
CATASTROPHIC CADENCES
Exploring the Sequential Dynamics of Disasters through the Prism of the Rhythm
- EWIS 2023 Workshop Proposal -

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In contrast to the popular representation of disasters as discrete, intensive events, critical disaster scholars emphasise their processual nature and spatio-temporal entanglement (Bonilla 2020a/b; Williamson & Courtney 2018) stressing that “while hazards may be natural, disasters are not” (Meriläinen and Koro 2021: 161). Thinking of disasters as operating along various spatio-temporal scales draws much needed attention to their historically rooted, structural hierarchies and related, unequally distributed racial, gendered, and class-based vulnerabilities.

The deep history of disasters is one that needs to be told and genealogically traced, and yet, the heightened frequency and intensity with which 21st century disasters occur entails that disasters are increasingly being treated and performatively enacted as omni-present fictional-potentialities immanent to the anthropocenic condition. In light of the rhetorical, aesthetic, and habitual normalisation of the exceptional, this workshop seeks to explore in what ways - both the experienced and expected - sequential acceleration of disasters shapes and is being inscribed into contemporary socio-political security and economic design choices.

Echoing propositions made by critical disaster and resilience scholars, not to think of disasters as static phenomena that can be studied using readily available disciplinary registers but as ‘a field of tensions’ (Horowitz and Remes 2021), we invite participants to make us of the ‘rhythm’ (Lefebvre 2013 [1992]) (from Latin *rhythmus* “movement in time,” and, old greek *rhuthmós*, ‘flow’) as a analytical lens capable of revealing the phenomenon’s routinised qualities and rhythmic durabilities whilst still acknowledging the experiential intensity of sequences of concrete historical events.

Concretely we invite scholarship from Critical Security, and Disaster Studies, International Political Sociology, Political Geography, Postcolonial, Gender, Mobility, and Science and Technology Studies in the form of:

- **Conceptual and methodological work** on the rhythmic nature of disaster acceleration, i.e., the periodic succession of beats, its tempo, rubato, metre, and cadences and its affective, socio-cultural or political effects
- **Theoretical discussions of and empirical investigations into**
 - the political economy of disasters, for instance regarding:
 - the normalisation and spread of ‘disaster capitalism’ (Klein 2007), i.e., neoliberal policies such as austerity measures, privatisation, and an influx of foreign direct investment as part of post-disaster reconstruction efforts
 - The commodification of the resilience paradigm in relation to an understanding of ‘disasters-as-fictional-potentialities’, or “a shift from the contained ‘in situ’ accidents [...]” to imagined, “‘integral’ accidents that will be experienced everywhere by everyone” (Matthewman 2017), e.g. in the form of resilient infrastructures and technologies.
 - the normalisation of the state of exception and emergency governance
 - the normalisation of the nomadic condition in light of climate migration, post-disaster mobilities, and adaptive mobility as resilience capacity

References

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