

# Disaster & Social Crisis Research Network Electronic Newsletter

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<http://www.dscrn.org/>

## Coordinator's Report



**Susann Ullberg** ([susann.ullberg@fhs.se](mailto:susann.ullberg@fhs.se))

Dear DSCRN members and friends,

I hope this issue of the newsletter finds you well! A quick international outlook from our vantage point reminds us that our work is needed. The recent floods in Pakistan, the food crisis in Mozambique, and the landslides in Guatemala are but a few examples that call for critical analysis and constructive proposals for risk reduction. Reconstruction on Haiti is underway yet this is a complicated long term process and tens of thousands of displaced continue to live in overcrowded camps. How we make such contributions is not an easy question. To what extent does our academic work through research, publications and teaching have an impact on disaster and crisis management policies and politics? A recent scholarly debate at <http://www.radixonline.org/index.htm> highlighted the social and political complexity involved in scientific knowledge production around the hot (!) topic of climate change. How does heterogeneity within scholarly communities affect the interpretation of social scientific arguments? What happens to our ideas and results when they are communicated outside academia, that is, how are they interpreted, acted upon and used by practitioners, policy makers and politicians?

These are interesting and important questions that were also touched upon in another context recently. The Research Committee 39 'Sociology of Disasters' had organized many sessions at the World Congress of the International Sociological Association (ISA) in the Swedish city of Gothenburg in July. Together with some other DSCRN members I had the opportunity to attend this conference and I was very pleased to meet so many interesting scholars and to see virtually all continents represented at the sessions.

This was of course an achievement of the RC39 but also seems to indicate the increase in research on disasters being carried out worldwide. The learning and thinking that can be achieved through the meeting of scholars from different social, cultural, political and economic cannot be overstated. The DSCRN is a strong advocate of global exchange! If you want to read more about the different sessions and about the papers presented at the ISA congress, please visit <http://www.isa-sociology.org/congress2010/#>.

Speaking about meetings; time has come for you all to think about and send us your panel proposals for our own sessions at the upcoming European Sociological Association (ESA) conference in Geneva next year. What is it that you are working on that you would like to discuss with international colleagues? What theoretical and/or empirical issues in the field of disaster and crisis studies do you find critical to raise at this time? Check out our Call for Session Proposals in this issue of the newsletter! For the upcoming ESA conference, the Executive Committee and its Programme Committee have decided to establish a new procedure: the Research Networks (RN) are integrated much more in the organization by dedicating all the semi-plenaries to the thematic areas of the research networks. All RNs were thus invited to suggest themes and invited speakers for a semi plenary. The Coordinating Committee (CC) of the DSCRN worked out and submitted a proposal for semi-plenary 10 'Risk and the environment' with the title "From risk to crisis society: windows of opportunity or reproduction of social vulnerability?" The Executive Committee will finally decide which of the 30 proposals will become the 12 semi-plenaries. This biannual conference is an important opportunity to meet with scholars and practitioners from our network. It is also an opportunity to engage more actively in the network. Remember that membership is free and that the activities carried out depend entirely on the engagement of each and one of us. On behalf of the entire DSCRN I want to thank all existing members for their contributions and welcome new ones! Read more and register for free as a member at our web page <http://www.dscrn.org/>!

As you can see we have a new web site address. We have recently moved from the university server that Paris Mines tech provided us with through our former web manager, Eduardo Runte. Our new server is institutionally independent and although we now have to pay for it, the DSCRN Coordinating Committee has agreed that it is a better option in the long term. The CC is currently studying the

options for financing this cost and we will present a proposal at the business meeting in Geneva. As I informed in the previous issue of the newsletter, our web manager and e-newsletter editor Eduardo Runte has moved on to other things in the summer. We were lucky to quickly find Antti Silvast, a PhD candidate in sociology at the University of Helsinki (Finland) as our new overall communications manager of the DSCRN ship. On behalf of the DSCRN I deeply thank Eduardo for a fantastic job during these years and warmly welcome Antti onboard! I wish you all an enjoyable reading.

Your sincerely,

//Susann Ullberg, DSCRN Coordinator

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## Editor's Note



**Antti Silvast** (dscrn.news@gmail.com)

Dear members and colleagues of the DSCRN,

Welcome to the September edition of the DSCRN Newsletter, which covers the period May 2010 - August 2010. As you have seen from the coordinator's report, our former E-Newsletter Editor and Web Manager Eduardo Runte has moved to other commitments. My name is Antti Silvast, and starting this newsletter, I shall be replacing Eduardo. I am happy to take this post and want to

wish Eduardo again the best of luck! For my own interests and background, I have put a short introduction at the *New Members* section.

This newsletter includes reports on summer's events, contributions in the *Writer's Corner* and announcements by the network members. In her coordinator's report, Susann drew our attention to the DSCRN call for session proposals for the upcoming European Sociological Association (ESA) conference in Geneva. Please head to the *Upcoming Events* section to read more about this.

Pleasant reading and yours,

Antti

## DSCRN Web Manager Note (May 2010-August 2010)

**Antti Silvast** (dscrn.website@gmail.com)

1. **New members:** Please join me in welcoming the new DSCRN members: (1) **Hannu Hänninen** (hannu.hanninen@aalto.fi), research fellow at the Aalto University, School of Economics, Finland, has interests in organizational and technological failures, risk regulation and work place safety; (2) **Edward H. Powley** (ehpowley@nps.edu), assistant professor at the Naval Postgraduate School, the United States, has interests in organizational resilience, organizational change and development and social impact of crises on organizations; (3) **Dzulkarnaen Ismail** (dzulk004@perak.uitm.edu.my), lecturer at Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia, has interests in post disaster reconstruction and project management for reconstruction and rehabilitation works; (4) **John Twigg** (j.twigg@ucl.ac.uk), senior research associate at the University College London, the UK, has interests in disaster risk reduction (DRR); (5) **Antti Silvast** (antti.silvast@helsinki.fi), doctoral candidate at the Department of Social Research, University of Helsinki, has interests in social theories of action, risks and security and qualitative methods.

2. **New web site address:** Our web site has moved! The new site is found at <http://www.dscrn.org> or <http://dscrn.org>. Our old address also works as of yet, but please update your bookmarks!

3. **Membership form:** The online membership form of the web site is currently not working. While we are fixing it, I have put online a Word document which can be used for joining the network by sending it to dscrn.website@gmail.com. Please follow this link to access it: <http://www.dscrn.org/cms/index.php?page=become-a-member>. Sorry for the inconvenience!

## New DSCRN Members

**Hannu Hänninen** (hannu.hanninen@aalto.fi)

Hannu Hänninen acts as a research fellow at the School of Economics of the Aalto University in Helsinki, Finland. His activities include research, research supervision and teaching. Hänninen's research interests include organizational and technological failures (particularly shipping accidents), risk regulation and work place safety. He is also a management group member of the Helsinki Institute of Science and Technology Studies (HIST) and an editor for the Science Studies journal.

**Dzulkarnaen Ismail** (dzulk004@perak.uitm.edu.my)

Dzulkarnaen Ismail holds a Diploma in building (2001) and a Bach. (Hons) in construction management (2003). He has received both from Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Shah Alam, Malaysia. He furthered his studies in year 2005 for MSc in Construction Management at Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Skudai Johor, Malaysia. He had 1-2 years working experience at Brunfield Engineering Sdn Bhd (2003-2005). Currently, he is working as a lecturer in Universiti Teknologi MARA, particularly serving the Building Department (2006-present).

In addition, he is actively involved in humanitarian aid mission as volunteer with MERCY Malaysia (2006-present). List of the missions includes reconstruction and rehabilitation of Aceh, Indonesia, reconstruction of a hospital in Pulau Nias, Indonesia and the construction of new District Health Office (DHO) in Bagh, Pakistan. His job tasks here were related to construction management.

**John Twigg** (j.twigg@ucl.ac.uk)

John Twigg is a researcher/consultant specialising in disaster risk reduction, principally in developing countries. He has worked on social vulnerability, disaster and livelihoods, institutions and risk management, and disability and disasters; and is currently focusing on community resilience and social capital. He is based part-time at University College London, where he teaches on several MSc courses.

**Antti Silvast** (antti.silvast@helsinki.fi)

Antti Silvast graduated in sociology from the University of Helsinki, Finland and is currently a doctoral candidate at the Department of Social Research at the same university. The topic of his doctoral dissertation is the security and risks of electricity supply, for which he also has engineering experience. He has interest on research methods and teaches on qualitative research method courses at the Department of Social Research. Starting this newsletter, Antti shall be working as the new E-Newsletter Editor and the Web Manager of the Disaster and Social Crisis Research Network.

## 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.

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



With the 2010 World Congress of Sociology now over, planning has begun for disaster sessions at the next World Congress in Yokohama July 13-19, 2014. The organizer for Yokohama will be Lori Peek (Lori.Peek@ColoState.edu). While 2014, may seem like a long time in the future, it takes time to plan for an international conference. Dr. Peek would welcome hearing from anyone who wants to organize a session in Japan.

At the conference in Gothenburg in July, there were papers covering research in all parts of the world except Antarctica and 61 persons took part from the following 21 countries: Israel, Greece, Finland, USA, Sweden, Canada, India, Iceland, France, UK, Japan, China, South Africa, Algeria, China, Italy, Norway, Romania, Denmark, Netherlands and Australia. Though there were no presenters from South America, three papers covered research being done there. Sessions were organized by the following persons:

- Betty Morrow, USA: *Vulnerability and Capacity among At-Risk Populations*;
- Ilan Kelman, Norway: *Conflict, Climate Change and Crisis Communication*;
- Sandrine Revet, France: *An Ethnographic Approach to Disaster and Risk*;
- Susann Ullberg, Sweden: *Scandinavian Disaster Research*;
- Andrew Collins, UK: *African Ethnographics in Adversity*.

All of the other sessions were co-organized by Lori Peek, USA and Joe Scanlon, Canada. Attendance ranged from 20 to more than 40, with the peak, 49.

For the first time, the disaster sessions began with one for doctoral students in which each presenter was allowed

only five minutes to outline his/her dissertation topic. The hope was that those listening would – after hearing about the topics – talk with the students during the week, passing on suggestions, etc. The session was chaired by Alice Fothergill from Vermont who took time off from ancestor hunting in Sweden to take part. This approach had not been tried before but the response was excellent: nine students took part – two from France, one each from Sweden, India, Canada, the UK, Australia, Japan and the United States. The session ended with remarks by Bill Lovekamp describing the Samuel Henry Prince award for outstanding dissertations. The feedback from the students was very good and the organizers recommended it be repeated in Japan.

The presenters were:

- Consuela Biskupovic (cbiskupovic@gmail.com): *Who Protects What? Analysis of the “Environmental Protection” in the traditional “Risk Zone” of the Andean Piedmont in Santiago, Chile;*
- Linda Eliasson (linda.eliasson@miun.se): *Making Sense of Uncertain Situations: Spontaneous Volunteers at the Scene of Accidents;*
- Priya Gupta (priya.knotty@gmail.com or priyagupta@isec.ac.in): *Disasters and Vulnerability, Survival and Resilience of Two Village Communities in Coastal Orissa, India;*
- Adam Rostis (rostisap@gov.ns.ca): *Problematizing Crisis: Re-Reading Humanitarianism as Postcolonial Organizing;*
- Emily Wilkinson (Emily.Wilkinson@ucl.ac.uk): *Learning from Disaster: Innovation and Change in Mexico’s Municipalities;*
- Nicholas Larchet (nicolaslarchet@yahoo.fr): *The Political Uses of Disaster: Reforming the Food System in Post-Katrina New Orleans;*
- Kim Spurway (k.spurway@unsw.edu.au): *Knowledge, Decision, and Disaster: A Systematic Review of the Literature;*
- Kailash Gupta (Kailashgupta@my.unt.edu): *Cross-Cultural Analysis of Disposition of Unidentified Bodies following Sudden Catastrophic Disasters;*
- Hiroko Taguchi (taguchi@drs.dpri.kyoto-u.ac.jp): *A Verification Method for Emergency Response Function: Visualizing the Production Line of Emergency Response Manuals, Kobe City.*

The email addresses are included in case anyone wishes to send these presenters additional suggestions or comments.

There were also two brunches – both were organized by Erna Danielsson from Sweden – designed to showcase new books and to again introduce the doctoral candidates. Once again, the response was excellent; and the brunches attracted about half the attendees including all the doctoral candidates (who were there as guests and were introduced). The feedback was excellent. One doctoral student informed us she was thinking of leaving the field but has changed her mind because of the supportive atmosphere at our sessions and at the brunches. The texts introduced at the brunch were:

- Tom Drabek: *The Human Side of Disaster;*
- Elaine Enarson and P. G. Chakrabarti: *Women, Gender and Disaster – Global Issues and Initiatives;*
- Kailash Gupta and S. L. Goel: *Disaster Preparedness;*
- Michael K. Lindell, Carla S. Prater and Ronald Perry: *Introduction to Emergency Management;*
- Lori Peek: *Behind the Backlash – Muslim Americans after 9/11;*
- Ronald Perry and Michael Lindell: *Emergency Planning;*
- Brenda D. Phillips: *Disaster Recovery;*
- Brenda D. Phillips, Deborah S. K. Thomas, Alice Fothergill and Lynn Blinn-Pike: *Social Vulnerability to Disaster;*
- William Freudenberg, Robert Gramling, Shirley Laska and Kai Erikson: *Catastrophe in the Making.*

The second brunch featured a presentation by persons from Gothenburg describing their research and focusing on Sven-Åke Lindgren’s presentation on a fatal night club fire. It did what we have tried to do for several World Congresses – provide an insight into emergency research being done in the country where the World Congress was held. The steady flow of questions after the presentation indicated how well it was received.

The organizers had suggested one session focus on Scandinavian research and Susann Ullberg also organized it. The speakers included Jan Trost and Örjan Hultaker two of the founders of our committee. Although Henry Quarantelli was not able to attend the meetings, he had prepared notes describing the role Trost and Hultaker played in the creation of the International Research Committee on Disasters and in the established of the International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters. (The two actually edited the first volume, a special edition on family and disaster.) At the end of the session, Scanlon,

on behalf of the committee, presented plaques, “Special Achievement Award.” The plaques stated they were given with “respect and gratitude” for “Lifetime Scholarly Contribution to the Disaster Research Community.” The pair admitted the first issues were actually printed in Trost’s basement: that was kept secret lest the journal lose credibility as a result.

Another special session was done as part of the business meeting when Bill Anderson wrote a tribute to Russell Dynes. Anderson said Dynes has been “a giant in the disaster research field for nearly fifty years.” Anderson listed Dynes’ accomplishments as including:

- INSTITUTION BUILDING as co-founder of the Disaster Research Center. Anderson stated it was “hard to imagine a more productive partnership” than the ones between Dynes and Quarantelli.
- ADVANCING KNOWLEDGE through the further refutation of the “societal breakdown perspective” which, Anderson said, persisted despite the early research as places like Chicago.
- ORGANIZED RESPONSE PARADIGM, leading to Dynes’s book, *Organized Behavior in Disaster*, which shows that what “looks like social disorder is actually the emergence of a new order”.
- DEVELOPING NORMATIVE PRINCIPLES such as “planning and preparedness activities are continuous processes, not goals to be accomplished and put to side”.
- MENTORING – Dynes had played a major role in training the next generation of researchers.

Tricia Wachtendorf arranged using Skype for Russ to be able to hear Joe Scanlon read Bill Anderson’s tribute and for the audience to see Russ on screen. The results were excellent. One student commented how thrilled she was to actually see the scholar she had heard about and whose work she had read.

At the end of the tribute Joe Scanlon announced that Bill Anderson had been awarded the Charles Fritz award for a lifetime contribution to Sociology of Disaster. The plaque will be presented to Anderson this fall. Previous winners included Charles Fritz, Henry Quarantelli, Burke Stannard and Scanlon. In announcing the award, Scanlon outlined Anderson’s career and paid tribute to his “unfailing courtesy and professional competence” as he helped support the research of a “generation of American scholars”.

*Joe Scanlon (jscanlon@ccs.carleton.ca)*

## **Disasters and Risks: from Empiricism to Criticism, Paris, France**

Organized by the Anthropological Research on Disasters and Risks Association (ACRA, <http://www.arcr.fr/>), the international symposium *Disasters and Risks: from Empiricism to Criticism*, was held in CERI Sciences Po Paris on June 17-18, 2010. 16 participants (sociologists, anthropologists, geographers, historians) from different countries of Europe (France, Italy, Sweden, Portugal) and Latin America presented their work. Around 50 people assisted the two day event and discussions were held by the international scientific committee<sup>1</sup>.

*Why empiricism and criticism?* The aim of the symposium was to go forward the classical world tour of risks and disasters that builds up accounts from emblematic places and noted dates. The symposium was organized around three main themes:

1. Methodological reflections on corpuses, on the practice of fieldwork in specific contexts, and on the archives chosen to investigate disasters and risks. The purpose of this methodological entry was to understand how the research object of risks and disasters is constructed.
2. Studies that analyze the hybrid practices, reconfigurations and adaptations provoked by disaster and risk situations, and works that investigate the confrontation between different types of knowledge, circulation of tools, actors or interacting social worlds’ responses.
3. Analyses of the political figurations of disaster and risk situations, and of the resources used by the different actors to elaborate critiques, and develop forms of appropriation or resistance against foreign operations, often presented, by their instigators, as “humanitarian” or “technical” and therefore outside the political field.

The organizers proposed disasters and risks should be considered as “ordinary” subjects for social sciences, despite the extraordinary contexts they create for people and the researcher. They invited the participants to develop

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<sup>1</sup>Olivier Borraz, sociologist (CSO, Sciences-Po-CNRS, France); Thierry Coanus, urban engineer (RIVES, UMR CNRS EVS, France); Nicolas Dodier, sociologist (GSPM, EHESS, France); Virginia Garcias Acosta, anthropologist (CIESAS, Mexico); Claude Gilbert, politologist (PACTE/MSH-Alpes, CNRS, France); Julien Languemier, anthropologist (RIVES, UMR CNRS EVS, France); Anthony Oliver-Smith, anthropologist (University of Florida, USA); Grégory Quenet, historian (Université Versailles Saint Quentin, France); Cécile Quesada-Moaeteau, anthropologist (‘Atenisi Institute(Tonga)-CREDO, France); Sandrine Revet, anthropologist (CERI, Sciences Po-CNRS, France); Françoise Zonabend, anthropologist (LAS, EHESS, France).

the empirical aspect of their studies. They also encouraged critical analysis, which means the observation of what happens within the risk or disaster situations more than finding out solutions or formulating recommendations. Through fieldworks and grounded observations, researchers proposed critical analysis but also analysis of the critiques developed by actors and people involved in the crisis management. The inaugural conference given by Professor Anthony Oliver-Smith made clear the recent evolutions of the risk and disaster research field and helped situating the contribution of the symposium following the orientation from empiricism to criticism.

The main result of these two intense debating days is, without doubt, the interest of the comparative perspective and the relevancy of trying to work around common questions despite the very different situations that are studied.

Several participants agreed that the topics of risk and disaster should not be split. For instance, Frédéric Keck analyses the avian flu in Hong Kong through complex and structured constructions such as the sanitary risk, the food chain risk or the plague itself whose prevention is also a crisis situation. Working on Seveso disaster, Laura Centemeri studies the historicity from the explosion of the chemical factory in 1976 to the long term dioxin contamination. Juanita Lopez Pelaez focuses in Medellin in Columbia on “small disasters”, daily accidents which impact the daily lives of residents living in informal settlements. These damages are not considered as disasters by the inhabitants and neither are they solved by local authorities who don't want to implement basic amenities in these districts. With these studies, what is at stake is the way some situations are qualified – or not – as risks or disasters.

The discussion on methods and especially ways of investigating in ethnographical field work was also very detailed. The majority of the participants focused on local scale in order to show the major role played by context to explain the post-disaster social and historical dynamics. Some anthropologists proposed different ethnographical methods for carrying out the field work. Susann Ullberg, for instance, works on the recent floods of Santa Fe in Argentina through a “translocal” ethnography of the city guided by the disaster and its “memoryscape”. On the opposite, Séverine Durand works on Lattes village in the South of France where flood risk seems to have disappeared from everyone's mind after some huge dike works. To study the presence or absence of risk in the daily life without interfering with it, she has chosen not to reveal the subject of her research to the inhabitants.

Another point appeared to be common to various contributions. It concerns the fact that risk and disasters situations contribute to constructing in some way a “fictional space”. First of all, the “back to normal” injunction of disaster managers appears to be a fiction, since the ob-

servation of social practices shows instead many transformations, reconfigurations, repositioning etc. Other fictions appeared in the presentations: Mara Benadussi for instance shows through her study of the intervention post tsunami in Sri Lanka that the construction of the victim's identity is a response to the demand of the international reconstruction programs. The “good victim” fiction and the “victims' community” fiction authorize both the inhabitants and the organizations to elaborate new practices and discourses that contribute in return to the construction of a new reality. The fiction is also at the centre of the risk concept, since the temporality of risk is of a not yet occurred event. Planned, measured, modelled, estimated, the risk management leads to the construction of scenarios that contribute to construct reality. The study of Seveso by Laura Centemeri, the simulations of pandemic flues by Frédéric Keck, the public meetings on The New-Orleans Masterplan after Katrina analyzed by Samuel Bordreuil and Anne Lovell or the simulation of floods in Alma Mata in the historical studied by Marc Elie all pointed this construction of a fictional space and time.

Most of the presentations participated to the criticism of the idea of “risk culture”, which is currently a powerful paradigm of risk analysis. Actually, through this expression technicians try to educate people to “rational way” of facing disasters and risks – which corresponds to their technical rationality. As a consequence, the expression points also out the field of investigation dedicated to social sciences, focusing only on populations and not scientific, technical or political actors. Anne-Marie Granet Abisset presented a personal experience of collaboration with researchers from hard sciences and the difficulty for her, as a historian, to make investigations beyond local people. Fabien Nathan criticized the risk perception approaches through the analysis of the strategies of the inhabitants of informal quarters of La Paz in Bolivia. The French researchers group Zwarterook noticed the lack of participation of the inhabitants in consultation meetings for industrial risks prevention which are supposed to be the place of a shared “risk culture”. Théo Blanchard rejected the idea of fatalism and referred also to local strategies developed in the 18th century in France to obtain help and assistance from the royal authorities. In her study of a Mam community of the south-western Guatemalan Altiplano, Julie Hermesse highlighted hybrid representation's systems (Maya traditional, evangelic millenarian and scientific) of the 2005 tropical storm Stan. The coexistence and the combination of different symbolic systems demonstrate the difficulty to identify a single “risk culture”. 40 years after the earthquake of 1968 in the Valley of Belice in Sicilia, the documentary film of Maria-Anita Palumbo and Elia Romanelli focused on the evolutions of urbanisation and memory across time. These temporal dynamics make once more the idea of a fixed and stable “risk culture” a fiction.

The symposium was a very rich and dense event that showed the importance of crossing disciplines and field-work observations on disasters and risks situations. Some research directions could have been deepened even more. For instance, the organizers wanted to encourage reflections about the way practices and discourses circulate from the international level to the national and the local ones and between expert and lay spheres. Some communications such as the work of Pascale Metzger about the Chikungunya epidemic in La Reunion, or the study of the use of expert knowledge by the inhabitants of a flood prone zone in Costa Rica by Cloe Vallette gave some information about this circulations process, but the theme would deserve more specific consideration. More attention should be paid to the way local and global connect today through disasters and risks situations. Future events should, we hope, allow advancing this perspective!

The program of the symposium can be found in the AR-CRA webpage: <http://www.arcra.fr/spip.php?article36>.

*Julien Langumier (langumier@yahoo.fr) & Sandrine Revet (revet@ceri-sciences-po.org)*

## **An Exploratory Research Agenda for Studying the Popular Culture of Disasters (PCD): Its Characteristics, Conditions, and Consequences**

**E.L. Quarantelli** (elqdr@udel.edu) & **Ian Davis** (i.davis@n-oxford.demon.co)

Professor E. L. (Henry) Quarantelli and Professor Ian Davis have just completed Disaster Research Center (DRC) Working Paper # 92. Some of the topics it discusses are temporary and permanent memorials and disaster museums, amateur and professionally produced songs, circulating jokes and humorous items including widespread semi-risqué items, varieties and functions of disaster generated Internet web sites, emergent graffiti and wall and flower displays, general relevance of PCD to disaster relief efforts and long-term social and political changes, World Wide Web chat rooms developed around disaster events, universal and culture-specific items, artistic creations ranging from disaster movies and novels to video games, underlying and emergent religious themes, and the importance of disaster popular culture in emergency management and crisis planning.

The paper can be accessed in PDF format at this URL:

<http://dspace.udel.edu:8080/dspace/bitstream/19716/5399/1/Working%20Paper%20No.%2092.pdf>.

The authors are most interested in initiating a scholarly discussion regarding the various aspects of the popular culture of disasters addressed in the paper and gratefully

welcome any and all thoughtful commentary on their discussion.

*Pat Young (pyoung@udel.edu)*

## **Writer's Corner**

### **Politics of Disaster**

By **Lt Col K.C. Monnappa** (monaps1@gmail.com)

#### **Introduction**

Pakistan as a nation is presently reeling under a variety of problems – both domestic and international. It is a pivotal member of the U.S. led coalition that is fighting the Al Qaeda in Afghanistan and as such is involved in quelling the unrest in its neighbouring country, but the impact of its involvement is felt within its own soil. Domestically, it is fighting its own home grown brand of Islamist militants and secessionism in Baluchistan. The legacy of the discontent over Kashmir persists, setting Pakistan back a decade as it spends large quantities of money on training infrastructures along the borders of India at the expense of domestic education, employment and health care. The country since July 2010 has been engulfed in battling the floods that has ravaged it. Nearly one-fifth of Pakistan is now reported to be badly hit by the devastating flood; the worst for the country in 80 years. Over 17 million Pakistani people are affected; six million of those needing urgent attention. Qureshi, the Pakistani foreign minister, said every 10th Pakistani "has been rendered destitute", crops worth billions of dollars have been destroyed, and things are likely to worsen as monsoon rains continue.

#### **Environment Scan - Pakistan**

Pakistan today is an example of all that has gone wrong. It is a country beset with problems. It can be viewed as a veritable failure politically, socially and economically. In fact, it figures prominently among the list of 'failed states'. To make matters worse, the country has nuclear weapons and has no control over its nuclear scientists (such as Abdul Qadeer Khan – considered the father of Nuclear Bomb of Pakistan), who have gone rogue and are known to have sold nuclear technology illegally to other countries, for example Iraq, North Korea, Iran and Libya. A major concern is that elements of the Al Qaeda are known to have contacted these rogue scientists in an attempt to procure material and technology to enable them to fabricate a 'dirty bomb'. To compound the problem, the country's army is a known supporter of the Taliban and has dabbled in waging an asymmetric war with India. It also has a unique distinction of being branded as a terrorist state and is accused by its US allies as running with the hare (Al Qaeda and Taliban) and hunting with the hounds (US and allies) in Afghanistan. The recent leak by WikiLeaks too has confirmed the dual role of the Pakistani

Army's Inter Services Intelligence shielding Al Qaeda elements within its soil, leaking operational intelligence to Al Qaeda, which has led to deaths of US and other countries' soldiers and compromising intelligence sources.

Pakistan also has an abysmal record where Human Rights are concerned. The country being an Islamic Republic has zero tolerance towards its minorities. There are innumerable instances where the Hindus, Christians, Sikhs and Ahmediyas and other groups have been persecuted on religious grounds. Forced conversions and sexual exploitation of women of the minority community are common. Democracy as an institution has never been a success and the Pakistani Army has always been the real source of power. The recent disaster can plunge this unfortunate country into further mess if not handled with care.

### **Response to Flood Crisis by Pakistan**

Pakistan on its own will not be able to tackle this disaster. While the response to the disaster from the international community has been lukewarm in the initial phase, this probably can be attributed to the slow onset of the disaster itself, which was totally under-estimated by all concerned. Richard Holbrooke, the U.S. special envoy to Pakistan and Afghanistan, believed that where the tsunami and Haiti catastrophes happened suddenly, "for about 10 days people didn't realize that this wasn't just another flood".

### **International Response and Repercussions of International Ennui with regards the Disaster Relief in Pakistan**

All the above portends to bad news. There is an urgent need for the international community to help the affected people by rushing relief aid to them. If the response to the affected people is inadequate, there is a likelihood of a vacuum being created amongst the vulnerable people, which has the potential to be exploited by the Islamic militants. There have already been reports that front organizations of various militant groups operating in Pakistan have stepped in to provide relief and succor to the affected people.

Donor fatigue is an issue and has reflected in the international response to the disaster assistance for the ongoing flood relief work in Pakistan.

Famed Pakistani musician Salman Ahmad stressed that 100 million of Pakistan's 175 million people are under 25 and "feel abandoned by the world". They "have two possible futures — one of following their dreams, the other of being sucked into extremism", he said. "Right now, the terrorists are counting on the fact that there will be a sluggish response from the international community, because if there is a sluggish response, the terrorists win, the extremists win", Ahmad warned.

After visiting flood areas with Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari, the U.S. Senator John Kerry warned of extremists who might "exploit the misery of others for political

or ideological purpose, and so it is important for all of us to work overtime". Zardari spoke of militants who might take orphaned children "and train them as the terrorists of tomorrow". The floods have affected remote parts of Pakistan that have made relief and rescue missions a challenge. Holbrooke said it's impossible to assess whether Al-Qaeda or others are taking advantage of the floods because "we can't even get in there".

The U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has urged governments and people to be even more generous than they were in the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and the Haiti earthquake, because the floods are touted to be a bigger "global disaster" with the Pakistan government saying that more than 20 million people need shelter, food and clean water.

### **Politics of Disaster**

The Minister of External Affairs for India Mr. S. M. Krishna had called on his Pakistani counterpart Shah Mehmood Qureshi and offered \$ 5 million in aid for relief work. This aid was promptly refused by the Pakistani government while at the same time its leaders have been sending SOS to the international community for more and more aid so as to meet the immediate needs of its millions of flood-affected people. Both India and Pakistan are founder members of SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional cooperation), which exhorts the members to cooperate in the event of a natural disaster affecting them. This is not the first time that these countries have been affected by disasters; in the past too both have aided each other when disaster struck.

The reason for Islamabad's refusal of Indian aid can be attributed to certain contentions that have no bearing to the present crisis that has devastated Pakistan. In 2005, when Pakistan was rocked by a massive earthquake, India sent huge quantities of relief material. Among them was a large quantity of blankets. The tags on the blankets that identified it as an Indian product were removed by the Pakistani authorities before it was distributed amongst the disaster affected population. The obfuscatory nature of the Pakistani authorities, in the present crisis, has bewildered the world as well as the Pakistani people. This reflects total incoherency in the policy of the Pakistan government that has put petty politics ahead of the welfare of its vulnerable people, who are reeling under the effects of the devastating flood.

It took Washington to put pressure on the Pakistan foreign minister asserting that there is no role for politics in disaster response; the Obama Administration has said it expects Pakistan to accept the \$ 5 million aid offer from India for its flood relief work.

"In terms of responding to a disaster, politics should play no role. You have a country (India) that's willing to help (Pakistan), and (...) we expect that Pakistan will accept",

the U.S. State Department spokesman Philip J. Crowley said. Frank Ruggiero, the U.S. Deputy Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, also asked Pakistan to accept India's aid.

"I think the priority is to use offers of assistance to help the Pakistani people, so we would encourage Government of Pakistan to accept that (Indian) offer", he said.

## Conclusion

International pressure, especially that of the U.S., has forced Pakistan to accept monetary assistance offered by India, towards amelioration of its flood victims. The political leaders of Pakistan need to accept that petty politics serving narrow ends are not going to help solve the dilemma that Pakistan as a nation is suffering from at present. In Chinese language, the character used for 'disaster' is the same as that used for 'opportunity'. Rather than using an excuse of utter helplessness, the Pakistan government should rise to the occasion by viewing the present situation that it finds itself in as an opportunity for winning the confidence of its people by accepting constructive help from the international community, which includes its neighbours especially India. The politics of aid rather than being an contentious issue between the two neighbours, should be used as a tool in diplomacy to forge closer ties, for never was the simple adage 'a friend in need is a friend indeed' sounded more true. Fostering long lasting ties with the world's largest democracy would hold Pakistan in good stead if it has to nurture its fledgling democracy and keep inimical elements out from endangering its very existence. Probably this disaster would prove to be the acid test for its politicians to prove to its voters that democracy after all works for Pakistan!!!!

## Hybrid Disasters or Usual Disasters?

By **Ilan Kelman** (<http://www.ilankelman.org/contact.html>)

Some disaster literature speaks of *hybrid disasters*. According to one definition, "a hybrid disaster is a manmade [sic] one, when forces of nature are unleashed as a result of technical failure or sabotage"<sup>2</sup>.

As we can see, the first category of hybrid disasters is technical failure. If a tornado rips a roof off a building or lofts a mobile home, then people become casualties because a technical failure unleashed the forces of nature against them. If an earthquake collapses a house or if a flood collapses a dam, then that was a technical failure unleashing the forces of nature against people in that structure.

But technical failures do not just happen. They happen because of long-term human decision-making, values,

<sup>2</sup>Boyarsky, I. & Shneiderman, A. (2002). Natural and Hybrid Disasters – Causes, Effects, and Management. *Topics in Emergency Medicine*, 24 (3): 1-25.

behavior, and actions that permitted, by commission or omission, the technical failure to occur. Certainly, ignorance has happened frequently in the past. But we know so much now which we still do not apply, leading to disasters, irrespective of our continuing ignorance.

As such, we need to be careful of insinuating that evil, destructive, or malign forces of nature are 'unleashed' and humanity must battle against them to protect our own and become safe – this plot thickening as righteous Man [sic] confronts and defeats and tames the wild, uncaring nature. We know enough to stop most (not all) disasters that involve environmental phenomena. But social processes lead to decision-making – usually (but not always) by those with power and resources over those without power and resources – so that technology and technical approaches are created and sometimes fail. That is the underlying social failure leading to technical failure leading to disasters, rather than forces of nature or technology per se.

Regarding hybrid disasters' second category, sabotage, some would go so far as to interpret that the above described style of decision-making – "those with power and resources over those without power and resources" – is a form of social sabotage. Taking a narrower definition of sabotage, there are many examples in history of natural hazards being deliberately and inadvertently turned into weapons of war.

The misapprehensions in the discourse of hybrid disasters primarily stems from its category of technical failure. These mistakes are similar to those regarding so-called *natech disasters*, "natural disaster-triggered technological disasters"<sup>3</sup>. As argued by many disaster researchers and practitioners (<http://www.ilankelman.org/miscellany/NaturalDisasters.rtf>), few disasters are exclusively "natural". Thus almost all disasters are by definition natech.

Nonetheless, at root, as always, is that natech and other disasters are social disasters. Society creates the technology that fails. The fault, dear disaster lovers, is not in our environment nor in our technology per se, but in ourselves.

## Announcements

### PhD-position: Moral Emotions & Risk Politics

The Philosophy department of Delft University of Technology (TU Delft) is looking for candidates for a 4-year, fully sponsored PhD project to conduct a comparative study of the role of moral emotions in existing models of

<sup>3</sup>Cruz, A. M.; Steinberg, L. & Vetere-Arellano, A. L. (2006). Emerging Issues for Natech Disaster Risk Management in Europe. *Journal of Risk Research*, 9 (5): 483-501

risk politics. For more details about this position, please visit the vacancy web site:

<http://www.academictransfer.com/employer/TUD/vacancy/6066/lang/en/>

The deadline of the applications is 30 September, 2010.

Sabine Roeser ([S.Roeser@tudelft.nl](mailto:S.Roeser@tudelft.nl))

## Call for Information

### Previous experiences with large scale crisis communication

The Communication with Disaster Affected Communities (CDAC, <http://crisescomm.ning.com/>) is a cross-cluster service comprising humanitarians and experts in outreach and communications. CDAC is currently deployed in Haiti and Pakistan.

International Media Support (IMS) is a founding member of CDAC. It is a non-profit organisation working to support local media in countries affected by armed conflict, human insecurity and political transition.

IMS is calling for information on previous experiences with large-scale crisis communication setups. We are looking for any manuals or lessons-learned studies that could ignite into general and more specific guidelines. The subject of these guidelines could e.g. touch on questions of displacements in camps threatened by hurricanes like Haiti.

IMS is also interested in more general advice on the content of communication, as well as introductions to relevant disaster and crisis theories and methodologies.

In case you or your network can be of assistance, IMS would like to learn more in order to collate more general info and experiences.

CDAC would also like to inform that it is in the process of seeking funds to up date Loretta's Hiebers Handbook *Lifeline Media: Reaching Populations in Crisis*.

You can contact IMS through:

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Thank you!

Peter-Bastian Halberg ([pbh@i-m-s.dk](mailto:pbh@i-m-s.dk)) & Nina Blom Andersen ([ninablom@ruc.dk](mailto:ninablom@ruc.dk))

## Upcoming Events

### European Sociological Association (ESA), 10th Conference University of Geneva, 7-10 September, 2011



### DSCRN/RN8 'Disaster and Social Crisis'

#### Call for session proposals

The theme of the 10th ESA Conference is 'Social Relations in Turbulent Times', a topic that indeed concerns our research network directly. In the wake of the 'credit crunch', one of the worst financial crashes in modern history, the economic system has been shaken to its core. European economies teeter on the brink of collapse; the rest, fearing the domino effect, rush to prop them up. Share prices and currency exchange rates fluctuate extravagantly as the successive economic thermals push them up and down. The tremors are felt on political landscapes across the continent. Will established practices and institutions crumble and die and if they do will the public sphere be marked by the birth of new configurations and alliances? Is a future of debt and material insecurity the prospect that faces the next generation as it strives to cope with the complexities of an ageing European population? In an era when economic growth will be constrained by both unprecedented fiscal deficits and the 'moral' pressures of environmental activism, how will the social fabric of Europe cope?

In this extraordinary context will social relations be marked by deep uncertainty and chronic pessimism or will people find opportunities to explore and develop creative solutions? One might expect emotions to run high and fears to be stoked by pervasive references to the 'external' threats posed by inter alia immigration and radical Islam and the 'internal' dangers associated with high unemployment and the decline of public services. On the one hand, the present conjuncture points towards a future of commotion and unrest, of anomie and alienation but on the other it may announce novel forms of social, cultural

and emotional life that grow out of new solidarities. How we face up to the challenges posed by the turbulence and unpredictability of our times is the key dilemma facing contemporary social analyses. The European Sociological Association invites scholars from around the globe to come together, in Geneva in September 2011 to debate the most pressing sociological questions of the day.

The DSCRN Coordinating Committee (CC) invites all members and colleagues to the network to submit proposals for sessions to be held at this conference. Abstracts should be submitted no later than November 19th, 2010. We welcome all proposals but particularly such that engage with the conference theme, with key theoretical issues in this field of research and/or with pressing problems in the field of disaster and crisis policies and practices. The CC will consider all proposals.

Members and colleagues from countries within and outside of Europe are very welcome to participate and send their proposals. If you have any queries please contact the DSCRN coordinator, Susann Ullberg, at [susann.ullberg@fhs.se](mailto:susann.ullberg@fhs.se). This e-mail address is being protected from spam bots, so please enable JavaScript to use it.

*Susann Ullberg (susann.ullberg@fhs.se)*

## **Dealing with Disasters International Conference 2010, Northumbria University, Newcastle upon Tyne, the UK, 23-23 November, 2010**

### **Keynote speakers**

- Salvano Briceno, Director, Inter-Agency Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, United Nations.
- Name TBC, Malteser International, Order of Malta.
- Wing Commander R J Garston, Standing Joint Commander, UK Land Forces.
- Sylvia Beales, Help Age International.
- Professor David Alexander, University of Florence, Italy.
- Professor Reynolds Popadopolous, University of Essex.

### **Speakers from:**

- Bindura University of Science Education (Zimbabwe)
- BRAC (Bangladesh)
- British Council

- Catholic University of Mozambique
- Cranfield University
- Durham University
- Global Risk Forum, Switzerland
- Nagoya Institute of Technology, Japan
- Nepal Red Cross
- Norwegian Refugee Council
- Russian Academy of Sciences
- Save The Children
- Tourism Concern
- UNICEF
- University College London
- University of Cambridge
- University of Dundee
- University of Florence
- University of Sussex
- University of Western Australia
- Vanderbilt University (USA)

Building on the success of conferences over the last five years, this year's programme will focus on ten years of progress in linking disaster and development and prioritisation for the following ten years. This involves exploring and highlighting aspects of resilience, response, investigation and recovery strategies for dealing with environmental, economic and socially related disasters, nationally and internationally.

Speakers will include representatives from universities, government agencies, Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and professional organisations from around the world. The partnership between universities and organisations involved in resilience planning, emergency response and post disaster development is a key feature of the Dealing with Disasters conference series.

Conference themes:

- Rights based approaches to disaster reduction.
- Beyond resilience.
- Health security and wellbeing.
- Urban disaster planning and infrastructure.
- Disaster communication and associated technology.

- Community to community development.

### Booking

Early bird booking rate: £195 before 15th October 2010.

Standard booking rate: £250 after 15th October 2010.

### To book go to

<http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/dwdbookingform>

For further information, email [dwdconf@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:dwdconf@northumbria.ac.uk).

Or visit: <http://www.dealing-with-disasters.org.uk>

*Andrew Collins (andrew.collins@northumbria.ac.uk)*

### Sociological Studies and Disaster, Oñati International Institute for the Sociology of Law, Oñati, Spain, 21-22 July, 2011

The fields of disaster studies and sociological studies have rich research traditions that could speak to each other well. To facilitate conversation, the Oñati International Institute for the Sociology of Law (<http://www.iisj.net/>) has agreed to sponsor a two day workshop on sociological studies and disaster at the Institute in Oñati, Spain. The workshop is scheduled for July 21-22, 2011. The goal of the workshop is to have conversations across subfields. The institute is generously providing three day's accommodations to participants.

We are looking for proposals for participation from individuals who are interested in working in sociological and disaster studies from multiple disciplinary and substantive perspectives.

Disasters have significant sociological aspects that remain under-explored. Disasters implicate people's movement, as they flee unsafe territory and look for a place to live temporarily or as they look to resettle. Disasters can reorganize legal priorities for states, or provide the grounds for new individual legal claims. The volcano and storm in Guatemala in June 2010 brought calls from the Guatemalan government to grant temporary protected status to Guatemalans in the United States, so they were not at legal risk if they traveled between home and the United States. The Haitian earthquake also provided grounds for claiming distinctive and safer immigration statuses for Haitians within the United States, so that people need not return home when visas expire. The Gulf oil spill raises questions about whether people will have to move permanently, and how states will compensate these people.

Questions to consider include:

- **The geography of risk** has become a central concern in risk analysis in recent years. Risk has also been central to thinking through law. How do the two intersect and inform each other?

- **Immigration and citizenship** studies have provided central themes in sociological studies and in disaster studies, in analyzing how people experience relief, or how people experience risk. In disaster studies, citizens are increasingly asked to be responsible subjects, and prepare for disaster.

- **Gender and Disaster studies** have noted the different roles and needs of men, women and children in preparation for disaster, response, and recovery. Sociological studies have provoked fruitful conversations concerning women's and children's social status and power.

*Tom Birkland (tom.birkland@gmail.com)*

### The DSCRN Electronic Newsletter

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 (April, August, December). The previously published newsletters are downloadable at the network's webpage: <http://www.dscrn.org>.

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, Antti Silvast ([dscrn.news@gmail.com](mailto: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

Antti Silvast, E-Newsletter Editor