

**Continuity and Change in the Applied  
Anthropology of Risk, Hazards, and Disasters**

*This article introduces the special issue of The Annals of Anthropological Practice "Continuity and Change in the Applied Anthropology of Risk, Hazards, and Disasters." After reviewing the factors that account for the heightened anthropological attention to disasters in the early 21st century, I review each of the contributions to the special issue. The topics included in the special issue represent some of the simultaneously perennial and currently pressing issues in the anthropology of risk, hazards, and disaster: vulnerability, resilience, culture change, culture in practice, risk reduction, disaster capitalism, and response and recovery. The objective of this special issue is to help provide an orientation to the theoretical and applied tools*

communities to rapidly adapt to new environments, lifeways, and subsistence strategies. They compel affected people to take stock of their personal and cultural identities in ways they may not have in the past; they hurt, and they reveal much to us about our values, desires, and our whole affective ranges.

Yet, in a sense, the anthropological fascination with disasters and our capacity to conceive of this proliferation has come about as much as a consequence of our shifting gaze as any increase (real or perceived) in their frequency or intensity. The conceptual dominance of functionalist and neofunctionalist paradigms and colonialist mentalities throughout much of the century long predisposed anthropologists to examining the all-too-neatly bounded and, importantly, *stable* systems of primitive others; dissimilarities and perturbations were likely to be bracketed out of analysis. Likewise, other social science disciplines, whose chief concerns were previously the populations of the Global North found in their early confrontations with disaster people largely alienated from and baffled by the risks and hazards of environments and nature that were to them, other (Faas and Barrios). The anthropological gaze of course shifted from the onward to suffering and subalternity (Crehan Robbins), the global embeddedness of localities (Hodder; Wolf), power relations both material and discursive (Foucault [ ]; Hornborg), the perennial flux of ecologies and human environment relations (Dovø), affect and embodiment (Clough and Halley Csordas

), and the emergent and often improvisational properties of cultural practice (Pickering). Along the way, perhaps gradually and then all at once (to paraphrase Hemingway), anthropologists came to see that the better part of the world's populations live lives intimately bound to their environments (Escobar), acutely aware of the concomitant risks and hazards, often in the shadow of periodic and looming disasters (Oliver-Smit). Acute sensitivities to subalternity and the sense of impending collapses likely explains much of the recent anthropological fascination with precarity (Muehlebac263 Tm [(sensitivities)-775.8(t)-0.1(o)-777.6(subalternity)-77m(e5321 342.00275 Tm [



theories, and anthropologists themselves. The panelists and organizers concluded this fruitful session with a commitment to maintain the panel's momentum by collaborating on this joint publication.

This special issue furthers the Pittsburgh plenary discussion with eight conceptual reviews that address topics that are fundamental to research and practice in disaster contexts: vulnerability, resilience, culture change, culture in practice, disaster capitalism, disaster risk reduction, and response and recovery. Each manuscript in this issue features ethnographic case material from those who participated in the thematic discussions in the plenary. Collectively, we hope that this timely presentation of ongoing debates and conversations in the anthropology of risk, hazards, and disasters will contribute to the advance of applied and scholarly work on these important topics. The articles in this issue are intended to provide a bit of an orientation to some

disasters. In the article by Susanna Hoffman, questions of cultural continuity and change are treated as not only theoretically poignant, but also central to how anthropologists advise communities, organizations, and policy makers in disaster contexts. An-



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