NEEDS 2021

5th edition of the Northern European Conference
on Emergency and Disaster Studies

Östersund / online 21–23 September

Abstracts from the panel

Community response to crises and disasters:
from preparedness to practices

Interrogating Household Preparedness: Gender, Race, and Resourcefulness in the Face of Disaster

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It is now a maxim among scholars and policy-makers alike that disaster preparedness needs to involve community-based approaches in order to be effective. These include not only neighbourhood-level strategies but also those involving households. Attending to the ways that members of a household respond to and prepare for disasters in their everyday practices reveals how 'preparedness' is constructed from the ground up (Heidenstrøm and Kvarnlöf 2018). But while the everyday performativity of preparedness is important so that we can draw on local experiences, we must also ask: what is a 'household'? In this paper, we explore how notions of 'preparedness' and 'household' are simultaneously produced in disaster preparedness policies and activities in Japan, the UK, and beyond. The questions driving the paper emerge from a transnational ethnographic research project that has looked at preparedness activities with children, their schools, and their families in Japan and Chile. In particular, many of the survival and resilience strategies in these activities focus on cultivating resourcefulness—that is, turning everyday objects into preparedness tools. Drawing on historical and cross-cultural analyses, we suggest that this mobilizes a gendered and racialized understanding of the household that has resonance with many preparedness and crisis management regimes (McEnaney 2000; Preston 2012). Ultimately, we suggest that as much as anthropologists and others have challenged essentialized and stable definitions of 'community' in disaster research (Barrios 2014), we must do the same for 'households' and other related terms such as 'family' and 'kinship'.

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Critical Infrastructure Governance for Risk and Crisis Management - The Role of Regional Airports in Remote Areas

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The summer of 2018 will go down in history as the hottest and driest summer for more than 260 years. The combination of heat and drought caused extensive wildfires in Sweden. Corresponding to twice the area of the wildfires in 2014, more than 25,000 hectares of forest burned during the summer of 2018. Compared to around 110 fires in average seasons, the rescue service detected more than 500 fires in this summer, whereas over 80 fires were reported from anywhere of the country on one especially drastic day. However, the most severe fires centered in the middle of Sweden in the counties of Dalarna, Gävleborg, Jämtland and Västernorrland. In addition to the extent of the fires, their sheer number further complicated the extinguishing work. For the fight against the forest fires, aviation and thus the regional airports came to play a major and perhaps crucial role. Although the regional airports play an important role in crisis management, the current Swedish airport system attaches little importance to this role. Instead, the public investigation that suggested the categorisation of Swedish airports departed only from the number of passengers that travel via the individual airports. Consequently, the airports in Sweden divide into three categories: national, regional and other airports. Whereas the government finances the national airports, the remaining airports rely on subsidies from municipalities, regions and private actors. This precondition has become a severe issue during the Covid-19 pandemic, which resulted in a substantial decrease of passengers and flights.

The paper reflects on the role of regional airports in regional and municipal crisis preparedness in Sweden. Departing from analyses of public policies, this study includes findings from interviews and a workshop with several concerned actors. Although the workshop more generally addressed the importance of regional airports to society, several issues emerged that concern public risk and crisis management. The results show that an efficiently operated network of regional airports is important – as basal infrastructure to aviation – not only for fighting wildfires but also for ensuring health care in sparsely inhabited regions. Moreover, the access to quick transportation by air that regional airports provide is of vital importance for the Swedish Prison and Probation Service, the tourism industry, public institutions, such as the university, and private companies and industries. The presented insights emphasise that the one-sided focus on the number of passengers is an insufficient foundation for the Swedish airport system.

Delaware Public Libraries in Times of COVID-19. How branch libraries in Sussex County adapted their programming to support their communities.

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Building on classic disaster research and current data, this project investigates how public libraries contribute to successful response and recovery from a disaster, offering unique services and leveraging the direct access they have to the communities they serve. Based on programming records by the Delaware Division of Libraries, this research highlights ways in which public libraries in Delaware have supported their communities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Public libraries are among the most ubiquitous civic networks in both urban and rural areas of the United States, making them an ideal web of resource-sharing. Resources are here defined as information/communication, as well as material resources and workforce. Libraries, and especially public libraries, play an important role in community resilience. They provide access to information, internet access, educational and inspirational material, and offer a space where the community can come together. After a disaster, public libraries often become vital hubs for both citizens and responders, where information, material resources, and assistance can be offered, requested, and coordinated.
For this paper, an analysis of 22 months of library programming and services in public libraries in Delaware is presented. This time span gives insight into pre-pandemic operations, as well as programming from the start of the pandemic, showing the impact libraries had on the well-being of their communities.

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Community organization for the protection of cultural heritage in the aftermath of disasters

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When disasters occur, they have the potential to cause great damage on infrastructure, property, and intangible assets as well, affecting large regions and disrupting livelihood in many ways, including cultural heritage. This paper explores how communities may use traditional social structures, not previously related to disaster management, to intervene and take independent actions in the protection of cultural assets during emergencies. Through a case study in Mexico, the type of community organizations involved during the emergency phase is reviewed, emphasizing on the emerging and informal groups. In that context, the thematic analysis of 17 semi-structured interviews conducted in this investigation revealed two factors that can need to be considered to understand what has driven those groups to physically engage in the rescue activities: a) the pre-disaster relationship between institutions and the community, within the socio-political context; and b) the cultural significance of the places or objects that are perceived at risk. Additionally, this research demonstrates that the social implication of emergency actions taken by the community have an important role for local communities by helping them to organize and face the loss. Thus, cultural sites and objects become physical nodes around which people can improve risk awareness, find psychological relief, and emerge as organized and more resilient groups. As a result, this research concludes that cultural heritage can and should stand in the centre of collective participation that enhance people's capacity to cope and reduce social vulnerability in disasters.

When COVID-19 meets conflict: Politics and locally-led responses to the pandemic in fragile and conflict-affected states

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The COVID-19 pandemic has magnified existing crises and vulnerabilities, yet much remains unknown on how the pandemic affected fragile and conflict-affected settings. Also, about community-level responses to both, the pandemic and top-down/ official responses. This paper builds on disaster studies' theory that hazards become a disaster in interaction with vulnerability and response policies, yet often lead to renewed disaster risk creation. The paper is based on seven case studies of countries that experienced social conflict and state-society disarticulation at the advent of the pandemic outbreak: The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Haiti, Zimbabwe, Philippines, India, Brazil and Chile. The case studies have been implemented by master students and PhD researchers residing at the International Institute of Social Studies, on the basis of secondary sources and remote interviews conducted between April and August 2020. The results have been published in multiple blog posts and a series of working papers and reports, as detailed below in the description of the cases. This paper is based on a qualitative meta-analysis of those results using a thematic content analysis, focusing on: (1) vulnerabilities and their relation with disaster risk creation and disaster (COVID-19) impact, (2) instrumentalisation and securitisation of COVID-19 responses, (3) top-down and locally/community-led responses to COVID-19, and (4) the effect and relationship between the COVID-19 disaster and social conflict. A fifth and important analytical theme was understanding how community and local level responses responded to the effects of COVID-19 *and* the effects and new risks created by top-down and official responses. A literature review on the topic was conducted guided by the same themes, consisting of books, journal articles, reports, and news articles. Given the recent developments on the subject of study and the importance of capturing information on a wide range of actions and responses, the review also included grey literature and audio-visual material. Findings show that authorities instrumentalised COVID-19 to strengthen their control and agendas. While taking responsibility for lockdowns, this was not accompanied with care to mitigate the adverse effects. Social conflict and crises shaped community responses, as high levels of mistrust in authorities complicated the implementation of measures, while authorities did not support community-based coping initiatives. The paper concludes that whether COVID-19 will trigger or exacerbate conflict and vulnerabilities depends on pre-existing, country-specific conditions, and how a government and other actors frame and respond to COVID-19.

A geospatial web app to localize disaster risk management through open-source data collection, sharing, and mapping

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A growing amount of literature in the development field points out that progress can only be achieved through the participation of local and marginalized actors. Hence, *localization* and *community involvement* are established objectives of the international disaster risk reduction (DRR) governance system. Nevertheless, many community actors that provide vital resources, know-how, and grassroots projects to this end, remain invisible to governments and humanitarian actors. Despite technological advancements to bridge the dysconnectivity between different development actors, few web applications connect non-state actors with hazard information and provide ways of participation and ownership. Thus, structural asymmetries in the humanitarian governance system persist. Therefore, this study investigates the potential and features of an accessible, transparent, and secure data, and information sharing platform tailored to local needs, capacities, and networks for participatory global risk governance. The project asks: *How could a geospatial web app harness open-source data collection, sharing, and mapping to localize disaster risk management?* Thus, the study investigates how to build inclusive networks of actors involved in the DRR process by applying critical cartography and participatory DRR approaches. The purposive literature review and comparative study of existing DRR applications aim to reveal the strengths and weaknesses in the current landscape of these web applications in promoting community networks and hazard preparedness. Thereby, the paper constructs a wireframe to complement lacking functions and create a blueprint for an inclusive GIS community app. The innovated geospatial web application *Homa Reto* (Engl. The Human Network) processes crowd-sourced information combined with available data by humanitarian agencies to provide a comprehensive overview of ongoing emergencies, hazards, needs, and provision of support. Thereby, *Homa Reto* wants to encourage data-critical and democratized humanitarian aid, decision-making, and evaluation processes. Furthermore, challenges of community ownership and subsequent empowerment are discussed to inspire further investigations of potential information technologies in building resilience.

Local communities responding to wildfires

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This paper draws on an ethnographic study on how local communities particularly affected by the large and numerous wildfires in Sweden in 2018 mobilized local resources to cope with the crisis. We have investigated three villages in the regions most affected by the wildfires (Dalarna, Gävleborg and Jämtlands län). The results to be presented are based on observations in social media and interviewees' descriptions of their everyday-practices during the events of the wildfires. By taking an ethnological perspective focusing the local, we have been able to grasp the local collective and individual responses and mobilisation from different angels, interviewing farmers, hunters, landowners, babysitters and coffeemakers, entrepreneurs and individuals who became involved in different ways during this very intense period. These individuals have described the cohesiveness and importance of local geographical knowledge and proximity in time, as well as the networks of social and economic relations that were activated in the local community. The interviewees also describe how the local mobilization was connected to external actors from different levels in society.

For this panel, we would like to discuss the paradox of voluntariness in relation to the question of remuneration. This is a paradox that reveals the core of the question of "helping out"; what are the reasons and motivational forces for it, how do others perceive help and what if the help serves another purpose than getting closer to the common goal of putting the fire out? This paradox also entails questions of whether, and in which circumstances, voluntarily work might be understood either as a blessing or as a burden. What is at risk if voluntary work gets paid, and what if it does not? Should the state be unaffected economically by crisis in rural Sweden and what will be expected the next time wildfires occurs?

Why volunteering? –Different reasons for getting involved

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It is well known that when crises occur people converge at the crisis site and want to help, however the literature on disaster volunteer motivation is sparse. Volunteers are a diverse group and various volunteers are therefore driven by different motives. Furthermore, the reasons for volunteering are complex and can seldom be described by only one motive. Today the landscape of crisis volunteering undergoes significant change with a decline in 'traditional', long-term, high-commitment volunteering and a rise in more fluid, episodic and diverse styles of volunteering. Thus, why people volunteer in the continuously developing civil society landscape, their motives and influences also undergoes change. The aim of this paper was to study motives for volunteers to get involved in crisis response, and to improve the understanding of the implication of this transformed landscape with new opportunities but also new challenges for crisis response. The data consists of interviews with volunteers involved in responding to the 2014 large-scale forest fire in Västmanland, Sweden. The result indicates that the volunteers are driven by different types of motives. The primary motivation for volunteering is, as also commonly described in the literature, a need or will to do something for others, thus some type of altruistic behavior. However, their volunteering is limited to if they have relevant useful resources such as experiences and knowledge, material or premises, and the time of arrival to the scene.

Incorporating Histories: How Social Movements in Mexico City Avoid Solidarity

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Though Mexico is affected by numerous forms of natural disaster, it is also commonly seen as a nation of solidarity. This was particularly true in the aftermath of Mexico City's 1985 earthquake, where the civil recovery efforts are often connected to the social movements that led to Mexico's "democratisation" in 2000, in which the PRI party that had governed since 1930 finally lost power. In the first few months and years after the 1985 earthquake, "solidaridad" [solidarity] was understood as a counter hegemonic force, one that promised a new beginning for the country. But, as the PRI party struggled to regain its legitimacy, it shaped and used the memory of the 1985 disaster: now, Mexico City is littered with plazas and monuments to solidarity; President Carlos Salinas' [1988-1994] social welfare program was called "Solidaridad"; and in 1993, Mexico launched its first satellite, named, unsurprisingly, "Solidaridad I". Alongside these performances, the Mexican state institutionalised the informal networks of civil responders as part of the state apparatus - at once demobilising those social movements and improving its own credibility. The civil solidarity that emerged after the earthquake was converted from counter-hegemonic force into national fraternity, while the casualties of the earthquake were transformed from victims of state mismanagement to martyrs for Mexican democracy. In 2017, a bizarrely similar earthquake struck the city, and, once again, civil society filled the gap of the absent state and have continued working to make the city safer from earthquakes. This time, however, the informal response networks have kept their distance from the state. Drawing upon 20 months of ethnographic research with the networks of informal responders and victim advocates that emerged after the 2017 earthquake, I ask: how do community responders refuse the state? How do social movements make change without agitating? How can a megacity manage seismic uncertainty outside the state?

Co-creating emergency response with unaffiliated, untrained citizen volunteers

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While it may be argued that it is only human to want to help people in distress it not uncommon that professional responders consider their worksite as a place where unprofessional responders have no business, or they may lack the capacity to involve these in a coordinated effort. Unaffiliated volunteers in disaster response is thus a debatable issue. The assistance of ordinary citizens may be a value added to the response effort, but it may also be a constraint or an obstacle for this effort or even an additional calamity to the scene of disaster. This has been discussed by several scholars, i.e. Alexander (2010), Harris, Shaw, Scully, Smith & Hieke (2017) and Whittaker, McLennan & Handmer (2015) but none the less convergence at scenes of disaster is a longstanding fact which has caught scientific attention at least since the 1950s (Fritz & Mathewson, 1957).

In this light, the integration of unaffiliated volunteers in official coordinated response to an extent where untrained citizens are co-seated with the authorities in the their response management facility ("command post") tasked with leading the response effort of other unaffiliated volunteers is an extraordinary case. None the less, this is the case studied here, in a coastal flooding event in Roskilde Municipality, Denmark.

This presentation will focus on developing a research framework enabling the analysis of the process of professionalizing unaffiliated volunteers which is inherent in including them in official, professional response repetitively. This includes considerations of professionalism (Hall, 2005; Wackerhausen, 2009), the presence of boundaries between professional and unprofessional responders (Johansson, Danielsson, Kvarnlöf, Eriksson, & Karlsson, 2018) the governance dilemmas of handling these boundaries (Schmidt, 2019) and how this leads to co-creation of the welfare good of emergency management.

When resources aren't enough: Rural (disaster) volunteerism as a compensatory act

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In the summer of 2018, both rescue services and volunteers fought against the extensive forest fires that spread over the northern parts of Sweden. The challenges were many and one of the most obvious one was the lack of resources, both material and human. This lack of resources, together with the long distances that characterize the rural northern parts of Sweden, have been highlighted in subsequent evaluations as one of the main reasons for the heavily spread of the fires. The lack of resources in itself can be understood against the background of several years of dismantling and centralization of the Swedish fire service. However, the responses from local community was enormous during the forest fires of 2018. Local volunteers, spontaneous as well as organized, assisted in firefighting; in providing food and services; in offering shelter for evacuated and many other things.

In disaster research, volunteer activities have often been described as something that "fills the gap" when official resources are scarce. This seems to be particular true in rural contexts. This paper applies a critical perspective on rural disaster volunteerism by framing it as an expression of spatial vulnerability and peripheralization: as something that is performed as a compensatory act (cf. Lundgren 2021) in rural areas affected by social dismantling. In other words, both place and politics are central in understanding (rural) voluntary activity. Inspired by the theoretical concept *geographies of volunteerism* (Fyfe & Milligan 2004; Milligan, 2007), this paper argues that people makes sense of volunteer initiatives in relation to both the place where these activities take place and in relation to the power relations associated with this place.

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Local knowledge practices through the lenses of community-based flood risk management: Insights from an emerging economy

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Connecting to the disaster risk reduction (DRR) studies, community-based initiatives are found to be more effective in both developed and developing countries, with a specific focus on the empowerment of local communities to build resilience. Building on social capital theory, the paper investigates local knowledge (LK) practices experienced by local actors in an emerging economy using the community-based flood risk management (CB-FRM) approach.

The qualitative research method was used by collecting data from focused group discussions, and interviews with the key informants including actors from local governments and non-government organizations. Additionally, informal discussions, field visits, and desk studies were undertaken to support the findings.

The findings reveal that the local communities carry out various local knowledge experiences to respond during disaster management phases. They own a creative set of approaches based on the LK and that empowers them to live in the flood-prone areas, accepting the paradigm shift from fighting with floods to living with that. The local actor's involvement is recognized as an essential component for CB-FRM activities. Yet, their program's implementation is more oriented towards humanitarian assistance in emergency responses, even, they often overlook the role of LK. Additionally, the results show a high level of presence of local communities during the preparedness and recovery phases, while NGOs and local governments have a medium role in preparedness and a low in the recovery phase. The lack of local ownership has also emerged as the major challenge. The research provides valuable insights for integrated CB-FRM policies by adopting LK practices.

Temporary affiliation: Volunteers during disaster response operations

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This presentation is about people's affiliation at ambiguous occasions, in situations that are something in between, positioned between certainty and uncertainty, between the organized and the unorganized, between routine and improvisation. Volunteerism during disaster response operations is in focus. The aim of the study is to understand how different types of volunteers are affiliated in different ways to different parts of the response operation. Empirically, the study consists of interviews with volunteers active during the response to the large forest fire that occurred in the Swedish county of Västmanland 2014. All prospective volunteers were not included in the response operation, and among those actually included different types of volunteers participated under different conditions. The most important dividing line in this respect goes between organized volunteers and those lacking a relevant organizational affiliation. To understand the different forms of affiliation of volunteers in the response operation, a distinction between an official and an unofficial operation is needed. The affiliation of organized volunteers takes the form of organization-based membership in the official operation, whereas the affiliation of volunteers lacking an organizational connection is a matter of network-based informal participation in the unofficial response operation. In the different kinds of response operations different conditions for inclusion prevail, but in both kinds of operations restrictions for inclusion are applied. Thereby, control of affiliation is used as a means of managing the uncertainty that characterizes all disaster response operations. The different kinds of affiliation may be understood within the boundaries of two forms of social order, namely, organization and network. Within this framework, the temporary affiliation of volunteers is analyzed.

Closing the field. Boundary construction in the field of disaster response as preservation strategy

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Unaffiliated responders have become subject of vivid debates. Despite they are considered a valuable resource in the response to disasters, as they undertake critical disaster response activities such as S&R, and bring in plentiful skills, they are still rarely integrated into official disaster operations and their relationship to the disaster expert organizations is rather conflictual. A well-known strand of argument suggests that this is motivated by persistent disaster myths that inform disaster experts understandings about civilians, leaving underexamined the conflictual context, in which these understandings unfold. This paper contributes to a deeper understanding of the persistent exclusion of unaffiliated responders. It suggests to apply a Bourdieusian perspective that takes the disaster response as conflictual space of practices, where field actors compete for the power to determine a disaster and its appropriate solution. Invading actors put a specific jeopardy on the established order in the field and the domain legitimacy of established actors. Consequently, the construction of field boundaries become a powerful strategy of established actors to exclude competing actors and perspectives. Hence, to defend their position and to preserve their power in the field. The paper examines in greater detail, how these boundaries are erected. To do so, it conducts a case study of a mudslide disaster in the Austrian Alps. Three strands of strategies can be distinguished, which established actors apply to erect boundaries: symbolic boundary construction (narratives become a powerful device for building invisible walls against external actors), boundary defense (invading actors are prevented from field entrance), and involvement (paradoxically, field boundaries are preserved through a more active or reactionist involvement of actors).

Dynamics of Collaboration: Exploring the Relationship Between Civil Society Organizations Caring for Refugees in Sweden

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Civil society organizations (CSO) are important actors in handling acute situations at a local level. For example, in the autumn of 2015, many refugees arrived in Sweden to seek protection from war and uncertainties. However, as the number of arriving refugees by far exceeded the capacity of the official reception system in Sweden, individual migrants were "left on their own" to find help and a place to sleep and eat, aspects that the Swedish Migration Agency in Sweden usually provides. In this specific case, CSOs played an essential role in relieving the municipality and helping refugees in acute situations. Even if some CSOs perform tasks individually, most rely on each other in various ways. However, caring for refugees is a field with different opinions concerning; what and how much should be done, to whom, and by who. The lack of consensus is evident when actors from different sectors focus on the same issue, but also CSOs tend to be motivated by different goals and use different approaches. The question is how CSOs collaborate under those types of conditions. Based on interviews with CSOs caring for refugees in a Swedish context, this presentation will focus on creating a greater understanding of the function of various collaborations among various CSOs in a Swedish context, when there are different views on what should be done and how

Crisis volunteerism during the Covid-19 Crisis - exploring adaptation processes

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This study explores community response to crises and disasters from the perspective of crisis volunteerism. Building on a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews, it analyses a particular group of organized volunteers in Sweden, *Voluntary Resource Groups*. These groups are organized at a municipality level and constitute an extra resource when a local crisis occurs. This study analyzes their role during the Covid-19 crisis and seeks to address their *adaptation processes*. In what ways have these groups changed their ways of working during this long-stretched crisis? Have their avenues for cooperation expanded? What experiences might be transferable to future crisis events? and how can they contribute to organizational resilience?

From Hierarchy to Anarchy: 'Spontaneous' Helpers in Disaster Situations and the Question of Organisation

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When thousands of volunteers showed up spontaneously during the 2013 flood disaster along the Elbe and Danube, and again in the Ruhr area following hurricane Ela the next year, professional responders and voluntary emergency organisations appeared almost as overwhelmed by this willingness to help as by the disasters themselves. Since then, a variety of research projects funded by German and European institutions and organisations have tried to come up with adequate concepts regarding the coordination and distribution of such 'spontaneous helpers'. From smartphone apps to 'mediating organisations' such as local clubs and organisations, a variety of solutions have been suggested, most of which had as a side effect the avoidance of any further involvement, leave alone integration, of rag-tag volunteers and professional responders.

This paper will take a different approach by thinking the situation from the point of view of the spontaneous volunteers, and treating them as assets. The volunteers are interpreted as signaling an increase in civic responsibility, de-hierarchising response patterns and moving them towards an anarchic, self-efficient ability to cope. At the same time, adequate disaster response needs training, often also equipment, and effective leadership. Based on both theoretical considerations, and local experiments, potential futures are charted for an integrated approach to disaster response and recovery.