

International Conference on Disasters, Indigenous Knowledge, and Resilience

3-5 April 2019 – Manila, Philippines

CALL FOR PAPERS

The Center for Applied Research in the Social Sciences (CARESS) is an autonomous research center created through a consortium of international universities geared towards initiating and coordinating multi-disciplinary and inter-university research endeavors in various fields in the Social Sciences. Its first International Conference on “Disasters, Indigenous Knowledge, and Resilience” will take place on the 3rd to 5th of April 2019 at the University of the Philippines Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines.

Proposal Submissions

- Proposals for presentations must be in the form of a summary of 6,000 characters maximum including spaces (bibliography not included).
- Submissions are to be sent to up.caress@gmail.com in document format (.doc/.docx)
- Submitted proposals will undergo “double blind” evaluations
- Full texts of accepted presentations are to be of 40,000 characters maximum including spaces and bibliography
- All proposals and full texts must be in English

Important Dates

Deadline for Proposal Submissions: 15 November 2018

Notification of Acceptance: 15 December 2018

Deadline for Full-text Submissions: 28 February 2019

Conference Website and Contact

caress.kssp.upd.edu.ph

up.caress@gmail.com

(+632) 426-3801

Publication

A publication is planned, following the Conference, in an edited book. A new call for papers will be launched following the Conference, and a new evaluation of the articles will be done to access the publication. Other publishing possibilities are also scheduled.

Partner Universities:



International Conference on Disasters, Indigenous Knowledge, and Resilience

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Thematic Issue

Disaster studies have emerged in the past thirty years in different social sciences. The objective of the Conference is not just a simple superposition of disciplines, but an increased interaction seeking to understand local problems based on a threefold look.

In anthropology disaster studies constitute a field of research devoted exclusively to the study of the way various groups in the world consider cataclysms and disasters of natural or industrial origin (Hoffman and Oliver-Smith, 2002). Indeed, this field offers a convincing demonstration of the contribution of an ethnographic and comparative approach to understanding the radical changes experienced by many people in the world. Indeed, the difficulty of thinking about “natural” disasters is that, in addition to being highly multi-dimensional, they are often not perceived as natural, at least not in the way the term is currently understood in western and westernized circles. They affect all aspects of human life having impacts on the environmental, social, economic, political and biological systems. At the intersection of nature and culture (Descola 2005), they illustrate, often dramatically, their interdependence. In addition, this anthropological field reflects the highly procedural and not only eventful aspects of disasters. It addresses the issue of symbolic and social resources used by indigenous peoples to take into account the changes induced by the advent of a disaster. The framework law MRDR, mentioned in the context, refers in part to the local disaster management. It emphasizes individual and community responsibility in terms of preparation and management of these risks, but at no point mentions the issue of the cultural context in relation the construction of “natural” phenomena. In this sense, the establishment of local prevention policies fundamentally lack an emic perspective making for efficacy. However, on these issues of natural hazards, the difficulty of enhancing the capacity of decision-making and governance of most indigenous peoples, especially those of the Cordilleras, are explained by several factors. Anthropology has long shown the strength of customary law in this mountainous region of the country especially in Kalinga (Barton 1949), the Ifugao (Conklin 1980), and Ibaloi (Wiber 1991, 1993). Mountain peoples are still, perhaps more than other populations, highly exposed to hazards and disasters (Anderson 1987). How, in this context, can we develop intervention policies without considering the perspectives of the people and their traditions? Let us recall, for example, the many constraints to be taken into account such as: 1) the strength of kinship networks and *compadrinazgo*, 2) the existence of complex rights in practices of irrigation, a point that Lewis (1991) studied amongst the Ilocano, and 3) the existence of a strong local bureaucracy (sometimes corrupt) that involves working with institutions such as religious missions or non-government organizations, 4) rapid environmental degradation of lands often coveted by mining companies, for example, 5) the need to consider multiple intermediaries (cf. Russell 1987), and finally, 6) the existence of ancestral traditions leading on occasion and as a last resort, armed guerrilla actions or conflicts. Nevertheless, rare and recent studies on

the issue offer critical information for proper adaptation of prevention policies to indigenous peoples. For example, amongst the Mangyan *alangans*, the *kuyay* (elders) explain that it is by observing the behavior of wild pigs that one can predict an impending tropical storm or a tsunami. In this case the Mangyan indicate that the pigs collect trash and make a shelter, placing them in a circle around themselves (Laugrand & Tremblay & Laugrand 2013: 132). Other indigenous peoples observe the behavior of birds as reliable signs. Although indigenous knowledge is now well recognized by International organizations (see UNESCO for instance), there is little knowledge of indigenous interpretations of these phenomena and their forecasting techniques and attenuating tactics. It is now clear that the management of socio-natural hazards must incorporate an understanding of indigenous knowledge and representations of these phenomena and develop on this basis an adaptation to indigenous realities (Hermesse 2010). It is in this global but operational perspective that the Conference is proposed.

Geographers have long been interested in the description of natural hazards and their human consequences. However, conceptual frameworks including and articulating disasters, vulnerability, mitigation, resilience, are relatively recent (e.g. Adger 1999, Barnett 2001, Smit & Wandel 2006). The concept of vulnerability spread in the early nineties (Cutter 1996). The focus on resilience (e.g. Folke 2006) dates from this present century. More recently, besides an increasing interest in the aftermath of disaster neo-colonialism misinterpretations are often pointed out. Simplistic assertions are due to the lack of cultural and linguistic knowledge (Gomez & Hart 2013) or to lack of geographical contextualization. Bankoff & Hilhorst (2009) regarding the Philippines wrote that "Less attention has been paid to the manner in which people structure their understandings of disaster episode into their personal and collective schemas and what consequences this has for their responses to disaster." Nevertheless analyzing disasters from both angles of outsiders and insiders remain a challenge (Brun 2009, Mercer et al. 2009) that this Conference aims to take up.

Historically, the interest in "natural" disasters is not new and dates back to ancient times (Guibodoni 1998, Favier & Granet Abisset 2005). The enormous impact of these events has led contemporary and researchers at all times to be interested mainly in the perspective of the natural sciences or religious interpretation. However, over the last twenty years, it is estimated that the Disaster Studies are an emerging research field in history (Burnham 1988), focused especially in the last decade by the current history of the environment. Indeed, the record of disasters that have occurred in the past and the realization of many "lists of calamities" are far from being satisfactory as historical surveys and renewal of research was necessary. On the one hand, these initial investigations are not free from gross errors, omissions, and inaccuracies (Schenk 2007) and researchers are working today on the submission of more finely critical historical data (Alexander 1996, Massard-Guilbaud & Platt & Schott 2002). On the other hand, the socio-economic and political consequences of these disasters are so important that historians seek recently to include these aspects in their research, trying to establish the number of victims and amount of damage, to identify recovery strategies, etc. (Favier 2002, Gisler & Hürlimann & Nienhaus 2003), while interacting with the natural sciences in order to clarify the geological, climatic, and biological causes of these disasters (Diaz & Markgraf 1992). More recently, historical research has

enriched this positivist approach with a more constructivist and cultural posture relative to disasters, considering issues such as the perception and interpretation of hazard, risk, and disaster themselves, and their long-term effects (Walter & Fantini & Delvaux 2006, Mauch & Pfister 2009). The study has turned into an approach of events as socio-cultural construction, resulting from a complex historical evolution of nature and of the interactions between man and his environment. However, little to this day has been done concerning the concept of "resilience of populations", a concept hitherto rarely mobilized in the historical discipline. Several researchers have nevertheless stressed the relevance and usefulness history (Enfield 2012, Bankhoff 2007, see also the recent IPA in several Belgian and Dutch universities, entitled City and Society in the Low Countries (ca. 1200-ca 1850). The 'urban conditions': between resilience and vulnerability on <http://www.cityandsociety.be>], as well as the program of the last conference of the European Society for Environmental History, Munich, 21-24 August 2013 [<http://www.eseh2013.org/program.html>]. In this perspective, Greg Bankoff (University of Hull, United Kingdom) is one of the few historians who have looked at the Philippine case; however, essentially mobilizing official and written sources.