

Working on safety, Scotland
01.10.2014

Cultural readjustment and learning from disaster

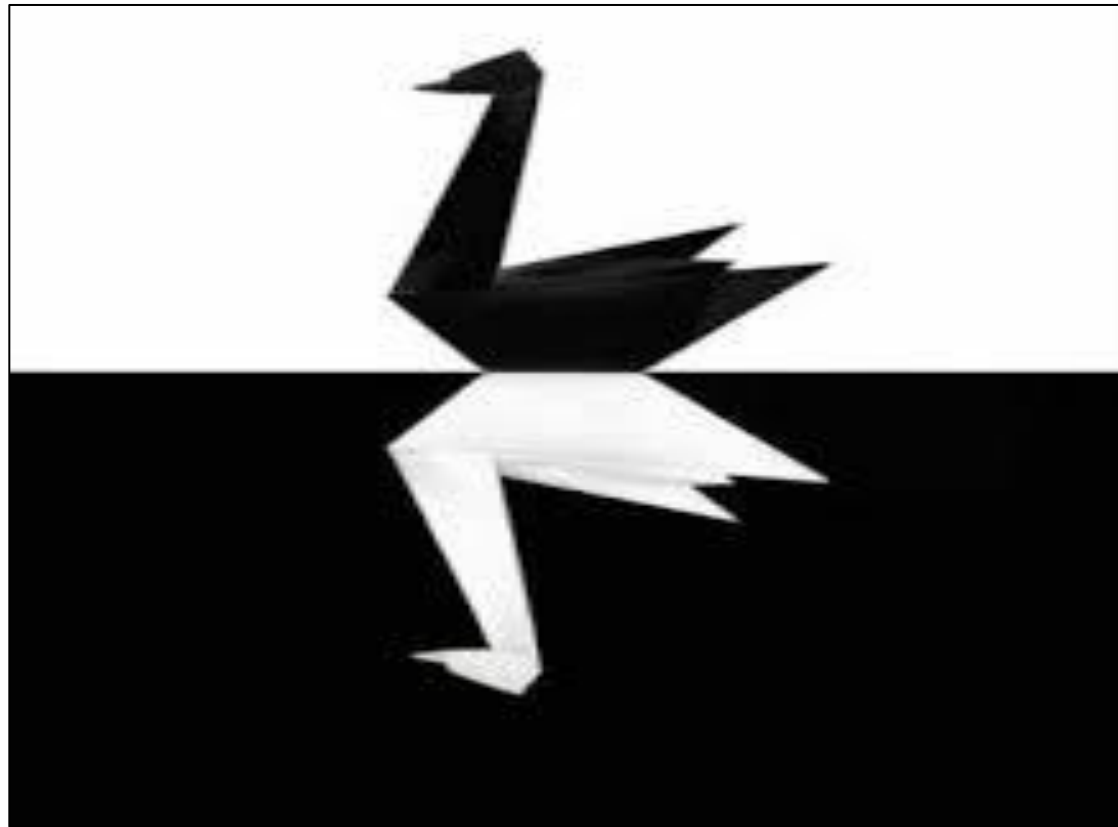
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Background: the Oslo terror 22.07.2011

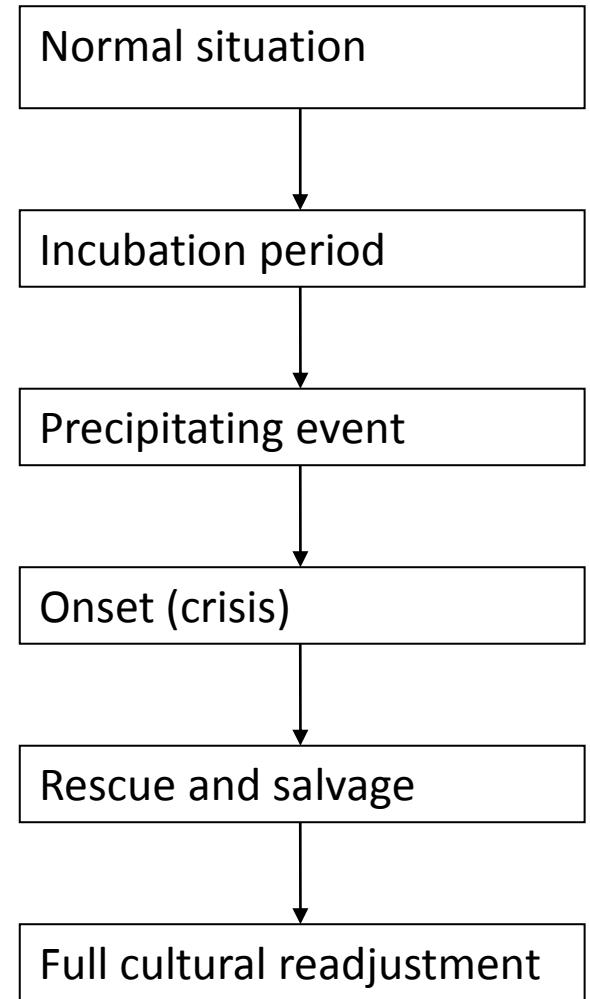


Learning from disaster



Why "cultural readjustment"?

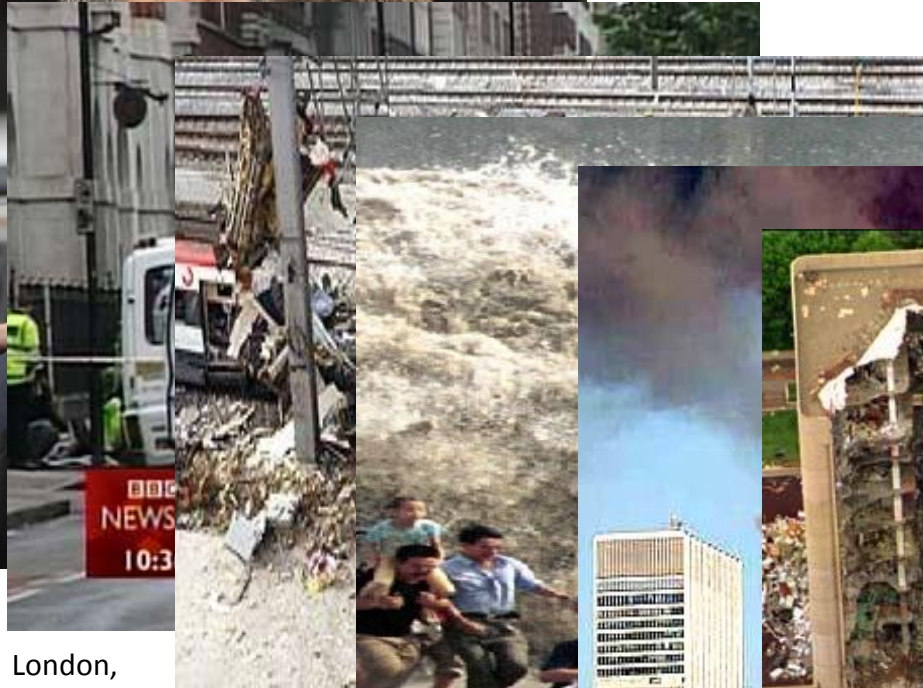
- We know a great deal about prevention and crisis management
- We have some knowledge about possible sources of "learning disabilities" (e.g. Pidgeon & O'Leary, 1994)
- We have limited information about the various stages and **processes** involved with cultural readjustment after disasters



What are we studying



Oslo, 2011



London, 2005



Madrid, 2004



Southeast Asia
Tsunami, 2004



USA, 2001



Oklahoma, 1995



Kings Bay, Spitsbergen, 1962

How are we studying this?

- Literature review of the incident reports
 - Narrow causal analysis or broader contextual analysis
 - Special emphasis on measures described
 - M, T, or O measures?
- Review of secondary literature describing the process after the investigation

WORK IN PROGRESS

Findings

We see the contours of four different processes that may take place in the cultural readjustment phase:

1. "Mechanistic" learning
 - Correct flaws that are directly related to the incident
 - Focus on immediate causes
 - Single-loop learning
 - Important in order to prevent the exact same thing from happening again

Findings

2. "Purification rituals"

- Can be analyzed as a form of social drama (heroes, villains, stages and battlefields)
- Often involving a form of "sacrifice" – The need to attribute blame and causes to a single actor
- Competition between different interests in defining The Truth about the disaster
- Oriented at re-establishing social order
- Re-instating ontological security

3. Learning as "garbage can" decision-making

- Old solutions find new problems
- New events become intertwined with ongoing learning processes
- Power struggles and differences of interests influence the framing of both problems and solutions

Findings

4. Learning as profound changes in institutional context
 - Disasters become watersheds in history
 - Influences regulation, public opinion and culture
 - Learning processes are related toward the *next* disaster, not only the previous
- Important: The aftermath of disasters are likely to include aspects of all four processes
- Timeframe of analysis an important factor
- Ability to follow or "isolate" long term effects a challenge

We need your help!

- Literature on long-term learning from disasters
- Secondary literature on the disasters described earlier
- Contact stian.antonson@sintef.no