

# Cultures of Disasters

An International Conference on Humanistic  
Disaster Studies

University of Oslo

November 6 – 8, 2013



## Book of Abstracts

Department of Culture  
Studies and Oriental  
Languages

UiO **Kultrans**  
University of Oslo



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# Call for papers

## Cultures of Disasters

### *An International Conference on Humanistic Disaster Studies*

*at the University of Oslo November 6 – 8, 2013*

Modern disaster research, dating back to the early 1920s, started up as a branch of sociology but has widened its circles to neighboring academic disciplines. In recent years, disasters have become a rapidly growing field of research in the humanities. The reason for this growth is obvious: disasters are incessantly foretold and retold – in news broadcast, movies, novels, operas, computer games and amusement parks. Due to global media networks and communication technology audiences all over the world are able to follow the stories of floods, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions in real time and at long distances.

However, the myriad of stories about disasters are structured around a limited number of narrative forms and motifs – the theodicy, the apocalypse, the state of exception, the trauma, etc. This repertoire of cultural patterns not only structure how we imagine disasters, they also structure how we handle disasters. For instance, the dramatic media images from New Orleans had significant impact on the authority's miserable disaster management after hurricane Katrina. Thus, stories of disasters may work as both models for and models of social practices.

The overall goal of Cultures of Disasters is to explore how the humanities can contribute to modern disaster research. How are disaster narratives structured? How do disaster survivors tell about their experiences? What are the aesthetics of disaster representations? How are representations and narratives of disasters intertwined with disaster management? How does the flow of disaster reports frame our understandings of risk? How do past and future disasters affect present societies? What do disaster representations tell about understandings of the relationship between the past, the present and the future? How do disasters bring up to date questions about the relationship between natural evils and moral evils?

The conference is dealing with both historical and contemporary perspectives on a broad range of topics. These include but are not limited to:

- History and disasters
- Disasters and media
- Disasters in popular culture
- Time and temporalities of disasters
- Representations and narration of disaster
- Disasters and personal experience narratives
- Apocalyptic imaginaries
- Spectacular aesthetics
- Past and present cultures of risk and uncertainty
- Disaster metaphors, concepts and symbolic forms
- Disasters and notions of nature
- The ethics of disasters

- Natural disasters in climate rhetorics
- Disaster fiction

The conference is organized by the Nordic research network Cultures of disasters in cooperation with KULTRANS.

The conference is funded by The Research Council of Norway.

### **Organising committee**

Kyrre Kverndokk,  
Postdoctoral Fellow, Department of Culture Studies and Oriental Languages, University of Oslo

Anders Ekström ,  
Professor of History of Science and Ideas, Uppsala University.

Isak Winkel Holm,  
Associate Professor, Department of Arts and Cultural Studies, University of Copenhagen

# Conference Program

**Wednesday, November 6**

**Venue: Sophus Bugge's Building and Harriet Holter's Building**

**12.00-12.30: Registration**  
Sophus Bugge's Building

**12.30-12.45: Welcome:**  
Helge Jordheim (Academic director, Kultrans), Kyrre Kverndokk  
Auditorium 3, Sophus Bugge's Building

**12.45-13.45: Keynote:**  
Kevin Rozario Can a Calamity Have a Culture?  
Auditorium 3, Sophus Bugge's Building

**13.45-14.15: Coffee Break**

**14.15-15.45: Sessions**

**Theodicy, Blame and Responsibility**  
Room 120, Harriet Holter's Building

David Larsson Heidenblad: Patterns of Assigning Responsibility. The Cultural Understanding of Impending Disasters in Sweden, 1600-2006.

Henrik Svensen: "It's not my Fault": Natural Disasters and Their Causes.

Thor Holt: Priests in Despair: Theodicy in Henrik Ibsen's *Brand* and Albert Camus' *The Plague*

**Stormy Weather**  
Room 124, Harriet Holter's Building

Yngve Nilsen: The Development of a Norwegian Storm Warning System 1860-1914.

Kyrre Kverndokk: The Bride of Frankenstorm: The Rhetorics of Weather Extremes.

Ilya Parkins with Shelley Pacholok: Remembering Sandy: The Patriotic Temporality of American Fashion and the Politics of Disaster Recovery

**Activism, Environmentalism and Cultural Theory**  
Room 140, Harriet Holter's Building

Guro Flinterud: Last Chance to See? Endangerment in the Media.

Coppélie Cocq: Indigenous Perspectives on the Commodification of Nature: Narrative Agency and Activism in Sápmi.

John Ødemark: Converging Apocalypses –“Indigenous” Cultures in the Amazon, the Nature of Culture and the Destiny of Humanity

**15.45-16.00: Break**

**16.00-17.30: Sessions**

**Ethnographing Disaster Management**  
Room 120, Harriet Holter’s Building

Susann Ullberg: Material Matters in Disaster.

Kristoffer Albris: Is Disaster Risk Science Performative? Ethnographic Thoughts on Calculated Uncertainties.

**Disaster Imaginaries**  
Room 124, Harriet Holter’s Building

Agnes Bolsø: Looking into the Abyss: Considering What to Do. Relations Between Ideas about Ecological Disaster and Political Ideology.

Peer Illner: Il faut être absolument contemporain: Disasters and Contemporaneity

Erik Thorstensen: A Very Small Disaster: Cultural Studies of Nanotechnologies.

**Japanese Disaster Culture**  
Room 140, Harriet Holter’s Building

Aike P. Rots: Shinto and Disaster in Post-2011 Japan: Community Resurrection, Spiritual Care and Theodicy.

Anemone Platz: No Home to Return to – the Missing Link after the March 11 Earthquake.

**Thursday, November 7**

**Venue: Georg Sverdrup’s Building (University Library)**

**09.00-10.30: Sessions**

**Remembering and Forgetting**  
Group Room 4



Megan Good: Reconsidering the Role of Cultural Heritage in Disaster Mitigation: Commemorating The Great East Japan Earthquake.

Constantin Canavas: "...What we Choose to Remember and to Forget." Negotiating the Memorial of the Disaster.

Filipa Fernandes: 'Madeira as Beautiful as Ever': Constructing Tourist Representations and the (In)visibilty of the Disaster

### **The Apocalypse in Popular Culture I** The Staff Room

Andreas Graae: The Culture of Contagion: Epidemic Response in 28 *Days Later* and 28 *Weeks Later*.

Jacob Lillemose: They Keep Coming and Coming. The Physical Pressure of Zombies.

Jerry Määttä: Keeping Count of the End of the World: The Many Rises and Falls of Apocalyptic Disaster Stories.

**10.30-10.45: Break**

**10.45-12.15 : Sessions**

### **Picturing Disasters** Group Room 4

Susanne Leikam: Transnational Visual Cultures of Disaster: Tracing the Pictorial Repertoire of Early Modern European Earthquake Illustrations into the American West.

Harald Østgaard Lund: «Real Photo Postcards» from Fires and Floods.

Anders Ekström: Time and the Re-Discovery of Disaster.

### **The Apocalypse in Popular Culture II** The Staff Room

Gaia Giuliani: Fears of Disaster and (Post-)Human Raciologies in European Popular Culture (2001-2013).

Gabriele Proglío: Memory and Re-Signification of the End in a Post-Human Perspective (2001-2013).

Ida Jahr: Left Behind Modernity – Genre Conventions' Influence on Evangelical Rapture Theology.

**12.15-13.30: Lunch**

**13.30-14.30:**           **Keynote:**  
Frida Hastrup: Troublesome Nature. Danger and Tropical Resources.  
Auditorium 2

**14.30-14.45:**           **Break**

**14.45-16.15:**           **Sessions**

**Disaster Recovery**  
Group room 4

Sara Bonati: The Role of the Global in the Local Disaster Recovery:  
From Media Amplification to Western Participation in Asian Tsunamis.

Teresa Caruso: Trust and State Intervention in Disaster Relief Policy:  
The Case of Southern Italy.

**“This is what they did to us”: Race and Gender in the  
Construction, Destruction, and Reconstruction of Pinhook, Mo.**  
Auditorium 2

Elaine Lawless: Gendered Perceptions of Place: The Pinhook, Missouri,  
Story of Building a Town and Losing It.

Todd Lawrence: Urbanormativity and Black Invisibility in the  
Destruction of Pinhook, Mo.

Film: "Taking Pinhook"

**16.15-16.00:**           **Coffee Break**

**16.30-17.30:**           **Keynote:**  
Diane Goldstein. “Down Goes All the Men”: Narratives and Counter-  
narratives in the Construction of a Small Town Disaster.  
Auditorium 2

**Friday, November 8**

**Venue: Georg Sverdrup’s Building (University Library)**

**09.00-10.00:**           **Keynote:**  
Ursula Heise: Slow Disaster: Endangered Species and the Rule of Law.  
Auditorium 2

**10.00-10.15: Coffee Break**

**10.15-11.45: Sessions**

**Disasters and Art**

Room 1

Line Marie Thorsen: Art and Acute Action: Art as Articulations of Public Concerns in the Wake of the Great Earthquake of North-Eastern Japan

Gunhild Borggreen: Drawing Disaster: Documentary Manga on the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake.

Synnøve Marie Vik: Nature: Disaster and Disastrous.

**Disaster Management as a Regime of Knowledge I**

Room 2

Christian Webersik: Making Information and Communication Technology Relevant for Disaster Preparedness and Management.

Jacqui Ewart and Hamish McLean: Hindrance or help? A model for the Involvement of Politicians in Communicating with the Public During Disasters.

Hideyuki Shiroshita: The History of Disaster Management in Japan: Why Japanese People had not Started Non-Technical Disaster Management in 1960.

**11.45-12.45: Lunch**

**12.45-14.15: Sessions**

**Disasters in Medieval and Early Modern Europe**

Room 1

Marina Montesano: The Narrative Of The Black Death And The Quest For Meaning In Late Medieval Sources.

Erling S. Skaug: Catastrophism in Italian Fourteenth- Century Art History.

Katrin Pfeifer & Niki Pfeifer: Representations of Natural Disasters in Early Modern Poems.

**Disaster Management as a Regime of Knowledge II**

Room 2

Ann Enander, Sofia Nilsson, Aida Alvinus & Susanne Hede:  
Framing the Public in Crisis.

Ilan Kelman, JC Gaillard, Jessica Mercer & James Lewis: Learning  
from Island Histories and Narratives to Improve our Disaster Futures.

Mikael Linnell: Representations of Disaster in Emergency Preparedness  
Scenarios.

**14.15-14.30: Coffee Break**

**14.30-15.30: Plenary Lecture**  
Isak Winkel Holm: Humanistic Disaster Studies: Heinrich von Kleist  
as Paradigm  
Auditorium 2

**15.30-15.45: Break**

**15.45-16.30: Panel Discussion:**  
Kristin Sandvik, Director, Norwegian Centre for Humanitarian  
Studies/PRIO  
Tine Ramstad, The Norwegian Refugee Council  
Helge Jordheim, Academic director, Kultrans  
Auditorium 2

# Keynote Abstracts

## Kevin Rozario

Associate Professor, American Studies, Smith College  
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### Can a Calamity Have a Culture?

While calamities have always generated cultural responses—the art, literature, philosophy, religious sermons, movies, and so forth, through which individuals and societies seek to make sense of crises—it is only recently that scholars have begun to think in terms of “cultures of disasters,” or what I described more alliteratively, and singularly, in my 2007 book as a *Culture of Calamity*. What is at stake in this shift to a study of the cultural logics of disasters? In this talk, I propose to map out and engage with key texts that have sought to establish a field of disaster studies that focuses on the cultural life of calamities so as to reexamine questions of public policy, emergency response, humanitarian aid, psychological recovery, and reconstruction. I will suggest that this approach to disasters is a response to a growing awareness of the importance of ideology in the politics of disaster (culture as politics by other means), but also a growing recognition that we live in an age of catastrophe, one in which disasters seem to hold a key to the patterns of development and destruction, ruin and renewal, that shape and threaten our world.

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## Frida Hastrup

Associate Professor, The SAXO Institute, University of Copenhagen  
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### Troublesome Nature. Danger and Tropical Resources

Looking back on the history of European colonial trade in the Indian Ocean, stories of shipwrecks, cyclones, disease and failing crops are not very hard to come by. For all its imperial zest, the effort to commoditize natural products was often less than smooth. As it turned out, the tropics resisted too easy incorporation into convenient mercantile practices. The tropical context, then, was both what enabled trade and threatened the gain to be procured by it.

Building on my contemporary work on the aftermath of the Asian tsunami disaster in South India, a main point of which was to explore the complex mutual constitution of the disaster and the everyday in coastal life, this presentation goes back in time to explore how tropical natural resources emerge as constituted both by everyday entrepreneurship and pending disaster.

The overall ambition is to discuss ways in which nature gets configured both as passive scenery for commercial enterprise and a mutinous actor standing in the way of success. How, I ask, do tropical nature and its potentially disastrous qualities appear in light of each other?

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## **Diane Goldstein**

Professor and Chair, Department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology, Indiana University  
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### **“Down Goes All the Men”: Narratives and Counter-narratives in the Construction of a Small Town Disaster**

On March 8<sup>th</sup> 2001, three teenagers from the small coastal Newfoundland community of Pouch Cove, drowned. Initial reports, which were later contested, suggested that the boys’ lives were lost while jumping from one piece of floating ice to another, in a traditional follow the leader or “chicken” type game, called “copying.” While it is still largely unclear what happened on the night of the drownings, the community contested the media construction of the boy’s deaths as resulting from foolhardy teenage behavior, and set to work challenging outside interpretations of the accident by creating and publicizing an alternative understanding of the tragedy. This paper is about deaths heavily imbued with cultural resonance and layers of historical meaning, meanings which resisted outside constructions of the cause of the drownings resulting in a counter narrative of traditional knowledge and heroism. By peeling away the ethnographic layers behind the competing narratives, this talk will illustrate the importance of narrative ownership in community healing from disasters.

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## **Ursula Heise**

Professor of English, UCLA, Institute of the Environment and Sustainability  
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### **Slow Disaster: Endangered Species and the Rule of Law**

Biologists claim that humans are currently confronting the sixth mass extinction of species in the history of life on Earth, with human activity as the major cause for the first time. The biodiversity crisis is both fast (by the standards of evolutionary time) and slow (in terms of humanly perceptible and reportable events). A multitude of books, films, photographs, websites, paintings and other art works have sought to document and mourn disappearing species over the last few decades, while scientists and policy-makers have crafted global databases, red lists, and laws to protect them. This presentation will compare the endangered species laws of Bolivia, Germany, and the United States to explore to what extent they are shaped by internationally shared policies or by distinctive national and regional cultures. Endangered species laws, as legal and cultural texts, embody particular perceptions of risk and thereby open a window onto locally and regionally specific cultures of disaster.

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# Plenary lecture

## Isak Winkel Holm

Associate Professor, Department of Arts and Culture Studies, University of Copenhagen  
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### **Humanistic Disaster Studies: Heinrich von Kleist as Paradigm**

Heinrich von Kleist's "Earthquake in Chile" from 1806 is a literary fiction about the earthquake in Santiago in 1647. But how are we to understand an imaginary disaster like that? As a representation of the traumatic impact of meaningless events? As a metaphor for the French revolution? As a self-reflection concerning the contingency of literary language? Or as an occasion to ask philosophical questions about the basic goodness the order of things? With Kleist's seminal short story as paradigm, this paper will, very tentatively, sum up the conference by outlining a number of different approaches to humanistic disaster studies. The so-called 'cultural turn' in contemporary disaster studies is, after all, several 'cultural turns'. Thus, the question is where we end up when we take these turns, and whether they will lead us towards a deeper understanding of disaster.

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# Abstracts

## Theodicy, Blame and Responsibility

### David Larsson Heidenblad

Acting assistant professor/PhD, Department of History, Lund University  
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### Patterns of Assigning Responsibility

The Cultural Understanding of Impending Disasters in Sweden, 1600-2006

The issue of anthropogenic climate change got its major cultural breakthrough in the autumn of 2006. In the Swedish public sphere moral causal explanations resounded with great intensity. The looming threat was depicted as everyone's fault and hence urgent calls were made for individuals to alter their carbon intensive way of living.

From a cultural historian's perspective the public framing of the threat of climate change was reminiscent of how major catastrophes were interpreted during the Medieval and Early Modern periods. Various kinds of disasters had for centuries habitually been seen as Gods punishment for the sins of men. Plagues, famines and wars were thus intrinsically linked to the moral shortcomings of man.

The striking similarities over time have been noted by several observers, both inside and outside of academia. But the notions of the parallels have not yet resulted in much research on how the cultural patterns of assigning responsibility for looming threats have developed historically. Have the calls for individuals to change their immoral ways echoed through the centuries in different cultural forms? Or have they gradually been replaced and new patterns emerged?

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### Henrik Svensen

Centre for Earth Evolution and Dynamics, University of Oslo  
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### “It's not my fault”: Natural disasters and their causes

God, nature, and scapegoats such as politician, marginal groups and greedy constructors are often blamed for the destruction and deaths following natural disasters. The former clear-cut division between natural hazards and natural disasters is blurred as we know that natural hazards can be triggered by human influences such as deforestation (avalanches and landslides), poor drainage (floods), water reservoirs (earthquakes), and climate change (heat waves and drought). In that sense, social factors are also important in understanding how hazards operate, not only disaster impacts. Additional complexity is added during coupled disasters like the 2011 Tohoku earthquake and tsunami, where nuclear hazards became a



major concern. The 2009 L'Aquila earthquake and disaster (Italy) emphasize the current challenges in understanding the causes of natural disasters. That disaster was primarily triggered by the earthquake and collapse of old buildings, but scapegoats were soon identified: scientists that were involved in risk evaluation prior to the earthquake. In this presentation I will discuss the historical evolution in how natural disasters are interpreted, and give recent examples on the complex issues of blame and responsibility, vulnerability and hazard analysis.

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## **Thor Holt**

MA, Litterature, University of Copenhagen  
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### **Priests in despair: Theodicy in Henrik Ibsen's *Brand* and Albert Camus' *The Plague***

In this paper I discuss Henrik Ibsen's *Brand* (1866) and Albert Camus' *The Plague* (1947) as disaster literature, focusing on theodicy: If God is good and almighty, why is the world full of evil and meaningless events like famine and avalanches (Ibsen) or a plague (Camus)? This literary relationship is, surprisingly, unexplored in previous research. First, I present these texts striking similarities in how they are structured and in the use of literary techniques: Both authors juxtapose a priest and a doctor's opinions on how to interpret and handle disasters – using the dead child as a pivotal disaster figure in order to create this topic's thematic tension. Exploring the dead child as a literary motif, I argue that both Ibsen and Camus distance themselves from the classical Christian theodicy's cognitive schema – based on the argument that sin equals divine punishment – in favor of what we may call an ethics of the interhuman. Turning theodicy from a metaphysical to an ethical and existential question, *Brand* and *The Plague* point forward to modern disaster discourse – offering a more hybrid and anthropocentric understanding of how to interpret and handle disasters.

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## **Stormy Weather**

### **Yngve Nilsen**

Researcher, Dr.Art, University of Bergen  
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### **The development of a Norwegian storm warning system 1860-1914**

From about 1860, many European countries participated in the establishment of an international storm warning system. This system was based on the telegraph and on a network of new national meteorological institutions, and it may have been the first international regime for managing risk of natural disasters. The European storm warning system was

founded by the French scientist Urbain LeVerrier, after a disastrous storm in 1854, causing great losses to the allied fleet in the Crimean war.

My paper will examine the Norwegian branch of this system, during its first five decades. The Norwegian Meteorological Institute was founded in 1866, and its first director was Henrik Mohn (1835-1916). This institute was subordinate to the University and Mohn was an excellent physician and mathematician. The scientific understanding of the formation of storms, however, remained limited during this period. The growth of the system was mainly based on institutional changes and practical initiatives. A major question was the extent of state efforts, for instance regarding reduction of telegraph charges and distribution of warnings to the population. A general guideline for risk management was the inverse precautionary principle; better one warning to short than one to much!

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## **Kyrre Kverndokk**

Postdoc, Department of Culture Studies and Oriental Languages, University of Oslo  
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### **The Bride of Frankenstorm: The Rhetorics of Weather Extremes**

The hurricanes that strike North-America every year are global media events. This is partly due to the fact that hurricanes have become “monstrous citysmashers”. The media interest for hurricanes is though not only limited to the dramatic events and the disastrous consequences of the storms. Hurricanes such as Katrina and Sandy are inscribed in a discourse on global warming. *The hurricane* has become a frequently used rhetorical figure in the popular climate discourse, partly as a prediction of a disastrous future and partly as a consequence of an already heated globe. Termed as extreme weather the hurricane is also seen in relation to other, rather different natural phenomena around the world, such as heat waves, melting glaciers and floods. Together these phenomena draw a global pattern of contemporary consequences of global warming and as signs predicting the future. Drawing on Norwegian and American media texts on hurricanes, extreme weather and global warming the paper asks: What characterizes *the hurricane* as a rhetorical figure in a popular climate discourse? How are patterns of weather extremes used as arguments and evidences in public debates on global warming? What kind of understandings of the relationship between the future and the present is implied in the popular climate rhetorics?

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## **Ilya Parkins (presenter) with Shelly Pacholoc**

Assistant Professor, Gender and Women's Studies, University of British Columbia, Okanagan Campus  
ilya.parkins@ubc.ca

### **Remembering Sandy: The Patriotic Temporality of American Fashion and the Politics of Disaster Recovery**

This paper explores a U.S. *Vogue* fashion spread published just over 2 months after Hurricane Sandy hit the Eastern seaboard of the United States. The spread appeared in an issue featuring American fashion and juxtaposed fashionably clad women models with emergency responders, most of whom are men working for State agencies such as the Coast Guard, the Army and the New York City Police Department. The feature invokes gendered rhetorics of fashion, crisis, and temporality to facilitate a particular kind of remembrance and recovery. Drawing on fashion theory, critical disaster studies, and pedagogies of remembrance, we ask, what kinds of remembrance are facilitated by the temporality of fashion? How do gender, race, class and sexuality contribute to the American imaginary being depicted in this spread? How does the text mobilize citizen readers in the service of patriotic recovery? A textual analysis of the representations in the spread reveals a temporality of recovery that invigorates and inspires a specific configuration of nationalism—one of consumption, expeditious recovery, and resilience—that best serves the need of corporate capitalism and a neoliberal state.

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## **Activism, Environmentalism and Cultural Theory**

### **Guro Flinterud**

PhD, Independent  
guro.flinterud@gmail.com

#### **Last Chance to See? Endangerment in the Media.**

The concept of endangerment pop up in mass media from time to time as part of a larger narrative of disasters brought on by humans. Endangerment alludes to a potential disaster, and endangered animals in the media provide a concretization of effects of human intervention in nature, from deforestation to co2 emissions. As such they become useful symbols to rally support, yet it is still an open question what this support amounts to; does the focus on endangerment inspire people to act, or does it simply work to sell more newspapers? In this paper, I will present three examples that highlight three different ways in which endangerment is actualized in mass media. I argue that rather than simply deconstructing media accounts and finding them superficial, a deeper knowledge of how the concept of endangerment is narrated in mass media is crucial to understanding the interplay between media consumption and the formation of people's understandings of their own (potential) roles in ongoing, slow moving disasters such as climate change.

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## **Coppélie Crocq**

Researcher/PhD, HUMlab, Umeå University  
Coppelie.cocq@humlab.umu.se

### **Indigenous Perspectives on the Commodification of Nature: Narrative Agency and Activism in Sápmi**

This paper discusses indigenous notions of nature, landscape and environment in a contemporary context. The current debate about the exploitation of natural resources in the Sámi area in Northern Sweden is the point of departure for this discussion. The expansion of the mining industry is perceived and described as a threat and a potential disaster for the reindeer grazing land and the people that inhabit the region.

Based on a dialogical narrative analysis of interviews with people dedicated to the struggle against exploitations in the Sámi area, I investigate the forms of expression used in the articulation of an indigenous perception and knowledge about nature. This approach considers issues of collective identity, cultural values as well as temporal and spatial representations.

This case study illustrates the role of expressive culture in activism. Moreover, this approach suggests the analysis of narrative agency for a better understanding of conflicting views of nature and natural resources.

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## **John Ødemark**

Senior research fellow, Department of Culture Studies and Oriental Languages, University of Oslo  
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### **Converging Apocalypses –“Indigenous” Cultures in the Amazon, the Nature of Culture and the Destiny of Humanity**

The paper examines how the image of the Amazonian “rainforest Indian” is mobilized in environmental discourse, popular culture and anthropology concerning the relation between nature, culture and global warming. In the structural studies of myth of Lévi-Strauss, Amazonian cultures furnished theory with traces of purity in a “fallen” world, and with localized examples of how humans build cosmologies upon a basic distinction between nature and culture. After Lévi-Strauss several key cultural theorists have revisited Amazonians to rethink – or efface – the borders between nature and culture. In some environmental discourse rainforest Indians are assigned the role of local forest keepers for global humanity. Here then it is the global human future that is at stake, not how pan-human traits can be identified in

“isolated” spaces seen as ”survivals” from the past. The paper explores a set of topoi that moves between the mentioned discourses – and how popular culture mediates between them, and in doing this calibrate a set of cultural categories. Particular emphasis is put on what appears to be a convergence of apocalyptic imagery from Christianity and “local” cultures in the rhetoric of environmentalism and ethnopolitics as apocalyptic imagery in “local” cosmologies are turned into signs of global destruction.

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## **Ethnographing Disaster Management**

### **Susann Ullberg**

Senior Analyst, Crisis Management Research and Training, The Swedish National Defense College

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### **Material Matters in Disaster**

Disasters are multidimensional phenomena produced in social, political and economic relations, and imbued with various cultural meanings. Yet disasters are at the same time imminently material, both when it comes to vulnerability and impact. Furthermore, so called natural and technological hazards are material forces that affect landscapes, buildings and bodies. Essentially, materiality impinges on people’s lives in multiple ways and pervades critical events when they occur. This overarching question in this paper is how material relations shape the social life of disasters? Social science research on materiality is broadly concerned with the relation between people and objects in terms of design, production, distribution, consumption and exchange, as well as emotional, sensuous and spiritual engagement. This paper aims at exploring the different ways in which the relation between people and things plays out in disasters by analyzing the case of recurrent disastrous flooding in the city of Santa Fe, Argentina. The paper is based on translocal and transtemporal ethnographic fieldwork by the author carried out in this city in the years 2004-2011.

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### **Kristoffer Albris**

PhD Fellow, Changing Disasters Programme, Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen

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### **Is Disaster Risk Science Performative?**

Ethnographic Thoughts on Calculated Uncertainties

Disaster risk management is a specific regime of knowledge that involves the cooperative work of expert judgement, predictions and economics in order to determine the probabilistic

impact of future dangers. In this paper, I argue that for disaster risks to be managed, they first need to come into existence. By discursively and technically construing a future event as a risk, the otherwise uncertain future is transformed into a calculable and manageable element (i.e. a risk). Taking a cue from recent work in economic sociology on the performativity of economic theory, the aim of this paper is to ask whether disaster risk science is performative in giving existence to disaster risks?

By drawing on data from ethnographic fieldwork among disaster risk experts and development professionals in the Pacific, I seek to illustrate how the configuration of disaster risk management is closely linked to how the future is imagined through hazards maps, computer simulations and satellite imagery - technologies that I term *prediction devices*. Furthermore, I discuss how the calculated future of risk, is closely linked to a certain type of *anticipatory economics*, that justify actions and development schemes, given their projected long-term economic benefits.

In line with critical studies of risk management (Power 2004, 2007; Rayner 2003, 2007), and studies of economics and financial markets in sociology (Callon 2007, 2009; Mackenzie 2006), I discuss how disaster risk science not only describes and represents risks as the possible impact and frequency of natural disaster events. Rather, it suggest that it acts like a performative engine that actively contributes to the making and amplification of the perception of disaster risks.

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## Disaster Imaginaries

### Agnes Bolsø

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### Looking Into the Abyss: Considering What to Do

Relations between ideas about ecological disaster and political ideology

‘Europe stands on the edge of a precipice, looking into the abyss’, says the manifesto signed by more than 150 European activist organizations on *Alter Summit*, Athens, June 2013. Among the urgent issues addressed in the manifesto, the ecological crisis is pivotal and in this these activists are not alone. There is ample scientific evidence that contemporary human economic behaviour inflicts climate change of global proportions and that the situation needs to be mended. Agents on all levels of parliamentary politics and activism, intellectuals included, are involved in research, debate and creation of alternative ways for humans to live, produce and consume. Several times a year a new book is released containing warnings and visionary thinking for a sustainable future for life on planet Earth. Nearly all foresee a monumental collapse ahead of us, if humans do not change their practices. The rhetoric is partly apocalyptic and it is sustained by modern science (and science fiction). Will we be able to turn, shift and change in time, making likely a future for human kind and the planet we

inhabit? We are apparently running out of time and political renewal is needed. There is a plethora of political strategies and ideologies on offer and they are linked to the ways one understands the danger lying ahead of us. This paper presents an analysis of the relation between particular understandings of a possible disaster and the politics that are suggested for an ecological sustainable future.

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## **Peer Illner**

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### **Il faut être absolument contemporain: Disasters and Contemporaneity**

This paper investigates the specific mode of attention produced by disasters. It argues that disasters both produce and rely on a notion of ‘the contemporary’ as their horizon of experience. If ‘the contemporary’ is defined as “the disjunctive unity of times” (Osborne 2013), this collective ‘time of the living’ will be questioned philosophically and exposed as a ‘heuristic fiction’. The fiction of the contemporary will then be traced in its artistic expressions where it is employed as a matrix to read political conflict.

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## **Erik Thorstensen**

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### **A very small disaster: narrative studies of nanotechnologies**

A prominent trend in the social, ethical, and cultural understanding of nanotechnology is concerned with the imagined future convergence of nano-, bio-, information- and communication technologies (NBIC). According to this trend, we will all in the near future see the disappearance of the human condition where finitude (death) is the central question unless science is restrained and put in the service of mankind. We will witness the end of mankind. Central to the argumentation in this trend is the use of mythology (Prometheus) and literature (Frankenstein) – and stories that oscillate between myth and literature (Golem). I will present how social scientists, ethicists, and philosophers make use of such myths and cultural prominent stories in order to predict the disastrous end of mankind in the future NBIC-convergence. I will use a theoretical framework from history culture and collective memory combined with insights from narrative theory. The material will be drawn from a larger study of uses of history and mythology in social studies of science.

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# Japanese Disaster Culture

## **Aike P. Rots**

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## **Shinto and disaster in post-2011 Japan: Community resurrection, spiritual care and theodicy**

In March 2011, Northeast Japan was hit by an unprecedentedly strong earthquake and a devastating tsunami, which killed more than twenty thousand people and destroyed entire towns. This was followed by the Fukushima nuclear disaster, causing widespread anger and anxiety throughout the country. In September, two unusually powerful typhoons hit Central Japan, killing several people and causing serious damage.

In this paper, I will examine religious responses to these disasters. In particular, I will look at responses by various actors related to Shinto: shrine priests, scholars, and umbrella organisations. Based on field research in Tōhoku (hit by the tsunami) and Kumano (hit by the typhoons), I will focus on three interrelated topics: 1) notions of community resurrection (and, by extension, national resurrection), and ways in which ‘traditional culture’ is employed to revitalise communities; 2) initiatives (both shrine-based and interreligious) to provide survivors with spiritual care, and help them cope with the death of loved ones; and 3) attempts to ‘explain’ these disasters in accordance with Shinto worldviews, and establish some sort of theodicy, however particular and unsystematic.

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## **Anemone Platz**

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## **No home to return to – the missing link after the March 11 earthquake**

Notions of home and home-ness are contested severely by the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake in March 2011 that not only destroyed houses but also shaken emotional meanings of home. According to family sociologist David Morgan leaving and moving home are frequently identified as one of the major sources of stress in modern society, partly because it provides an occasion when a whole host of assumptions about locality, property and family and domestic relationships are reassessed.

Having missed the physical dwelling due to “hazard” and “vulnerability” thus threatens the balance between identity and stability of the home. Simultaneously with losing their home, people have also lost the related bond to past and future embodied in their homes.

The project is work in progress that analyses the rhetoric of the housing market and the average citizen (interviews) addressing issues of security, ownership and emotional bonding



towards ones home in search for changes and continuities in a society, where to own the dwelling one is living in has high priority.

Images, narratives and concepts that shape the understanding of house and home ownership in Japan constitute the cultural framework for analysing the consequences of the March 11 disaster in this context.

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## Remembering and Forgetting

### Megan Good

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### Reconsidering the Role of Cultural Heritage in Disaster Mitigation: Commemorating The Great East Japan Earthquake

Through field research conducted on the cultural properties damaged and new monuments erected as a result of the March 11, 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and Disaster, I argue that a strong correlation between cultural heritage and disaster mitigation not only exists but needs to be more widely addressed. For my case studies I investigated the circumstances concerning the following three proposals for preservation to commemorate the disaster: a message left on a wall in the Rikuzentakata City Community Center by a woman to her mother who died trying to escape the tsunami, three severely damaged buildings in the town of Onagawa proposed for preservation as a memorial park, and the proposed preservation of man-holes in the city of Urayasu which protruded from the ground during the earthquake. In relation to these case studies, I examine how the commemoration of natural disasters in Japan has evolved since the 14<sup>th</sup> century to include the preservation of damaged materials.

Questions that I will focus on are: *How do disaster survivors tell about their experiences? What are the aesthetics of disaster representations? How are representations and narratives of disasters intertwined with disaster management? What do disaster representations tell about understandings of the relationship between the past, the present and the future?*

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## **Constantin Canavas**

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### **“...What we choose to remember and to forget.” Negotiating the memorial of the disaster**

The engagement in the negotiations concerning the “heritage” of a technological disaster inscribes the experience of the catastrophe into a social context dominated by new, post-disaster conditions. Eventually this engagement creates its own representations, and interacts with the new political and social frame. Especially in cases of long-term impact and social rearrangements after the disaster, the strategies of preserving its memory often lead to conflicts among the different actors.

The present paper focuses on the controversy concerning the future of the site of the chemical disaster which occurred in the Union Carbide plant in Bhopal, India, in the night of December 2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1984. Options such as the re-shaping the site for re-use, or transforming it into a memorial of the chemical disaster presuppose a decontamination, whose extend and costs depend on the unresolved question of legal responsibility for the disaster. The controversy is kept vivid and visible by the claims of the victims which are bound to the site.

The perspective of considering the site of the industrial disaster as heritage and transforming it into a memorial is inevitably opposed by other re-use projects as well as by perspectives of investment and regional development. Major actors in the negotiations of the future of the Bhopal disaster site are the disaster victims as well as the groups of activists. Their unresolved claims constitute a major narrative in the controversy of representing the site of the disaster – a narrative which is being restructured and reshaped by the changing frame of the actual societal conditions, and which reflects the state of the negotiations regarding the elements which should be kept in or excluded from the representation of the collective memory.

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## **Filipa Fernandes**

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### **’Madeira as beautiful as ever’: constructing tourist representations and the (in)visibilty of the disaster**

The purpose of this work is to study the construction of the touristic representations of Madeira Island (Portuguese Autonomous Region) after the floods of February 2010.

Representations are used to communicate messages about places and products, to redefine and reposition places, products and destinations (Morgan and Pritchard 1998). It will be exposed, using appropriate theoretical support, that images, representations and memories of the disaster are associated with regional tourism policy. What narratives and discourses of tourist propaganda are alluding to disaster? How tourist imaginaries circulate associated with disaster and which actors are involved in this process?

Madeira Island depends largely on the tourist industry; it must be pointed out the numerous discourses constructed in post-disaster to minimize the situation. One example is the creation of the promotional campaign "Madeira, beautiful as ever", aiming to promote the region as safe destination.

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## **The Apocalypse in Popular Culture I**

**Andreas Graae**

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### **The Culture of Contagion: Epidemic Response in *28 Days Later* and *28 Weeks Later***

Infectious disease with pandemic potential is a common trope in contemporary disaster fiction and an increasing concern in global media. In fact, one could claim that epidemic has captured modern disaster imagination extending the way we understand disaster response and intervention. This paper will focus on how epidemic is narrated in popular culture and how this narration shapes the way we imagine control of diseases that exceeds the spatial, temporal and social boundaries set by traditional disasters. In fiction, this problem is typically solved by authorities' often brutal quarantine or exclusion of infected individuals – establishing a temporal state of exception while waiting for things to get back to normal. But what if the outbreak is not temporal or geographically bound? What if a global pandemic has become the new normal? Drawing on recent discussions of states of emergency, disaster sociology and cultural theory this paper will explore the conceptualization of boundaries in two related disaster movies – *28 Days Later* (Danny Boyle, 2002) and *28 Weeks Later* (Juan Carlos Fresnadillo, 2007) – discussing how individual rights is weighed against public health, and in what way this weighing is related to the blurring of spatial and temporal boundaries.

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**Jacob Lillemose**

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### **They keep coming and coming. The Physical Pressure of Zombies**

In the history of zombie fiction the figure of the zombie has been interpreted in a number of ways but two readings are predominant. First there is the idea of the zombie as a malevolent, somewhat exotic intruder of the rationalised order of modern society then there is the idea that the zombie represents the mutated malevolence of that order turned against itself. This presentation will offer a third line of interpretation taking its point of departure in a description of the material logic of a zombie invasion, in particular as it manifests itself in George A. Romero's ongoing saga about the living dead. Instead of being concern with what the zombie symbolises culturally it will explores its horrific marching in terms of the sheer

physical pressure it puts on the material structures of society. It is a pressure that society can only stand for so long but not stop. As such the pressure is destined to transform society into a permanent state of exception where chaotic forces reign.

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## **Jerry Määttä**

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### **Keeping Count of the End of the World: The Many Rises and Falls of Apocalyptic Disaster Stories**

In the past decade, apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic disaster stories have once again become a widespread phenomenon. Often considered to have originated with Mary Shelley's *The Last Man* (1826), the secular apocalyptic disaster story is mainly a product of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and has experienced several periodic rises and falls. Inspired by the first part of Franco Moretti's influential *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for Literary History* (2005), the aim of this paper is to map British and American apocalyptic film and literature through statistical analysis of previous surveys of the field. While the data will essentially consist of a meta-study of canonisation and historiography within the genre and its field, disclosing what works are considered to be the most important, the data can also be used to assess the periods in which the most influential, innovative, and/or popular works were published or released. As an attempt will also be made to explain the fluctuations in the popularity of the genre – with an eye to the historical, cultural, medial, social, and political contexts – perhaps the study might help us understand why it is that we as a society seem to need these stories ever so often.

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## **Picturing Disasters**

### **Susanne Leikam**

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### **Transnational Visual Cultures of Disaster: Tracing the Pictorial Repertoire of Early Modern European Earthquake Illustrations into the American West**

This paper will perform an inter pictorial reading of earthquake visualizations from the first mass-produced illustrations of seismic tremors during the heyday of the early modern European broadsides to their idiosyncratic adaptations in North America. Aiming to explore the semantic surplus resulting from the transformations and resignifications of the stock motifs and pictorial patterns (cf. Hebel 2012), the analysis will start with the first stable repertoire of the broadside earthquake illustrations in

early modern Europe, which enacted the ‘cosmic sensationalism’ (Warburg 1920) of the time. Through close transatlantic ties and exchanges, the pictorial repertoire extended into Puritan New England, where the early earthquake woodcuts served as embellishments of manifold religious interpretations of temblors. In the memorialization of the New Madrid Earthquakes of 1811/12, the repertoire was considerably altered to fit the American West by adapting a rural setting and including stock motifs of the westward movement and the frontier such as the log cabin or the steam boat. In so doing, the earthquakes taking place in what was Missouri territory at the time were framed as ‘wild’ as well as hostile forces and thus as an integral part of the frontier, which places the events in a distinctly national ideological tradition.

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## **Harald Østgaard Lund**

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### **“Real Photo Postcards” from fires and floods.**

Pictures of disasters, fires and floods, have changed with their mediums: from murals and mosaics of byzantine church art, via woodcuts and other prints on paper, to television, flat screens and mobile phones. In the first decades of 20th century photographic postcard brought a flood of new pictures.

The presentation will focus and give examples on how new technology with new forms of production and distribution, have created new kinds of pictures, and consequently new relations and understandings of disasters. And at the same time how the involvement with disasters may have affected the understanding and production of photography and postcards.

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## **Anders Ekström**

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### **Time and the re-discovery of disaster**

This paper explores how mediated forms of liveness and presence interact with historical time in the long-term history of representing extreme nature events. I will focus on the re-discovery of the ancient eruption of Vesuvius in the 18th and 19th centuries, and discuss how the fall of Pompeii through intense and continuous remediation emerged as a foundational theme in the construction of a modern Western disaster imaginary. There is a strong emphasis on newness in contemporary discourses on how the emergence of new technologies enable (news) images to travel across media and borders; in relation to disasters, this focus is further reinforced by the disruptive nature of the events themselves. I argue, however, that a crucial aspect of the process of remediation - in the sense hinted at by Benjamin, made explicit by McLuhan ("the 'content' of any medium is always another medium"), and later developed by new media theorists Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin - lies in its way of simultaneously making the

past and present visible, and establishing cross-temporal links between events and mediascapes.

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## The Apocalypse in Popular Culture II

### Gaia Giuliani

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#### Fears of disaster and (post-)human racilogies in European popular culture (2001-2013)

This paper aims at mapping the impact of ‘fears of disasters and crisis’ on European self-representations in terms of racial stereotypes and ‘white fantasies’. In order to grasp how and to what extent ‘fears of disaster’ engenders European racist self-representations, it investigates the emotional coding of ‘sameness’ and ‘otherness’ at play in modern unified Europe - since the time when the end of the Cold War gave space to fears and sense of vulnerability related to cultural globalization and multiculturalism (J. Habermas); increasing economic divide and financial crisis, global disorder and governmentality (M. Davis, D. Chakrabarty, S. Mezzadra); mass migration (E. Balibar); deadly contagions, global scale terrorism and war, natural catastrophes (J. Butler, T. Asad). Its methodology is a critical discourse analysis of texts, in particular, cultural products, especially Tv series (i.e. the English *Dead set* 2009 and *In the flesh*, 2012), movies (i.e. the French *L’Orde*, 2009) and novels (i.e. the Spanish *Apocalypse Z*, 2012-): they will allow the discussion to grasp contemporary articulations of fears for disaster, crisis, death, end of Time, end of the ‘human’, and the overcome of the post-human represented in popular culture, and corresponding ideas of race, culture, gender, and class-based post-world(s).

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### Gabriele Prologo

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#### Memory and Re-signification of the End in a Post-Human Perspective (2001-2013) University of Turin – EHESS Paris

This paper aims to highlight the relationship between the representations of the end of the world and the post-human after the 9/11 in science fiction films. In many of these, disasters of the past (as wars, nuclear calamities, infections) are retold in new social, economical and historical frameworks. The re-elaboration of cultural memories happen in a public and collective context (J. Assmann, P. Nora, J. Alexander, D. Jodelet), during projections and after, outside the cinema.

Moreover, if disasters are structured around a limited number of narrative forms and motifs, I will focus my empirical research specifically on imaginaries of the end of the Earth (i.e. *War of the Worlds* 2003) of the humanity (i.e. *I Am Legend* 2009) and space-time (*The Time Machine* 2009). In my

attempt to bring to the fore some of these memory processes and to remark the relation with the present global crisis period in term of representations of the imminent (Koselleck), of fears, doubts and worries. Furthermore, the end of the word could be used to reconsider the human in new perspectives: the end can disclose the epistemological edge of the human and could be an interesting starting point for a post-human discourse.

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## **Ida Jahr**

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### ***Left Behind* Modernity – Genre Conventions’ Influence on Evangelical Rapture Theology**

Few people know that the (pre-tribulation) Rapture is an intrinsically modern addition to the Protestant theological imaginary, having been invented by the American pastor John Nelson Darby in the 1830s. Evangelical and Fundamentalist religious practices and beliefs are in constant negotiation with secular life in such a way that the labels “backwards” or “conservative” fail to adequately describe their practice. The Christian (post) apocalyptic, youth book series *Left Behind*, written by evangelical Pastor Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins, has had enormous impact on the Evangelical world, with 65 million copies of the 16 installments sold. The series depict the world after the Rapture, and the ensuing battle between Good (a band of 5 essentially good, but not born-again, and therefore not Raptured, humans) and Evil (the anti-Christ Nicolae Carpathia, who takes over the U.N. to bring about the re-building of the Temple). Interestingly, Pastor LaHaye has continuously maintained that the books are true to Scripture. This paper will argue that this is a perfect example of evangelical theology in negotiation with secular popular culture, as the series follow certain strict genre conventions of the youth action thriller, and these play a large part in the series success, but they are in no way compatible with Darby’s original conception of Rapture theology.

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# Disaster Recovery

## Sara Bonati

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### **The role of the Global in the Local Disaster Recovery: From Media Amplification to Western Participation in Asian Tsunamis**

In front of tragedies that have the same characteristics, the international recovery system responds differently answering to particular motivations not necessary connected to the nature of the disaster. The variability of the answers depends not only by the kind of the event but particularly by the social structure. The cultural element becomes relevant for understanding the kind of answer and the level of attention.

Media have a central role to produce international attention. They seem be fundamental to stimulate private participation, though the “spectacularization” of the event (Cnn Effect). So, how the media select the events to promote? Which images capture western attention?

Starting by Stromberg’s (2007) words: «the decision about what to call a disaster and how much relief provide depends on who is suffering», the theories of death hierarchy (Seabook, 2005), aid business (Olsen, 2005) and virtue ethnics (Korf, 2006) will be investigated in two different contexts: “boxing day” tsunami (2004) and “Tohoku” tsunami (2011). After the crisis, why the attention to the event decrease? Which heritage is left “on the field”?

The study will analyze the level of western involvement in the Asian tsunami recovery plans and the role of the media to activate western private attention.

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## Teresa Caruso

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### **Trust and State Intervention in Disaster Relief Policy: The Case of Southern Italy**

In November 1980 southern Italy was hit by a major earthquake; 90 seconds long, the event triggered social, economic, and political consequences that are present even today. The disaster prompted Rome to the approval of a law in 1981 (Law 219/81), which diverted vast amount of national capital to the region. The aim of this article is to describe the consequences of the state intervention at the local level: The kind of intervention adopted, the amount of financial investment and the way in which it was distributed affected the social and economic equilibrium of the local community that in this paper will be analyzed through the lens of perceptions of trust.

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## **“This is what they did to us”: Race and Gender in the Construction, Deconstruction, and Reconstruction of Pinhook, Mo.**

Focusing on the destruction of the African American town of Pinhook, Mo during the Heartland Flood of 2011, this session will engage the ways in which race, gender, and class are revealed as critical factors in disasters and their aftermaths. Working from narratives of displaced residents, this session will highlight how women have taken the lead in performing “care work” necessary to sustain a community of displaced residents and eventually rebuild their town. It will also examine the role that rural and racial invisibility played in the destruction of this small town. A twenty-minute excerpt from a documentary film in process will begin the session.

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### **Elaine Lawless**

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### **Gendered Perceptions of Place: The Pinhook, Missouri, Story of Building a Town and Losing It**

Based on interviews with displaced residents and relying on folklorist Kathleen Roberts' discussion of landed tenure as a critical concept in the analyses of place and home (forthcoming, JAF), this paper will examine gendered perspectives of the construction of Pinhook, Mo in the 1940s and its destruction in 2011. Eighty years after Pinhook was built, it is largely women who are seeking aid from FEMA for relocation and funding for recovery nearly two years following the 2011 breach that destroyed it. Describing how the women of Pinhook have established and preserved the “care work” required to rebuild their town and sustain a scattered community, this paper will illustrate how men and women perceive and articulate their love for Pinhook differently.

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### **Todd Lawrence**

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### **Urbanormativity and Black Invisibility in the Destruction of Pinhook, Mo**

Beginning with the concept of “urbanormativity” and placing it in dialogue with theories of racial invisibility, this presentation will, working from narratives of displaced residents, examine how it is possible that a small black town in rural southeast Missouri could have been destroyed by an intentional act, unseen and completely unconsidered when the interests of urban cities along the Mississippi that the “operation” of the floodway was meant to save

were weighed. The presentation will argue that the erasure of Pinhook, Mo was not the result of Mississippi floodwaters, but rather the result of hegemonic practices privileging wealth, whiteness, and urbanity.

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### **Film: " Taking Pinhook"**

This twenty-minute excerpt from an untitled film-in-progress documents the aftermath of the destruction of Pinhook, Mo., Pinhook is a small, rural, African American town in southeastern Missouri that was flooded by an intentional breach of the Birds Point-New Madrid Levee by the Army Corps of Engineers during the Heartland Flood of 2011. The film presents images of the devastation along with interviews of displaced residents revealing a community struggling to preserve itself. Pinhook residents, still displaced, share stories narrating the birth of this black town in the early 1940s, its shocking destruction in 2011, and their hopes for its reconstruction on higher ground.

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## **Disasters and Art**

### **Line Marie Thorsen**

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### **Art and Acute Action: Art as Articulations of Public Concerns in the Wake of the Great Earthquake of North-Eastern Japan**

In the wake of the immense earthquake disaster that struck Japan on the 11<sup>th</sup> of March 2011, a myriad of art-based projects were conceived and shaped instantaneously as a response to the issues and concerns faced by people in the affected areas. Responding to the acuteness of the situation, artists and art professionals – alongside various other social actors – turned their practices towards aiding the disaster-zones. In doing so, artists started shaping their artistic practices according to the realities faced by North-Eastern Japan, in close cooperation with those affected and other actors involved in disaster support. Building on my master thesis, I suggest that such disaster-driven art projects can be fruitfully viewed through Bruno Latour's concept of matters of concern, and the wider theoretical context of Actor-Network Theory (ANT). With the notion of matters of concern, Latour allows for the analysis of new hybrid formations, prompted by public concerns and criss-crossing the spheres of art, activism and disaster relief. Analyzing specific artistic projects, I argue that this approach enables one to follow the practices and movements at stake as hybrid undertakings, which serve to publicly articulate, and thus give cultural shape to, the multiple concerns triggered by the disaster.

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## **Gunhild Borggreen**

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### **Drawing Disaster: Documentary Manga on the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake**

The Japanese manga (comics) publication from 2012 entitled *Santetsu. Nihon tetsudô ryokô chizuchô Sanriku tetsudô daishinsai no kiroku* (Santetsu. Notebook on maps of Japanese railway travels. Documentary of the great earthquake disaster on Sanriku railway) by Yoshimoto Kôji is one example of many on how the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake in 2011 is represented and reenacted through cultural productions and practices in Japan. The narrative of *Santetsu* deals with activism and recovery in local communities after a disastrous event. It recounts narratives by a number of railway employees, framed by the autobiographical details of the artist's travel to Iwate prefecture 5 months after the earthquake events.

Using theories from performance studies and film studies, I will argue that the manga is performative both in drawing style and temporal structure. Along with the power of testimony, drawing as handicraft provides an "emotional truth" of events rather than a "factual truth" (often conveyed through photography). These elements contribute to agency and "ownership" in terms of disaster. My analyses show how the manga may provide alternative perspectives on reconstruction while also dealing with broader issues of power distribution and social and economic structures in the Japanese society at large.

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## **Synnøve Marie Vik**

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### **Nature: Disaster and Disastrous**

Man has claimed ever more natural domains, yet nature still steps up as master. Nature holds power in tornadoes, flood catastrophes and earthquakes. It also has top priority in politics: it has become a threat, largely because it is threatened. This double threat that nature is part posing, part the victim of, was evident in Louisiana, where the hurricane Katrina first devastated the area in 2005, before the man-made, oil catastrophe in 2010 in the Gulf of Mexico made the situation on land and in water even worse. Likewise the double threat became visible in Japan in 2011, where an earthquake and a following tsunami left vast areas in ruin, before the spills from the nuclear plant in Fukushima made continued habitation in the area impossible for the foreseeable future. Nature is evermore experienced as traumatizing and traumatized.

This double trauma is closely connected to technology and technological progress. A city is a technology in itself, and the images of the devastation to New Orleans pose a very concrete destruction tied to social structures. In this paper I will describe the volatile relationship between nature and technology in visual culture, discussing various forms of imagery that deals with nature as a threat and as threatened, as disaster and disastrous, ranging from the work of artist duo Allora & Calzadilla to the TV-series Treme.

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## **Disaster Management as a Regime of Knowledge I**

**Christian Webersink**

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### **Making information and communication technology relevant for disaster preparedness and management**

To date, there is a large body of literature on the physical and economic impact of natural hazards leading to disasters. However, there is little known about the socio-cultural determinants of disaster preparedness, response and recovery and the use of information and communication technology (ICT) support. Education, income, and religious beliefs are all shaping vulnerability and resilience of local communities. For instance, it is not well understood why in some regions people often ignore official orders to evacuate, and rather follow the advice of local leaders, elders or religious and spiritual leaders (for instance in Indonesia). In other instances, disasters are seen as 'acts of God' thus shaping disaster response and preparedness. This paper aims at examining the socio-cultural determinants that make populations vulnerable to natural hazards in regions that suffer most from natural disasters. Moreover, the paper inquires of how ICT can better assist to mitigate such vulnerability through better prevention and mitigation, preparedness and methods to alert vulnerable population.

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## **Jacqui Ewart**

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## **Hamish McLean**

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### **Hindrance or help? A model for the involvement of politicians in communicating with the public during disasters.**

Australia has experienced a number of significant natural disasters during the past few years and politicians have become increasingly involved in the provision of information to the public before, during and after disasters. Drawing on data from interviews with senior executives of emergency management agencies in Australia we explore how these organisations manage the involvement of political actors in disasters and their role in communicating with the public before, during and after disasters. We also explore how emergency agencies manage their relationships with their political leaders in the recovery phase. We found that improvements can be made to the ways in which politicians communicate with the public about disasters and we outline a best practice model for the involvement of politicians in delivering disaster warnings and information in the lead up to and during a disaster, and in the recovery process.

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## **Hideyuki Shiroshita**

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### **The History of Disaster Management in Japan: Why Japanese people had not started non-technical disaster management in 1960**

It has been said that 1995 Kobe earthquake was an eye-opener for Japanese people since Japanese society has learnt many lessons of disaster management from the disaster. The main lesson learnt was the capacity limitation of experts. The experts include not only academics but also practitioners. Before the Kobe earthquake, most Japanese people believed that hardware countermeasures which had been installed by the experts were almost perfect. This was because last catastrophe before Kobe earthquake was 1959 Ise-wan typhoon which killed more than 5000 people. After Kobe earthquake Japanese academics have seriously started human and social aspect of disaster researches. This can be seen, for instance, as the number of research papers.

However, the fact is there were already some researches on disasters from human or social aspect around 1960. These researches looked several decades ahead, but people had not paid attention to these researches. Because of Ise-wan typhoon hit in 1959, most people must have thought disaster management was essential for developing a society at the time. However, the researches were not inherited.

In this presentation, in order to prevent repeating this situation in Japan the reason of this situation will be discussed by tracing the history of Japanese disaster management.

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## **Disasters in Medieval and Early Modern Europe**

### **Marina Montesano**

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### **The Narrative Of The Black Death And The Quest For Meaning In Late Medieval Sources**

«(...) Enough that this sore affliction entered so deep into the minds of men and women, that in the horror thereof brother was forsaken by brother, nephew by uncle, brother by sister, and oftentimes husband by wife; nay, what is more, and scarcely to be believed, fathers and mothers were found to abandon their own children, untended, unvisited, to their fate, as if they had been strangers». The narrative of the Black Death found his main interpreter in Giovanni Boccaccio, whose Decameron copes entirely with finding a way to deal with the tragedy. Along with the Florentine, many other commentators asked questions and/or showed the consequences of a phenomenon whose violence was unrelenting and different from any other that their generation but also their historical memory could remember – giving the fact epidemic of that kind had abandoned Europe some 7-8 centuries before. The issues were medical of course, but also and maybe mostly moral, as it was clear that no cure could be found for the plague. Aim of the paper is to present the narrative and the quest for meaning inside contemporary written and iconic sources.

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### **Erling S. Skaug**

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### **Catastrophism in Italian Fourteenth-Century Art History**

In 1951 Princeton professor Millard Meiss proposed that the Black Death influenced painting in Tuscany by a return to archaic styles and idioms. His broad study eventually lost its appeal, mainly for chronological reasons.

A different hypothesis, developed by the author 1979-94, was based upon technical analysis. Whereas the individual workshop productions normally can be identified by distinctive

*workshop-specific criteria*, these criteria break down in Florence and Siena after the plagues in 1348 and 1363. The surviving artists seem to have fused into one joint shop, perhaps in order to meet the increased demand for altarpieces by mass-production.

The consequences of the flood of Florence in 1333, a disaster relatively more serious than the flood in 1966, have not been studied till now. The well-known appointment of the painter Giotto as *capomaestro* of the Duomo in 1334 was actually to be in charge of the rebuilding of the city after the flood. A group of his works can be dated after his appointment, and a chronological distinction of Florentine painting before and after 1333 can now be established by a sudden change in technique.

Traces of disasters may in the long term be beneficial for today's art research.

In the process of publication:

Erling S. Skaug, *Giotto and the Flood of Florence in 1333. A study in catastrophism, guild organisation and art technology*, Florence (Giunti Editore S.p.A.) 2013.

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## **Katrin Pfeifer**

PhD student, University of Salzburg

## **Niki Pfeifer**

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## **Representations of natural disasters in early modern poems**

In this talk we discuss how early modern natural disasters were represented in poems. Specifically, we investigate—from a cultural historical perspective—a severe storm which raged over Amsterdam in 1660. Two contemporary poems describe this natural disaster from different perspectives. The authors had experienced the storm themselves. The first poem was written by the merchant and sailor Gerrit Jansz Kooch. The second poem was written by the priest Joannis Vollenhove. We compare and contrast the two poems and discuss how natural disasters were perceived, causally attributed, managed and remembered in early modern times. Finally, we make a strong case for how the humanities can fruitfully interact with modern disaster research: we argue that historical disaster research is relevant for contextualizing risks of future natural disasters and we show how psychological factors influence the risk perception of natural disasters.

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# Disaster Management as a Regime of Knowledge II

**Ann Enander (presenter) Sofia Nilsson, Aida Alvinus & Susanne Hede**

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## **Framing the public in crisis**

People flee, are helpless and dependent on authorities, hurry to public shelters, plunder, and act in an antisocial manner. Is this picture of public reactions and needs in crisis situations consistent with reality? Myths and incorrect assumptions on the way people act in difficult situations are tenacious and might have serious consequences for effective crisis management. This presentation summarizes findings from a literature study on how public reactions and needs are represented in crisis situations. Previous research, media, and official reports were analyzed using thematic method. There was also an attempt to integrate the identified themes to gain a more holistic understanding of the subject matter.

The results show that the public is framed through three dynamic interrelated processes that might create bias, thus distorting the understanding of public needs. In these processes the public is identified, characterized, and evaluated. Hence, it appears that there are more subtle forms of influence at work that exert values in framing the public during crisis, as compared to the more direct and dramatic myths and misconceptions discussed in previous research. Being less obvious, these processes might be more difficult to handle and therefore impact more negatively on crisis management.

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**Ilan Kelman (presenter), JC Gaillard, Jessica Mercer and James Lewis**

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## **Learning from island histories and narratives to improve our disaster future**

Disaster-related research and practice has a long history, with island case studies, histories, and narratives contributing significantly to the theory and application. That is particularly the case for understandings and analyses of disaster-related vulnerability and resilience. In recent years, climate change studies have had an increasingly significant influence on this work, often without incorporating different histories which emerge especially from island-related work. Yet in parallel, legitimately or otherwise, climate change studies have been employing narratives of islands and islanders as icons of climate change impacts--usually focusing on apocalypses-- without fully embracing island studies or even islander views. This paper details key elements from the history of island-based research and practice for disasters, vulnerability, and resilience, linking that with ongoing work emerging from climate change. The analysis is collated into five a priori suggested points for seeking a broader scope for vulnerability and resilience narratives to place those historically and critically, without losing sight of the potentially unprecedented environmental and social challenges expected. That



leads to tackling climate change within wider disaster-related challenges through building on the past without becoming mired in it.

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**Mikael Linnell**

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**Representations of disaster in emergency preparedness scenarios**

2012 was a good year for the disaster fiction genre in Sweden. Two of the most talked about novels are *Fallvatten* by Mikael Niemi and *Det som inte växer är döende* by Jesper Weithz. The former depicts a dam break and subsequent tsunami in the north of Sweden, while the latter tells a story about a family experiencing the threats and dangers encountered in the wake of a fragile, almost disintegrated, societal and individual safety net. A reviewer in a major newspaper appointed Weithz’s novel the best literary interpreter of Ulrich Beck’s risk society thesis so far. The events occurring in these fictional accounts (dam break, tsunami, snowstorm, aircraft hijack, etc.) are also found in scenarios used in emergency preparedness exercises. The same story is told but the purpose differs.

When rational calculation is no longer enough to capture the unthinkable or the unexpected, imagined scenarios are employed to construct knowledge about how to act on that uncertain future. Literary representations and narratives of emergency and disaster become intertwined with emergency and disaster management. The aim of the present paper is to explore and analyse representations of disaster in emergency preparedness scenarios. The questions guiding this work are focused on how such scenarios are constructed, what kind of knowledge is acquired, and what are the possible effects on peoples’ understandings and expectations of disaster? In other words, what are the implications for disaster culture when concepts like “fact” and “fiction” dissolve?

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