also tested. Sources of occupational stress had significant reverse correlations with job satisfaction and well-being. The hierarchical regression analysis was used to examine the moderating effect of work motivation and coping strategies on job satisfaction and psychological well-being. The result suggested that coping strategies and

work motivation are one of the potential moderating variables between sources of stress and job satisfaction.

Writers' Corner

Electricity Distribution Systems and Contemporary Risk: A Control Room Ethnography

By Antti Silvasti, University of Helsinki
(antti.silvast@helsinki.fi)

(Editor's note: the list of references has been removed from this version of Silvasti's paper. For the complete version, please contact the author)

Introduction

Risk, formally defined as the possibility of future loss, is one of the topics of the three year (2008-2011) research project *Managing Insecurity: Risk and Technologies of Welfare*, based at the University of Helsinki, Faculty of Social Sciences and led by Professor Turo-Kimmo Lehtonen. My dissertation research is an empirical subproject of *Managing Insecurity*. The research question of the dissertation is: *How does risk figure in the day-to-day and mundane practices of managing electricity distribution?* The research is grounded on empirical material that as gathered by interviewing and observing electricity technicians in their daily work. These technicians work in the energy market and electricity distribution control rooms of an electricity company in a Finnish town. The duties of the rooms, respectively, are trading electric power at the common Nordic power exchange Nord Pool and maintaining the town's electricity distribution networks. This extended summary is a brief introduction to my research context, entering of the research field, methodology and preliminary research results. The paper concludes with tentative points for further studies.

Research context: risk, anthropology and the contemporary

Two main approaches may be identified in the currently popular sociological discussions about risk. First, many sociologists claim the current practices of risk result from societal developments. Accordingly the society has entered a new period, for example, the risk society (Beck 1992), climate of risk (Giddens 1990) or culture of fear (Furedi 2006; see also Eberhard 2007) which results into new form of societal relationship to risks. Second, in another popular discussion, it has been argued that risks are always the result of cultural interpretations. They are not merely "objective" calculations of probabilities and impacts, and hence sociologists should focus on how people perceive risk in the context of their cultural groups (e.g. as 'experts' or as 'lay persons') (Douglas & Wildavsky 1982).

As relevant as these considerations are, they tend often not to be sensitive to the divergent technical ways that experts are already managing insecurity. The focus in the Managing Insecurity project is thus notably different from the current sociological discussions. We emphasize on the diverse calculations and techniques that translate concerns over welfare and security into risks and how these risks are then implemented in the daily practices of people. By being empirically sensitive to the different expert ways of dealing with risks, we strive to avoid the presumption that risks result from one common societal development, or that all risks are either completely cultural or completely objective to start with.

The empirical subprojects of Managing Insecurity analyze four different topics: private insurance, social insurance, life insurance and electricity distribution. While the other subprojects' empirical material is mostly historical, my dissertation mainly applies ethnographic approaches like participant observation and interviews. Background to this style of research is an interest in anthropology. Traditionally, anthropology has been concerned with "premodern" far-away people and their societal structures, economies, cultural symbols and rituals (Rees 2008). My research, in its turn, has been motivated and informed by the new approaches and theories that Paul Rabinow, Stephen Collier, Andrew Lakoff and their colleagues call *anthropology of the contemporary* (Rabinow et al 2008; <http://anthropos-lab.net/>).

Anthropology of the contemporary seeks to analyze phenomena that are "emergent", "give shape to here and now" and "are generally perceived as important" (Rabinow et al 2008, 57-58). As the name suggests, the particular concern with the research program is 'anthropological' – in the local and situated aspects of contemporary issues and events. When used as a research methodology, the term contemporary

allows us to decompose emergent phenomena – for example synthetic biology – into different elements that are assembled into one form constitutive of the phenomenon in question (Rabinow et al 2008, 58).

In addition to the above example synthetic biology, the topics in the research program have included genomics, biosecurity and nanotechnology (see Rabinow et al 2008). Moreover, anthropologists Stephen Collier and Andrew Lakoff (2008) have also applied the approach to analyze *infrastructures* as a contemporary security problem.

Infrastructures are currently commonly understood as the underlying structures of everyday life; the products and services without which we cannot function (Edwards 2003). Recently, the protecting of critical infrastructures has become a topical security policy issue in many Western countries and the EU (Abele-

Wigert & Dunn 2006; see also Silvast & Kaplinsky 2007). According to Collier and Lakoff (2008), the key element of these concerns is found on technocratic discussions about national security. The attempts to protect critical infrastructures have in this respect three aspects: "a concern with critical systems upon which modern society, economy and polity depend"; "the identification of vulnerabilities of these systems and of threats that might exploit these vulnerabilities as matters of national security"; and "the effort to develop techniques to mitigate system vulnerabilities" (Collier & Lakoff 2008, 24). In their various articles and discussion papers, Collier and Lakoff (e.g. 2008) have analyzed the history of these kinds of expert forms of knowledge in the US. They document a variety of ways, for example simulations, forecasts and estimations, through which security experts have at different time imagined uncertain events. Moreover, Collier and Lakoff argue that the more historical reasoning about infrastructure security – for example, strategic bombing theories of the early 20th century or Pat Choate's and Susan Walter's 1983 book *America in Ruins: the Decaying Infrastructures* – has various similarities to today's techniques and discourses of critical infrastructure protection.

The approach taken in my dissertation project is similar to the above. I want to 'decompose' an emergent phenomenon – namely, problems related to electricity supply breakdowns in Finland – and interpret its different constitutive elements. While the main fieldwork of the dissertation is done at electricity distribution control rooms, the research has also been done in regular contact with Finnish experts of electricity supply security. In the following, I introduce the key informant of my dissertation and then move to introduce the field work.

Entering the field and doing methodological choices

When I first heard about N.N., I was working for the Finnish Energy Industries, an industrial policy and labor market policy association. I had told my colleagues there that I would like to continue my sociology master's thesis (Silvast 2006), which concerned the lay and expert perceptions of electricity supply breakdowns, to a doctoral dissertation in sociology. Everyone I spoke to suggested contacting N.N. He was then a CEO for a Finnish energy company, a former safety authority and a researcher who held a doctorate at a university of technology. Curiously, I had never met him before despite having long worked with energy research and industry.

N.N. was starting a large technically oriented research project on electricity supply breakdowns, and knew my master's thesis research. Upon contacting him, we set up a meeting in a restaurant in Helsinki in September 2007. At the dinner, I learn about N.N.'s own doctoral research. He carried out a statistical analysis of fires

caused by electricity, such as refrigerators catching fire at home. This work, he tells me, was able to found the research of electrical fires in Finland. Currently he would like to similarly found research and management of long and extensive electricity supply breakdowns in Finland.

His concern for electricity supply appears clear from the beginning. In a later recorded interview, N.N. accounts on the 'underlying' role of electricity: "Due to the society's technological development, electricity has become sort of, it comes tremendously close to peoples' skins. (...) (E)verything, including working, living, taking care of business, hobbies, moving, practically everything that is done requires electricity." He thinks that long electricity supply breakdowns might lead to disasters. Moreover too many energy end-customers ignore this. "If you have activities that are critical for the loss of electricity, you cannot wash your hands from preparing. And say, hey, I have critical activities, the society or the energy companies should take precautions so that I do not get any problems." Contrasting to the solution where customers "wash their hands", he wants to emphasize that energy companies, the society and customers all have responsibilities for taking precautions. When I raise the topic of competitive energy supply, it is then perhaps not surprising that he is in certain respects critical about the common tendency in Finland where cities sell the ownership of their electricity utilities: "Who bought the utilities? Private companies, who of course these buyers did not come to develop the region and the Finnish society, but they did economically profitable investments, they invested money to get good returns."

The quotes above suggest there is something distinctively *infrastructural* about electricity supply in Finland. Infrastructures are by definition the underlying structures of everyday life (Edwards 2003) and N.N. also thought that "everything that is done requires electricity". However, I would argue that when infrastructure security is concerned, what is understood as infrastructures varies markedly from context to context. Stephen Collier's and Andrew Lakoff's (2008) material from the US security discussions emphasize how infrastructure problems relate to national defence security, national economic security, the functioning of the government and public health and safety (see National Infrastructure Protection Plan 2009). At the national Finnish and EU level, these have been relevant and important points of discussion as well (e.g. Abele-Wigert & Dunn 2006). But many of the the Finnish concerns about electricity supply failures have also touched topics that are more technical and managerial. A forecast project of the situation of Finnish electricity networks in 2030 (Kumpulainen at al 2006), for example, raises several issues of how future electricity networks are going to

be operated: for example of the organization of electric power generation, automation of electric power networks, weather conditions and overhead lines, ageing energy grids, growing quality expectations by energy customers, ownership of utilities and competitive electricity markets and their regulation. If these topics are considered important by Finnish energy expert forecasts, then their study is perhaps also merited as 'contemporary' phenomena. Another motivation for studying day-to-day management of electricity systems stems from previous studies. The day-to-day practices of electricity supply and other infrastructure control rooms have recently been the topic of detailed ethnographic studies (Roe & Schulman 2008; de Bruijne 2006; Steenhuisen 2009). Moreover I find the topic electricity technology management important also for my background: previously to graduating in sociology I worked as a computer engineer. Motivated by these considerations, the dissertation project's field site has been selected to be the control rooms of electricity supply.

From the start, N.N. appeared to be highly enthusiastic about my "uncommon but very important point of view to the technically oriented research team" as he later wrote in his research group's funding applications where I featured as part of their social networks. On his own suggestion, N.N. joins my dissertation's supervising panel. As I explained in this paper earlier, he was also at a time a CEO of an electricity distribution company in a Finnish town, and was happy to let me do observations and interviewing in their control rooms. I contacted the middle managers of the technicians who work in the control rooms and was able to set up the technicians' interviews after one telephone call.

In regional electricity distribution, the 24/7 operated control rooms are used to adjust the power flows between electricity production and generation, to maintain electricity networks and to operate on the common Nordic stock exchange Nord Pool. Two things in specific are traded in Nord Pool: physical electric power and derivative contracts. Trading *electric power* means that a contract is made between two anonymous electricity producers: producer A will agree to produce electric power for the producer B with the price X for the hour Y. With *derivative contracts*, a price agreement between two producers is made for longer durations, for example for days, weeks, months, quarters of year or even years. The electric power trading, in its turn, is divided to two markets: *Elspot*, where contracts about producing electric power are traded for the following day, and *Elbas*, which is used during the same day.

In the company of my case, the management of electricity distribution had been divided to two rooms which mirrored that the company has both market and

technical duties: one room controlled the technical maintenance of electricity networks, the other room electric power trading and electricity generation. Methodologically the research of the rooms relied on interviews and participant observations. Between two pilot visits in 2007 and 2008 and four days in 2008, I sat in the two control rooms and carried out around dozen interviews and 20 hours of observation. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed, and the observations were written to a notebook. With the interview questions and the observations, I sought to address the daily working routines of the control rooms. Secondly, with some interview questions, I also addressed the figurations of specific contemporary concepts in the work, such as markets, customers, crisis, welfare, public service and security. To capture the diverse character of the empirical material, two different methods were used for the analysis of the data as well: discourse analysis for the interview speech and ethnographic analysis for the field notes and interviews.

Preliminary results

Based on the preliminary result of data analysis, there are rather different logics at work in the control rooms. At first, it appeared that the workers have rather determined opinions about their work's aims. Several market room workers reported that the work is almost wholly subsumed under the economic demands of making energy stock exchanges. In answer to my question about possible crisis situations in the work, one of the workers of the market room then replied that "the only problem is that money gets burned (...). There is no security risk." Given that the topic of my dissertation is risk, it was not wholly convincing that I had selected the most relevant concept to analyze. For the network room's workers, they told me that their work strives for maintaining the physical well-being, health and safety of people and avoiding material losses that result from technical breakdowns, in this order of priority. Towards these ends, the work was reported to follow strict laws, standards and practical protocols. While public health risks then do figure in the work, it was again difficult to explicitly discuss the topic of risks with the workers. "You cannot think about threats too much because it can be really a rack," one of the workers reflected of exceptional situations in the work.

The problem with these kinds of research results is that they are rather predictable. The formal duties of the rooms respectively are correcting technical failures, obtaining market shares and minimizing the price of electricity. Moreover, as Simon Graham and Stephen Marvin (2002) have documented in their book *Splintering Urbanism: Networked Infrastructures, Technological Mobilities and the Urban Condition*, serving 'public interest' has traditionally been one of

the main concerns of both regional and national infrastructure provision. There is perhaps little reason to conduct laborious interview studies at work places if the same research results might have been obtained from reading official job descriptions or for example from interviewing the managers of the technicians (cf. the research results in Silvast 2006).

However, the ethnographic analysis of the data showed a rather different side of the work. Its main result is that risks are not only managed and prevented, but also made in action (see also Schulman & Roe 2008, 114). What appears as rather planned and economic on the level of worker discourse seems to be rather constantly marked by practical rules of thumb, skill, tacit knowledge and changing situational contexts. In the market room, the changing weather is behind many of the contingencies of the daily work. When there is for example surprising showery rain in the city, it increases the city's heat consumption. The heat is generated at a district heat plant, and as its side product, I understand, the plant generates electricity. This extra generated electricity then has to be sold on the electricity stock exchange. An opposite effect is created by street lights, which increase the city's electricity consumption. As lights tend to go on at various times depending on the weather, there is no way to exactly anticipate the moment when extra energy has to be either generated or purchased on the markets. For one of the technicians thus, "this work is always sort of seeking, there is no crystal ball. You cannot make the electricity stock exchanges beforehand so that it goes spot on. This work is momentary."

There are other exceptions to daily routine of the market room as well. When I was sitting in the control room, the company was starting an extra power plant. Rather than being momentary striving for profit, the actions towards selling the plant's energy were rather precautionary. Before economic decisions were made, phone calls to the local generators had to be made, computer screens had to be studied and an Excel sheet depicting the required amount of electric power had to be "constantly tinkered with" as one of the workers explained. I started to notice some kind of cautionary and slow actions when observing other market actions as well. Analyzed ethnographically, the economic agency of the workers is it seems then an active and gradual accomplishment rather than a set of isolated economic decisions.

Based on a similar analysis also the network control room has tensions between anticipation and improvisation. On the one hand as the workers reported the work is highly standardized and follows law and protocols. On the other hand each situation is also different and "then comes your own adaptation of how you want to do it" as one of the technicians puts it. To

illustrate the adaptive aspect, one night in the room I wrote down all the phases of diagnosing and fixing a fault in the electricity network. The situation was sparked when a customer called the company. The technician first talks with the customer who has her lights blinking at home. He then determines if this fault is the responsibility of the electricity company. He decides to send maintenance to the field because although the problem is at a home and not on the company's electricity grid, blinking lights may indicate a "ground fault" which has a risk of electric shock to the customer. He finds the location of the house on a computer map, phones a maintenance team and tells them about the technical details of the fault. He determines how many other houses have to be, "in the worst case" as he tells me, cut off from electricity distribution during the fixing of the fault. He waits for the maintenance team to get to the house of the customer. He tinkers with a computer to start writing a new fault report. He talks with the maintenance on the phone again once they arrive. And finally after several attempts at finding the cause of the fault at the customer's house, he determines together with the maintenance that this was not a "ground fault" but a problem of loose electricity line, typical "of these old front man houses" as he notes to me. He then concludes the fixing by sending the maintenance team off and checks with the details about their working hours which determine their billing.

The point in this long description is that there are divergent aspects in the work and only some of them are anticipated, standardized or economic. The above example documents constant tinkering, improvisations, independent decisions, team work, skills, using of computer systems, practical rules of thumb and know-how of the local region. Whereas analogical findings have been done in organizational research of control rooms before (Roe & Schulman 2008; de Bruijne 2006; Steenhuisen 2009), they have only rarely been addressed from the perspective of risk.

Conclusion

While it is not possible to do systematic conclusions on the base of these preliminary results, I will give some tentative points. Upcoming studies about risk, it would seem, could also be fruitfully attuned to the routine and ordinary, to underlying technical and organizational arrangements, to regional and local conditions and to worker skills and team work. Moreover the results also have implications for the existing studies about infrastructure operations and infrastructure crises. In relationship to analyses about specific infrastructure breakdowns such as an electricity blackout in Stockholm in 2001 (Deverell 2003), Auckland's two month blackout in 2000 (Newlove, Stern & Svedin 2000), the Buenos Aires electricity blackout in 1999 (Ullberg 2005) and an ice storm and the resulting

electricity blackouts in Canada in 1998 (Murpy 2009), the concept of risk in this dissertation is more attuned to studying the routine and ordinary management of infrastructures. As such I believe that it may fruitfully complement the 'risk' analyzed in crisis management, where risk is associated with unwanted events that lead to exceptional breakdowns. For organizational analyses of infrastructure management (Roe & Schulman 2008; de Bruijne 2006; Steenhuisen 2009), the results documented that skills and cognitive capabilities are not merely reliant on the people in the control rooms. In the spirit of science and technology studies, it is fruitful to also acknowledge the role of the physical equipment, such as computer systems and spreadsheets, as it has a clear part of the 'distributed cognition' in the work. Their acknowledgement would also move control room ethnographies closer in line with the recent analyses of actions in financial markets (e.g. MacKenzie 2007).

Antti Silvast (M.Soc.Sci) is a doctoral candidate at the University of Helsinki, Faculty of Social Sciences. His dissertation project is funded by the Academy of Finland and with scholarships from the University of Helsinki and the Kone Foundation. I would like to thank Eini Nyman for transcribing the interviews and making a tentative analysis of them. For correspondence, please write to antti.silvast@helsinki.fi.

Pictures of field research about typhoon evacuation issues in Cangnan county and Duqiao Town, Zhejiang Province, China

By Xiaoli Lu (Ph.D. Research at Leiden University's Crisis Research Center and Founding Coordinator of China Crisis Management Website, www.crisis119.org) and Laurens Janssen (Graduate student at Wageningen University) during the field research in Zhejiang Province, China in November 2009



Figure 1 Preventive measures for windows adopted in the coastal areas in the face of typhoons, Cangnan County, Zhejiang Province, China



Figure 2 Emergency Command Center, Duqiao town, Linhai City, Zhejiang Province, which is claimed the first computer based command system in town level all over China.



Figure 3 Emergency Command Center, Duqiao town, Linhai City, Zhejiang Province, which is claimed the first computer based command system in town level all over China.



Figure 4 news release room for journalists which is just outside emergency command center, Duqiao Town, Cangnan County, Zhejiang Province.



Figure 5 An officially certified multiple-function shelter at Xiaguan town, Cangnan County, Zhejiang Province, China



Figure 6 Signs of the officially certified multiple-function shelter, Xiaguan town, Cangnan County, Zhejiang Province, China



Figure 7 the NGO (named Emergency Rescue 1+1) office, which is claimed the first emergency rescue NGO in China by its leader. Cangnan County, Zhejiang Province, China

For further information or research outcomes about this field research, please contact Xiaoli Lu through xlhit@gmail.com.

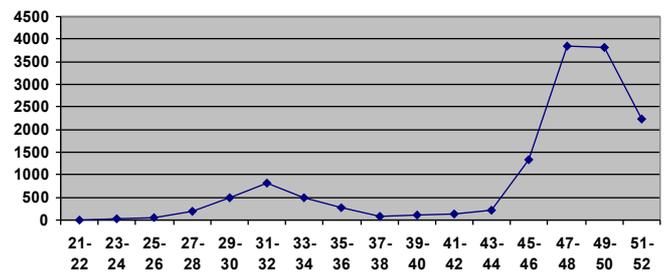
The H1N1 pandemic situation in Greece during the “first wave”: Some epidemiological and crisis-management Aspects (An Executive summary – see note 1)

By Nicholas Petropoulos, erc@otenet.gr

The article opens with the declaration of H1N1 by the World Health Organization as a pandemic and in turn focuses on the situation in Greece. First, it describes the course of the pandemic, during 2009, using “lab-confirmed” cases as an index, both for infections and fatalities. In both cases, the data are examined over time, between the 21st and the 52nd ISO weeks (see note 2), for various regions within Greece and with respect to age. Second, the article focuses on certain aspects of crisis management, such as the National

Pandemic Plan, the infrastructure for diagnosis and treatment, vaccination programs, alternative practices and management of information.

Graph 1. Lab-confirmed H1N1 cases by two-week intervals from the 21st (18-24/5/09) to the 52nd (21-27/12/09) ISO weeks (Total cases = 14,188)



Source: Adapted from statistics sent electronically to the author by Stefanos Bonovas & Theodore Lytras, Center for Disease Control and Prevention (KEELPNO), Department of Epidemiological Surveillance and Intervention, Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity, 31 December 2009.

In regard to **infections**, over time, two peaks are noted, a minor peak during August 2009 and a major peak during November-December 2009. With regard to **region**, high rates were noted in the Attica region and low in the Macedonia-Thrace region. Compared, however, to the general population, there was overrepresentation of cases in the Attica (Athens) and Crete regions and under-representation in the Macedonia-Thrace region. In terms of **age**, the median age for the infected cases was 20 years. Various factors, such as weather, temperature, morbidity, natural immunity, tourism, internal mobility, population density, etc. are suggested to account for the differences.

With regard to H1N1 **fatalities**, 72 deaths were documented up to the 53rd ISO week (see note 3). Deaths peaked during the 49th-50th weeks (30/11/09-13/12/09); they were highest in Attica and Central Macedonia regions (Athens and Salonica urban centers) and quite low in the Peloponnese and the E. Macedonia-Thrace regions. However, compared to the population, deaths were overrepresented in Central Macedonia and Thessaly, underrepresented in E. Macedonia-Thrace and the Peloponnese and about equally represented in the Attica region. The **median age** of the fatalities during the “first wave” of the pandemic was 54 years. Though infections were concentrated among the younger age groups, deaths were concentrated among the older age groups. Here again various factors are discussed, such as differential morbidity, differential access to medical services (e. g intensive care units) as potential causes for the differential death rates.

The article also points out that the use of “lab-confirmed” cases does not necessarily represent the pandemic situation in the general population.

Reference is made to the national Opinion survey conducted by the University of Athens and based on a complex of self-reported influenza-like symptoms. According to the survey results, by the 52nd week (21-27/12/09), some 14,6% (1,6 million) of the Greek population had already contracted the disease. A high proportion (40%) of these was in the younger age group, an observation also consistent with the “lab-confirmed cases”. This meant that the younger population had developed natural immunity, against a possible second wave of H1N1 infections in the upcoming winter months.

The second part of the article focuses on aspects of **crisis management** and contains sections on the National Pandemic Plan, coordinating agencies, the laboratories for diagnosis, the hospital infrastructure, the vaccination program, the complementary-to-vaccination practices and the management of information. This section attempts to answer some questions regarding convergence of cases, overloading of hospital services and exploitation of the crisis for commercial purposes especially by internet entrepreneurs. A large section of part two is devoted to the vaccination program and to an account for the comparatively low vaccination rate in Greece, as compared to other countries. Several factors are discussed including the nature/course of the pandemic, the semiotics of government policies, selective perception of vaccination benefits/side effects, the lack of consensus among scientists/specialists, the historical precedents (the “cry-wolf” phenomenon), the conflicts of jurisdiction, and the vested-interest/conspiracy theories. Also discussed in part two was the question of the management of the surplus vaccines, a problem apparently confronted by many countries.

[0091223.pdf](#).

The article concludes with an overview of the results, a discussion of two fundamental questions surrounding the question of characterizing by the WHO of the H1N1 virus as a pandemic and the potential impact of a lack of professional consensus on the public’s vaccination behavior during future pandemics (the so-called cry-wolf phenomenon). It proceeds to a series of proposals for research on a comparative level between countries, on a regional level within countries and on a social-psychological level. The H1N1 “pandemic” presents especially an opportunity for research on vaccination behavior, from the perspective of risk, in view of the experimental nature of the new vaccines, and for a further exploration of the “cry-wolf” phenomenon.

Notes:

- 1- The full article, with more graphic presentations and a more in depth analysis, can be accessed at the following website address: www.erc.gr/images/stories/katastrofes/H1N1_First_%20Section.pdf
- 2- For the estimation of the International Standards Organization weeks See Rick McCarty, <http://personal.ecu.edu/mccartyr/isowdcal.html>, 1998
- 3- As of 3/03/2010, the deaths for Greece due to H1N1, according to the Greek Center for Disease Control and Prevention (KEELPNO), were 140, a somewhat high number compared to other European countries, such as Sweden (24), Spain (4), and Italy (1) (See *Ethnos*, 6/03/10)

Announcement

2010 Samuel Henry Prince Dissertation Award

By Bill Lovekamp, welovekamp@eiu.edu

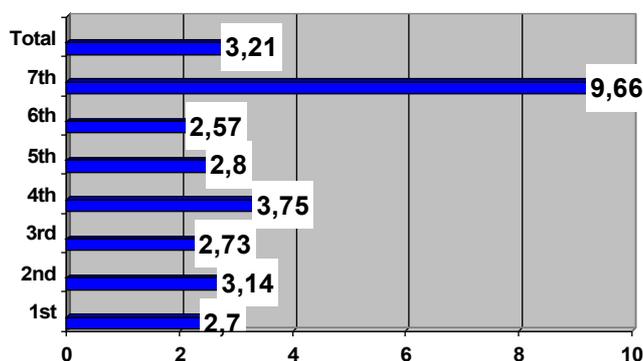
Dear Colleagues,

I am writing on behalf of the International Sociological Association's Research Committee on Disasters and I am pleased to announce the call for nominations for the 2010 Samuel Henry Prince Dissertation Award. This Award is named for the Canadian, Samuel Prince, who in 1920 wrote the first doctoral dissertation on a disaster topic in the social sciences. This award is given in recognition for initial and notable accomplishments by disaster researchers in the social and behavioral sciences. The intent of the International Sociological Association's Research Committee on Disasters in giving this award is to encourage the early identification of exceptional research talent, to the extent it can be indicated by a doctoral dissertation.

If you are a candidate for this award or know someone who is qualified, please send (or have them submit) the following:

- 1) Curriculum Vita (limit 5 pages)

Graph 2. Percentage of General Population Vaccinated for H1N1 by Health Region (23/12/2009) (Total=350,735)



1st=Athens-Attica, 2nd=Piraeus-Aegean Islands, 3rd= Central and Western Macedonia, 4th=Eastern Macedonia -Thrace, 5th=Central Greece – Thessaly, 6th=Peloponnesus-Ionian Islands-Epirus, 7th=Crete. **Source:** Report on the Special Telephone Number (1135) calls and actual vaccinations, The Center for the Control and Prevention of Diseases (KEELPNO), Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity. http://www.keelpno.gr/keelpno/09/id918/report1135_2

2) Dissertation Abstract (5-8 pages) Abstracts must address how the dissertation is innovative, cutting edge methodologically and grounded within relevant disaster frameworks, and applicable to the disaster field.

3) Two letters of recommendation from dissertation advisors, committee members, or others familiar with the research. Letters should be sent separately and incorporate the assessment criteria and overall quality of the dissertation.

To be considered for this award, please send all relevant materials to Sudha Arlikatti Sudha.Arlkatti@unt.edu by **May 31, 2010**. Please contact Sudha or me if you have any additional questions. Also, the full announcement and all guidelines are attached. If you know of other folks, lists, research centers, etc. to pass this along to, please do! And, please forgive me for any cross-postings.

Upcoming Events

Disaster and risk: from empiricism to criticism

International symposium – 18th-19th June 2010 in Paris (CERI-EHESS)

Julien Langumier (RIVES, CNRS UMR EVS) : langumier@yahoo.fr

Cécile Quesada-Moaeteau (CREDO, CNRS UMR 6574) : quesada.moaeteau@gmail.com

Sandrine Revet (CERI, Sciences Po-CNRS) : revet@ceri-sciences-po.org

The symposium calls for social science research (contemporary and historical) that relies on empirical studies (fieldwork, research in the archives...) to study the social and political dynamics involved in these situations and more specifically analyze the interactions between populations and the different actors that intervene to prevent or manage collective drama. The reflection will be organized along three main lines:

1. From the event to the research object

Research will be presented that aims at restoring the density and depth characterizing disasters and risk situations by reinserting them inside dynamic and heuristic scales, that is, by analyzing these events and situations from perspectives that articulate micro and macro, local and global, long time frames and emergency, small disasters and big catastrophes, etc.... The methodological reflections on corpuses, on the practice of fieldwork in these specific contexts, or on the archives chosen to investigate these topics also help to understand how a research object is constructed from the themes of risk and disaster.

2. Beyond the “risk culture”: confrontation and circulation of knowledge and practice

We will introduce studies that analyze hybrid practice, reconfiguration and adaptation born from disaster and risk situations. Hoping to go beyond a certain form of “culturalism” that leads to simplistic dichotomies between “expert” and “profane” knowledge and practices, we encourage papers that investigate confrontation between different types of knowledge and analyze the circulation of tools, actors or practice between the different interacting social worlds.

3. The politics of disaster and risk

By reintroducing the analysis of the dynamics that are born within risk or disaster situations, we want to understand the political use of these situations by different actors. Notably, what are the resources they use to elaborate critiques, rally together and develop forms of appropriation or of resistance against “governance” operations, often presented, by their instigators, as outside the political field, or analyzed by social sciences in terms of “bio-politics”? By observing, from local fields, the interventions of different national and international actors (States, International Organizations, Non Governmental Organizations) we will question the transformations of the concept of security these interventions – and their legitimization processes – contribute to.

Schedule

The symposium will take place in Paris on the 18th and 19th of June 2010.

6th IRCD Researchers Meeting

Boulder, Colorado

The International Research Committee on Disasters (IRCD) and the Natural Hazards Center have partnered together to organize The 6th IRCD Researchers Meeting immediately following the Annual Natural Hazards Workshop in Boulder, Colorado. The Natural Hazards Workshop will be held at the Omni Interlocken Resort near Boulder, Colorado, on July 10-13, 2010. The IRCD Researchers Meeting will be held July 13-14.

Submissions of scholarly research on any aspect of hazards/disasters are being accepted. Submissions from all disciplinary perspectives are welcome. Please submit abstracts electronically to Bill Lovekamp welovekamp@eiu.edu with “IRCD Researchers Meeting Abstract” in the subject line.

The submission should include the following:

- Author’s (and co-authors’) name, address, telephone number, and email address. Indicate the person that will present the paper;

- Title of the paper;
- Three or more keywords that identify the topic area of the paper;
- A short single-spaced abstract of no more than 300 words describing your research question, methodology, and findings;

The deadline for abstracts is **June 4, 2010**, with notification of inclusion in the program by June 15, 2010.

If you have any questions, please contact Bill Lovekamp welovekamp@eiu.edu or Joe Trainor jtrainor@udel.edu, co-organizers of the IRCD Researchers Meeting.

Cordially,
Bill & Joe

**XVII International Sociological Association
World Congress of Sociology
Gothenburg, Sweden**



International Research Committee on Disasters (RC-39) Regular Sessions: July 12-16, 2010

<http://www.isa-sociology.org/congress2010/>

Update from the organizers:

Lori Peek and Joe Scanlon, co-ordinators for the disaster sessions at the World Congress in Gothenburg, Sweden, say that they would welcome additional attendees but that their program is full.

“We were swamped with persons wanting to present. We decided to ask them all to confirm because we have had drop-outs in the past and all but one confirmed.”

The sessions run from July 11-17.

Scanlon says he suspects part of the reason for the strong response is the location in Europe. “There is no question,” he says, “that Europeans and North Americans found it very expensive to travel both Brisbane, Australia and Durban, South Africa, where the World Congresses were held.”

Scanlon adds that anyone still thinking of attending should not be put off by the fact the meetings are part of the World Congress of Sociology, sponsored by the International Sociological Association. He says that

while the person who was the driving force behind the creation of the International Research Committee on Disasters, Dr. Henry Quarantelli, was a Sociologist, he saw the ISA mainly as a venue where disaster scholars from all disciplines could meet. Scanlon, himself, is not a Sociologist but has a background in Journalism and Public Administration.

One twist at the sessions in Gothenburg is that discussants are asked not to read papers in advance. Scanlon says that when discussants have read the papers they often focus on elements that the presenter has not mentioned in the brief time allowed. “The result,” he says, “is a debate between the discussant and the presenter without anyone else knowing what is going on.”

The opening session will be devoted solely to doctoral candidates who will be allowed five minutes to outline the topic of their dissertation.. “Scanlon says, “That will mean that everyone attending will know what topic these students are working on and will be able to talk to them and make suggestions for the rest of the week.” The doctoral students will be introduced a second time at a brunch on Tuesday.

Joe Scanlon

Travel to Sweden

Gothenburg is a university city just across the water from Fredericshavn, Denmark and has excellent train service north to Norway and Oslo, east to Stockholm and (by ferry and train or by train alone) west and south to Copenhagen. There is now a bridge connecting Copenhagen, Denmark to Sweden. There are also some small beautiful fishing villages north of Gothenburg worth a day trip.

Rail travel in Europe including all Scandinavian countries is easy for non-Europeans especially with a Eurail pass (ideally a first class pass). There is usually a small extra charge for a seat which can be booked at any railway station. Passes can be obtained for a specific number of days or for so many days in a longer period. They must be stamped before first used and produced (when asked for) with a passport. Trains usually run on time and the signs at stations are visible and clear. Just one caution: different cars on the same train go to different destinations – it is important when travelling by train to make certain not only that you are on the right train but in the right car. (We once met a Canadian who had left her seat to go to the dining car and returned only to discover her car with her baggage had left the train.)

Train travelers if they wish can head south from Sweden to Germany, France, the Netherlands and other European countries including the Republic of Ireland. Eurail passes are not valid in the United Kingdom which has its own pass system. Buying standard tickets for short trips is not expensive but long distance first

class travel is much cheaper with a pass. It is of course also possible to travel by air but changing travel dates is usually difficult and expensive when air travel is involved. It is easy when traveling using a rail pass.

Airline Discount

Airlines which belong to the Star Alliance are offering a 20 per cent discount to those who travel with their members to the Congress. You can get the discount by calling the reservations office and quoting the event code SK02A05. Registered participants plus one accompanying person traveling to the event are automatically granted a discount of up to 20%, depending on the class of travel. Participating airlines are:

- Air Canada
- Asiana Airlines
- Austrian Airlines,
- bmi,
- LOT Polish Airlines,
- Lufthansa
- SWISS International Air Lines
- Scandinavian Airlines & Blue1
- Singapore Airlines
- TAP Portugal
- THAI
- Turkish Airlines
- United

Booking office information can be found at: www.staralliance.com/conventionsplus

This is the periodic electronic newsletter of the Disaster & Social Crisis Research Network. The purpose of the DSCRN is to promote the study, research and analysis of “natural”, “technological” and “social” disasters with a view to contributing to the development of disaster resilient European communities, and preventing or mitigating the human, economic, social, cultural and psychological effects of crises and disasters.

The DSCRN Electronic Newsletter is published three times a year (December, April and August). The previously published newsletters are downloadable at the network’s webpage: <http://dscrn.crc.ensmp.fr/>.

Announcements of conferences, book, film, and CD-ROM reviews, reportage on conferences, disaster diaries, brief articles on best or worst practices in disaster prevention and recovery, commentaries on disasters and crises, human interest stories relevant to disasters, etc. should be sent electronically to the editor, Eduardo Runte (dscrn.news@gmail.com) no later than the first of the month of publication. Contributions to the newsletter should preferably be written in a concise format (½-1 page long maximum) in order to make reading comprehensive albeit focused. Ideas should be referenced (Author, year), but there is no need for a complete reference list.

Relevant contributions from the field of disaster and crisis research, as well as from applied disaster and crisis management practice, are most welcome!

All “signed” texts express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily those of the coordinator, the editor or of the DSCRN.

Susann Ullberg, DSCRN Coordinator

Eduardo Runte, E-Newsletter Editor