

## Island Cities and Urban Archipelagos Conference

Copenhagen, 21-25 October 2014

Panel proposal: **Natural disasters and (dis)memory of islands: cultural issues on urban development**

Coordination: **DMDM Project - CECC-UCP and CIERL-UMa**

[dmdmadeira2@gmail.com](mailto:dmdmadeira2@gmail.com)

---

### Panel Abstract:

“Catastrophes and crises are [...] disruptions of order [...] [they] change and subvert what we have become accustomed to [...]. They simultaneously demand and defy conceptual understanding and cultural representation and thus force our cultural imagination to invent new concepts and modes of understanding”

C. Meiner & K. Veel (2012), *The Cultural Life of Catastrophes and Crises*, p.1.

The panel wants to discuss the role of cultural memory in processes of (re)construction of islands representation and cultural identity as well as in processes of disaster and risk reduction (DRR), in particular in urban island contexts.

Given its (ultra)peripheral situation as well as its territorial discontinuity in relation to other spaces, the island comes into view as a paradoxical autonomous world. As Peckham (2003) points out “the island in this sense [is] a space in which ‘native’ customs might be preserved and, at the same time, a space in which potentially destructive, atavistic forces might be controlled and ultimately domesticated. It is here that the island emerges as an ambivalent, problematic place: at once a refuge and a prison, a place of innocent childhood adventure and of beastly aggression”.

“Small islands” report (Mimura *et ali*, 2007) highlighted that islands have characteristics which make them particularly vulnerable to disasters. These events, especially if arising from climate change, are expected to have important consequences in ecosystem and in natural and urban landscape, which are considered the main resources for economic incomes, in particular for the insular tourism industry. However, small islands vulnerability is also a consequence both of human behavior and imaginary, and of the process of (dis)memory of the place history.

Insular disasters are historical events, strongly implicated in urban development, although sometimes erased from cultural memory of touristic islands. They are also phenomena related to cultural, social and political issues, notably in subnational insular jurisdictions (SNIJs).

The panel wants to debate the processes of redefinition of identity of insular places and the role of external pressures and natural disasters in the process of identity (de)construction. Papers, from different backgrounds, are expected to focus on insular-urban contexts, particularly in SNIJs and touristic islands.

**Key concepts:** Cultural (dis)memory of insular places; representation of island and disasters; cultures of disaster; tourism; SNIJs; identity (re)construction

## Panel composition:

### 1.

**Title:** Insular (dis)memory of disaster? Academic/artistic/educational response to cultural amnesia and natural risks

**Author:** Ana Salgueiro (Catholic University of Portugal, CECC-UCP and CIERL-UMa - Portugal; DMDM Project)

#### Abstract:

Following the conceptual framework proposed by Quarantelli and Oliver-Smith, for whom a natural disaster is not a physical happening, but a social occasion and a complex *eco-socio-cultural* systemic crisis, we will focus on the analysis of an academic multidisciplinary project, which investigates the (dis)memory of natural disasters in Madeira island.

DMDM - (*Dis*)Memory of disaster? Culture and natural hazards. Madeira island, a case study - is an affiliated project to CECC – Research Center for Communication and Culture (Catholic University of Portugal) and to CIERL- Research Center for Regional and Local Studies (University of Madeira).

This communication critically describes DMDM conceptual guidelines and its academic, artistic and educational activities, introducing some of the core questions to which DMDM addresses. What images of the island were inscribed in Madeira’s cultural memory, which had tourism as economic focus since XIX century? Which place and function took (or not) in Madeiran identity narrative the representation of natural disasters? How cultural memory and/or cultural amnesia of disasters are implicated or not in the perception of natural risks and how has been or can be manipulated this perception in a political, artistic or educational way? Has it contributed both to the insular urban development and to building vulnerability or resilience? How can be the arts and the humanities important disciplinary fields for the study of complex phenomena as natural disasters and the promotion of resilience?

#### Short CV:

**Ana Salgueiro** is a PhD student in Culture Studies at the Catholic University of Portugal. She has a master degree in African Lusophone Literature and is graduated in Portuguese Studies, both at the University of Lisbon. Her research areas of interest are: Insular Studies (cultural and literary approaches, mainly related with Lusophone islands); Memory Studies; and Disaster Studies. Ana is a researcher at CECC-UCP and at CIERL-UMa. She coordinates DMDM Project since 2012.

---

### 2.

**Title:** The role of a “peripheral” geography in the (de)construction of a DRR culture in Madeira island

**Author:** Sara Bonati (University of Padua - Italy; DMDM Project)

#### Abstract:

Madeira is a Macaronesian island in the Atlantic Ocean that frequently experiences natural hazards due to its geographical position and social attitude. The most affected area is the city of Funchal, which is also its cultural and economic center. The geographical characteristics of the city made easier the development in this side of the island. In fact, Funchal is located in a natural amphitheater, with a favorable climate and a natural port. However, the development of the city didn’t respect the geophysical characteristics of the place, so that the urban

sprawl was one of the responsible for the increased risk, which, unfortunately, didn't led also to an increase of risk awareness.

Accordingly, this work wants to discuss the role of geography in disaster prevention, considering geography as "space" and as "discipline". Are the pheriphery and isolationism conditions and the environmental and the political characteristics (as a SNIJ) of the island responsible for the lack of a culture of disasters? Isolationism, in fact, appears to have alimeted the myth of the "garden island" or "pearl of Atlantic", which would be responsible for the refuse of DRR strategies. Contrariwise, because of their geographical characteristics, the islands represent interesting laboratories for experimental strategies. Therefore, how can Madeira become a laboratory for DRR projects? In response, some first experimental resilience strategies, implemented in the island, and their results will be presented and discussed.

### Short CV:

**Sara Bonati** is a PhD candidate in Geography at the University of Padua (DISSGeA). She has a master degree in International Relations and Human Rights (University of Turin) and a second one in Geography (University of Bologna). She is graduated in International Studies (University of Turin). Sara has been visiting researcher at the University of Lisbon (CEG) since 2012-2014. Actually she collaborates with the University of Brescia, and to DMDM, associated to CECC-UCP and CIERL-UMa.

Her main research interests are: vulnerability and resilience in disasters; landscape education; humanitarian aid systems; insularity, tourism and climate change; media and arts in disasters.

---

### 3.

**Title:** «Madeira as beautiful as ever»: constructing tourist representations and the (in)visibility of the disaster

**Author:** Filipa Fernandes ( University of Lisbon and CAPP- Portugal; DMDM project)

### Abstract:

This paper aims to study the construction of touristic representations of Madeira Island (Portuguese Autonomous Region) after the floods of February 2010. These floods resulted in dozens of deaths and caused heavy damage in Funchal, Madeira's capital and largest city.

Touristic representations are used to communicate messages about places and products, to redefine and reposition places, products, and destinations (Morgan and Pritchard 1998). With the help of appropriate theoretical support, it is demonstrated that images, representations, and memories of the disaster are associated with regional tourism policy. What narratives and discourses of tourist propaganda allude to disaster? How do tourist imaginaries associated with disaster circulate, and which actors are involved in this process? Madeira Island depends largely on the tourist industry: The numerous discourses constructed after the disaster sought to minimize the situation. One example was the creation of the promotional campaign 'Madeira, Beautiful As Ever', aiming to promote the region as safe destination.

### Short-CV:

**Filipa Fernandes** is an Assistant Professor of School of Political and Social Sciences - University of Lisbon. Holds a PhD in Tourism from University of Évora. She is a researcher at CAPP (Centre for Administration and Public Policies) and since 2012 a researcher at DMDM. Main research interests: water, irrigation systems, heritage, memory, tourism, touristic representations, nature-based tourism.

---

#### 4.

**Title:** *Island of rain*. An autobiographical journey report on the archipelago of Madeira. A case study

**Author:** Anne Martina Emonts (University of Madeira; CECC and CIERL - Portugal; DMDM Project)

**Abstract:**

Since Clifford Geertz's brilliant and not at all just academic but ironical introduction to *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973), an ethnographic view inside of Cultural Studies has become salable, and it has become possible to include single case studies of 'thick description' in scientific analysis.

Nevertheless, neither the memory boom, nor the autobiographical authenticity boom (Holdenried 2000; Anderson 2011) could draw the attention to the autobiographical turn in tourism studies. Supposedly 'objective' questionnaires in matters of analysis of travel destinations continue to be preferred to 'subjective' and 'trivial' travel reports.

The present case study (Schleichert, Gertraud, *Regeninsel. Winter in Madeira. Ein Tagebuch* [Island of Rain. Winter in Madeira. A Diary], 2000) intends to demonstrate limits and potentiality of text analysis and interpretation of data in 'trivial travelogue' (Nünning 2009) – focusing the capital Funchal and its urban representation, last but not least, under the perspective of gender, in order to discuss the importance of literary and memory research in disaster studies.

**Short CV:**

**Anne Martina Emonts** is Assistant Professor of German Culture at the UMa. She is graduated in German Studies and Catholic Theology at the University of Bonn and Portuguese Studies at the University of Lisbon. Her Master in Portuguese Contemporary History (UMa) won the 2011 National Award for Feminist Studies in Portugal. She got her Ph.D in German Culture at the UMa (2006). Her research areas are Cultural Studies, Gender Studies, Cross-Cultural Studies and German Modernism. She is a researcher at CECC-UCP and CIERL-UMa, cooperating with the project DMDM (CECC/CIERL) and with the field work 'Culture and Conflict' (CECC-UCP).

---

#### 5.

**Title:** "Sightseeing and panoramas: (re)imagining the natural and urban island through contemporary visual arts"

**Author:** Martinho P. Mendes (University of Lisbon and CIERL-UMa - Portugal; DMDM Project)

**Abstract:**

The study of the iconography of Madeira rich in lithographs, engravings, paintings and photographs, many of them still preserved in several museums and archives of the city of Funchal, helps to understand how these representations created a specific imaginery of the island as an idyllic space and a paradise lost.

Not forgetting both how the imaginary contributes to the construction of cultural memory and how this memory is deeply implicated in the relationship that individuals and communities establish with natural and urban environments, this communication seeks to examine how the spread of Madeira's iconography contributed (or not) to the construction of vulnerability or resilience to natural hazards.

Focusing on the analysis of contemporary art projects developed in the island after the natural disaster of February 20, 2012 (one of the largest in its history), we try to answer some questions: (1) how to relate the recent contemporary art projects with the Madeiran iconographic tradition (2) how to read the critical and deconstructive process developed by these projects (3) To what extent these projects, designed as essays of creative experience aimed to think about the relationship of island communities both with their natural, urban and cultural heritage,

and with natural hazards, could pave the way for experimenting new artistic projects driven by the same kind of concerns, whether in the context of museum studies, art education or even intervention in public space.

**Short CV:**

**Martinho P. Mendes** is a PhD candidate in Fine Art at the Faculty of Fine Art at the University of Lisbon (FBAUL). He has a master degree in Art Education (FBAUL) and a graduation in Visual Arts (UMa). Martinho collaborates with DMDM, associated to CECC-UCP and CIERL-UMa. He is the responsible for the educational service in the Museum of Sacred Art in Funchal. His main research interests are: art education in museums and art centers and contemporary art practice at the intersection with the natural sciences, ecology, ethnography and spirituality.