THE RESILIENCE DOCTRINE: Disaster Cooperativism in the Climate Crisis

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Founded 2006 at The Evergreen State College
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“This program will explore the role of natural and human-made disasters—including earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes, floods, droughts, volcanic activity, landslides, wildfires, pandemics, wars, attacks, uprisings, and radioactive and toxic leaks—in shaping human society and consciousness. A central focus will be on how many of these place-based upheavals are becoming more common or intense in the climate crisis, and how communities can plan, respond, and adapt under new conditions. The program will apply the lessons from elsewhere in the world to locally in the Pacific Northwest.”
CLIMATE SUMMIT

WHAT IF IT'S A BIG HOAX AND WE CREATE A BETTER WORLD FOR NOTHING?

- ENERGY INDEPENDENCE
- PRESERVE RAINFORESTS
- SUSTAINABILITY
- GREEN JOBS
- LIVABLE CITIES
- RENEWABLES
- CLEAN WATER, AIR
- HEALTHY CHILDREN
- ETC. ETC.
Winds shift from W-E to S-N; along mtn. range ridgelines; Not uplift for precipitation.

Trees toppled by December 2006 windstorm knocked out region’s power for days.

No single weather event can be linked to climate change, but it is intensifying extremes and increasing instability.
Winter Megastorms

Floods & mudslides, 2007

Skokomish

Lacey

Kennedy Creek

Black Lake Blvd. & Cooper Point
Winter Megastorms

Seattle cut off from Portland by I-5 floods in Centralia & Chehalis, Lewis County, December 2007
Winter Megastorms

Blizzard, December 2008
Flooding, January 2009
Ice storm, January 2012
Spring Landslides

March 2014 Oso slide followed heavy spring rains, killed 43

Stillaguamish & Tulalip staff had warned of unstable slope, Made worse by poor logging practices.

Two tribes provided funds & shelter.
Summer Wildfires

Carlton Complex Fire 2014 largest in WA history:
200 homes burned in Pateros, Methow Valley

Wenatchee blaze destroys 30 homes, 2015
Summer Wildfires
Coastal rainforest burned near Quinault, and on Vancouver Island, 2015
Smoke map, Aug. 2015
Climate change refugees?

Lower 48 Mean Total Precipitation

This map was created by NOAA's National Climatic Data Center (NCDC), Asheville, NC, USA
After the “shock” of natural or human disasters, corporate interests move in to privatize the economy, institute the “shock” of austerity, and repress those who resist.

Disasters increasingly ‘provide windows into a cruel ‘and ruthlessly divided future in which money and race buy survival.” (Naomi Klein, 2007, p. 522)
Emergency
= 
*e- (opposite)
+
*mergere (submerge in liquid)

[Latin]
Catastrophe

= 

kata (down)

+ 

streiphen (turning over)

[Greek]
Disaster

=  
\textit{dis-} (without)  
+  
\textit{astro} (star)  

[Latin]  

Hurricane Sandy
Disaster capitalism: Taking advantage of a major disaster to adopt economic austerity policies that a distracted and desperate population would be less likely to accept under normal circumstances.

“With resource scarcity and climate change providing a steadily increasing flow of new disasters, responding to emergencies is simply too hot an emerging market to be left to the nonprofits.” (p. 16)
“The best way to recover from helplessness turns out to be helping—having the right to be part of a communal recovery…. Such people's reconstruction efforts represent the antithesis of the disaster capitalism complex's ethos…. These are movements that do not seek to start from scratch but rather from scrap, from the rubble that is all around…(p. 589).
Disaster Cooperativism

Responding to a major disaster with cooperative, community-based ways to ensure immediate survival, and engaging people in exploring social and environmental solutions that they would be less likely to accept under normal, apathetic circumstances.

“Rooted in the communities where they live, these men and women see themselves as mere repair people...fixing it...making it better and more equal. Most of all, they are building in resilience – for when the next shock hits” (Klein, p. 589).
During good times, it’s easy to deride “big government” and talk about the inevitability of cutbacks. But during disasters, most everyone loses their free market religion and wants to know that their government has their backs. And if there is one thing we can be sure of, it’s that extreme weather events like Superstorm Sandy, Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines, and the British floods—disasters that, combined, pummeled coastlines beyond recognition, ravaged millions of homes, and killed many thousands—are going to keep coming.

Over the course of the 1970s, there were 660 reported disasters around the world, including droughts, floods, extreme temperature events, wildfires, and storms. In the 2000s, there were 3,322—a fivefold boost. That is a staggering increase in just over thirty years, and clearly global warming cannot be said to have “caused” all of it. But the climate signal is also clear.
Greensburg Tornado in Kansas, 2007
Nicaraguan Revolution

Somoza dictatorship relief failure after Managua earthquake, 1972

Sandinista Revolution takes Managua, 1979
Collapse of Soviet Union

Chernobyl nuclear disaster in Ukraine exposes state secrecy, 1986

Soviet Union divides into 15 countries, 1991
Chile and Argentina uprisings

*Olla común* (collective cooking pot) feeds urban poor before uprising against Chilean military regime, 1989

Workers’ cooperatives lead popular rebellion against austerity in Argentina, 2001
Iraq and Lebanon invasions

Shi’a Hawza seminaries coordinate food relief after U.S. invasion of Iraq, 2003; later won elections

Shi’a party’s relief efforts after Israeli invasion of Lebanon, 2006; later won elections
Indian Ocean Tsunami, 2004

Quake and tsunami devastate Aceh province in Indonesia, 2004

Peace agreement with Aceh separatist rebels, 2005 (not same effect in Sri Lanka)
Japanese drew from experience of mutual aid societies after 1995 Kobe earthquake
Tsunami in Japan
Fukushima Nuclear Meltdown
Fukushima Aftermath

Rapid rebuilding of tsunami-damaged area; Temporary ban on nuclear power
Christchurch NZ quakes, 2010-11

Living Like Kings
https://vimeo.com/96458672
Cascadia Subduction Zone

How a changing climate triggers earthquakes, tsunamis, and volcanoes

Nisqually 6.8 quake damage in downtown Olympia, 2001

Ghost Forest near Copalis Beach from 1700 earthquake/tsunami
“The ability of disasters to topple old orders and open up new possibilities.” (Rebecca Solnit, 2010, p. 16)
Extraordinary Communities That Arise in Disaster

In many disasters, “strangers become friends and collaborators, goods are shared freely, people improvise new roles for themselves. Imagine a society where money plays little or no role, where people rescue each other and then care for each other, where food is given away… where the old divides between people seem to have fallen away” (p. 17).

San Francisco earthquakes, 1906 and 1989
“Everybody woke up the next morning and everything was different. There was no electricity, all the stores were closed, no one had access to media. The consequence was that everyone poured out into the street to bear witness. Not quite a street party, but everyone out at once—it was a sense of happiness to see everybody even though we didn’t know each other.”

—Man in Halifax, Nova Scotia, after a 2003 hurricane (Solnit, p. 4)
“The history of disaster demonstrates that most of us are social animals, hungry for connection, as well as for purpose and meaning. It also suggests that if this is who we are, then everyday life in most places is a disaster that disruptions sometimes give us a chance to change” (p. 305).
“One of the things that has seduced people into giving up on their own actions is the claim of emergency—the government will often make the spurious claim that because certain things require very fast action, there is no time for ordinary processes of deliberation and thinking….I find exactly the opposite to be the case. Thinking and emergency action are deeply compatible. Sometimes that thinking takes the form of very recognizable deliberative processes, and many other times ….we build all the deliberation into...protocols.”

(Scarry interview)
Elite Panic

Sociologists have documented that ordinary people are usually calm and rarely panic in emergencies. But elites perceive a threat from out-of-control and unruly “mobs,” so create a myth of social panic that shapes their actions, and they panic as a result. *Elite panic reinforces an assumption that human nature is greedy and animalistic, and an upending of their social order can only lead to chaos.*

“Hierarchies and institutions are inadequate to these circumstances; they are often what fails in such crises. Civil society is what succeeds, not only in an emotional demonstration of altruism and mutual aid but also in a practical mustering of creativity and resources to meet the challenges....” (Solnit, p. 305).

President Bush, Mayor Nagin, Gov. Blanco issue orders to shoot
Myths about post-Katrina chaos

New Orleans gang members were not murdering people in the Superdome, but “they were the ones getting juice for the babies. They were the ones getting clothes for the people who had walked through that water. They were the ones fanning the old people, because that’s what moved the gangster guys the most, the plight of the old people.” – Denise Moore (Solnit, p. 244)
Hurricane Katrina, 2005

Common Ground clinics, mobile medics, soup kitchens, tool-lending stations, distributing goods languishing in Red Cross warehouses

“People on both sides of the old racial divides went away with changed perceptions. The volunteers mitigated the racial violence and demonization of the first days after the storm” (Solnit, p. 293)
Hurricane Katrina, 2005

Residential Structural Damage in New Orleans, La
Caused by Hurricane Katrina and the Levee Failure Induced Flooding, August 2005
“Disasters are, most basically, terrible, tragic, grievous, and no matter what positive side effects and possibilities they produce, they are not to be desired. But by the same measure, those side effects should not be ignored because they arise amid devastation. Most social change is chosen—you want to belong to a co-op, you believe in social safety nets or community supported agriculture. But disaster doesn’t sort us out by preferences; it drags us into emergencies that require we act, and act altruistically, bravely, and with initiative in order to survive or save the neighbors…” (p. 6)
“One reason that disasters are threatening to elites is that power devolves to the people on the ground in many ways: it is the neighbors who are the first responders and who assemble the impromptu kitchens and networks to rebuild. And it demonstrates the viability of a dispersed, decentralized system of decision-making. Citizens themselves in these moments constitute the government – the acting decision-making body – as democracy has always promised and rarely delivered. Thus disasters often unfold as though a revolution has already taken place” (p. 305).
FEMA and the Red Cross “were incompetent and ineffective. I don’t know where we would be without the volunteers. Our people have language barriers and education barriers; 47 percent of the adult population has less than a high school education”

--Brenda Dardar Robichaux (Houma)

Robichaux and her husband canoed to homes with food, housed, and held cultural workshops for volunteers.
"Women make an important contribution to disaster reduction, often informally through participating in disaster management and acting as agents of social change. Their resilience and their networks are critical in household and community recovery."

--Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2007)