

Disasters and resilience in the 21st Century

Multidisciplinary Workshop

Brussels, Monday 11 December 2017
Palais des Académies — Paleis der Academiën
rue Ducale 1 — Hertogsstraat 1
1000 Brussels

First Announcement and Call for Contributions

Aims of the Workshop

Natural disasters have affected our planet since the earlier phases of its formation. Seismic activity and volcanism are linked to the Earth's internal dynamics and have caused serious disasters in the planet and mankind history, sometimes bringing an abrupt end to the existence of the affected communities (e.g. Santorini or Pompeii in the antiquity). However, natural risks have taken a new dimension in the early 21st C because of their occurrence within a fast-evolving and heavily populated planet. Earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and tsunamis are long-known natural risks but their effects increase when combined to those of climate changes and demographic pressure (as in 2004 in the Indian Ocean or 2011 in Eastern Japan).

A wide range of risks and disasters also emerges from combined action of natural factors and of poverty, poor governance, or uneven distribution of resources. Garbage landslides, long-lasting pollution in mining areas, open air recycling sites or dumps, deforestation and losses in biodiversity are all risks arising from poor environmental governance. Migration has long been a normal reaction to an unacceptable level of risk (conflict, climate change, resource shortage) and it still takes place today, sometimes exposing migrants to high risks (such as droughts, diseases) in the course of their exile.

Risk management is at high stake in the 21st C and questions the functioning of our modern societies. Bottom-up solutions flourish everywhere and demonstrate the high resilience of local communities, but they also point to the lack of top-down long-term risk management and environmental governance. Many – if not all – risks, including climate changes, could indeed be mitigated through appropriate management policies. The costs and benefits of the alternative “action – no action” seems to be evaluated in different ways by local communities and state authorities.

The Royal Academy for Overseas Sciences Theme Day 2017 welcomes to-the-point, provocative, talks on adaptation and resilience facing risk, either through bottom-up actions or public policies. Different viewpoints, from natural, technical, medical and human sciences researchers, are most welcome. We therefore invite original (oral or poster) contributions on themes such as the characterization, inventory, causes, effects of disasters, but also on their management, on mitigation policies and/or resilience.

Participants are invited to submit their abstract for an oral or a poster presentation related to one of the above-mentioned themes (www.kaowarsom.be).

Timing

- Submission of proposals: before 30 September 2017 (preferably in English — max. one A4 page - 12 point font + short biographical note).
- Notification: early November 2017.
- Registration: before 25 November 2017.