

Working on safety, Scotland  
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# Cultural readjustment and learning from disaster

Stian Antonsen  
Dept. of Safety research, SINTEF

Rolf Bye,  
Safetec Nordic Ltd.

# Background: the Oslo terror 22.07.2011

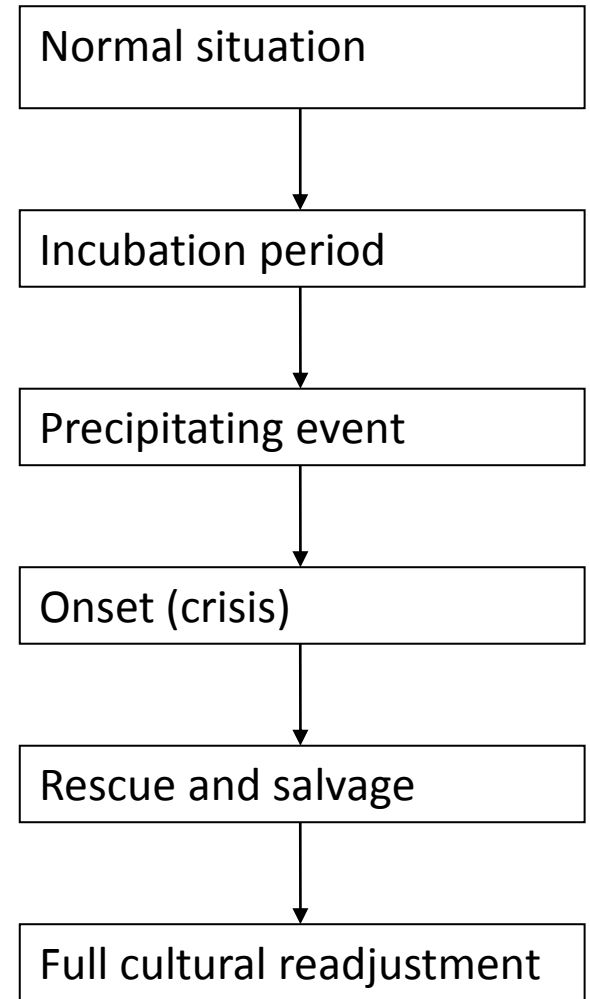


## Learning from disaster



# Why "cultural readjustment"?

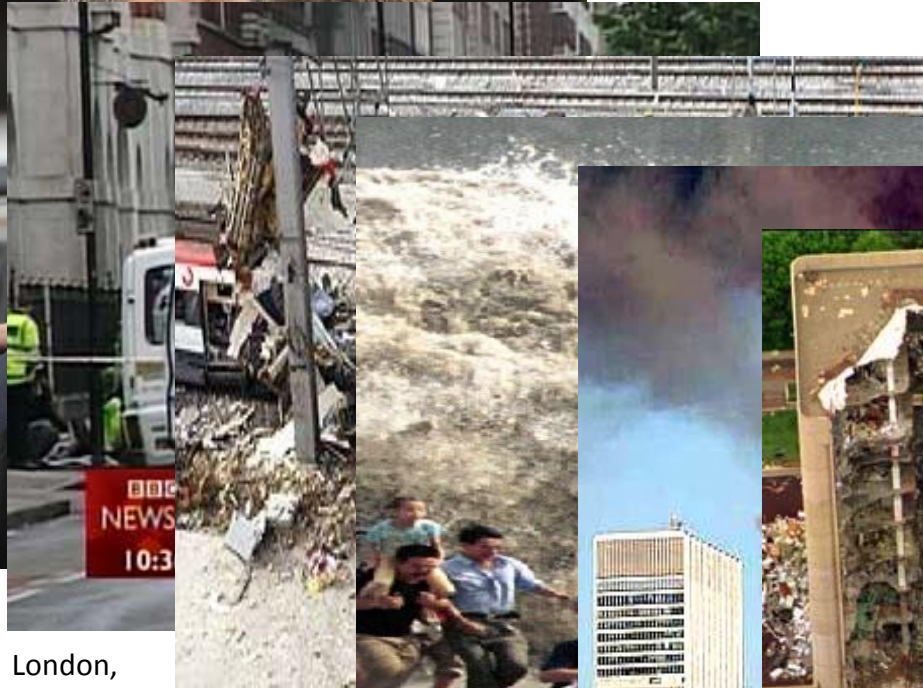
- We know a great deal about prevention and crisis management
- We have some knowledge about possible sources of "learning disabilities" (e.g. Pidgeon & O'Leary, 1994)
- We have limited information about the various stages and **processes** involved with cultural readjustment after disasters



# What are we studying

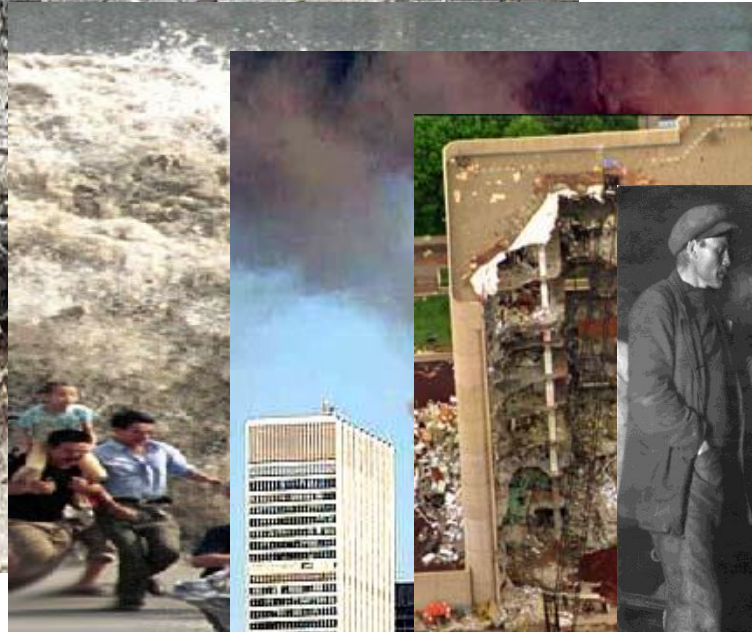


Oslo, 2011



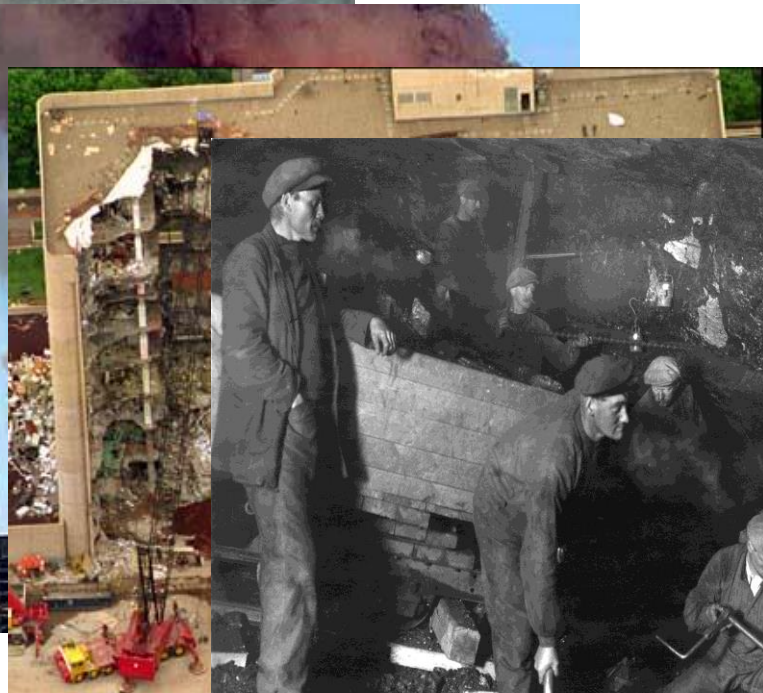
London, 2005

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.antonsen@sintef.no](mailto:stian.antonsen@sintef.no)