

ZiF-Research Group *Communicating Disaster***Closing Conference “Dealing with the Disasters of Others”**

26-28 January 2012

Presentation:***Altruistic, Augmented, Agile: Public Crisis Response***

Monika Büscher, Lisa Wood and Sung-Yueh Perng, Lancaster University, UK

Date & Time: Friday, 27 January 2012, 14:00

Location: Center for Interdisciplinary Research, Bielefeld, Germany; Room 222 “Plenarsaal”

Abstract:

Inspired by the conference title ‘Dealing with the Disasters of Others’, we will discuss how, on watching disasters unfold via social and traditional media, people begin to **engage** with the disasters of others, mobilise their own actions to do something **for** others and collaborate **with** others. We draw on events during the bombing and shooting in Norway on 22nd July 2011 to discuss how those in the periphery of a disaster can help mobilise resources. For example, during the shooting on Utøya Island on 22/7 this was demonstrated through private boats launched to rescue victims, WiFi networks unlocked, emergency contact numbers circulated and homes opened up for others affected by the events, all based on calls issued by members of the public on twitter.

Such altruistic, ‘agile responses’, augmented by social media and self-organised independently could amplify, but also obstruct, or even endanger professional efforts, as well as those who physically mobilise these resources. The paper is situated in the context of current debates in professional emergency response where agencies are attempting to engage with social media users and, as such, gain purchase on the response to disasters made by ‘others’. On-going discussion regarding public responses to emergency events via Twitter, You Tube and Facebook also demonstrate how emergency response organisations attempt to ‘manage’ and expand their own media use. However, engagement has the potential to go further and dovetail into wider attempts of supporting more broadly ‘agile’ emergency response, that is, emergency response that leverages computation to gather, analyse, and utilise more intelligence more effectively and dynamically. Yet this dovetailing generates a number of tensions, which we will explore with reference to examples.

To conclude the paper we consider how such tensions over engagement and agile responsive action can be ‘designed’ for and particularly how this feeds into our current work on co-design in the field of emergency management.

For further questions on the conference or the research group,
please contact the research group assistant:

Marén Schorch

Center for Interdisciplinary Research (ZiF)

Tel.: +49 (0)521 106-2776

communicating_disaster@uni-bielefeld.de