

# EMERGENCIES BULLETIN

## May – December 2009 Nos. 2-3

Electronic Bulletin of the Website on “Disasters and Social Conflicts”

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### Editors Note:

Consistent with the integral orientation and philosophy of the website, the current double issue features materials on “natural”, “technological” and “social” types of disasters/crises(e.g.

epidemics, rockslides, forest fires, global warming, drought, nuclear accidents, sea piracy, serial shootings, terrorism, etc.). Our main purpose is the contribution to the prevention and management of disasters and the transformation of violent conflict into non-violent forms.

The overview of “mass-violence” events in Greece during the last eight months does not purport to be exhaustive, as it does not include a “pandemic” form of mass violence (in athletic contests) which we hope to cover in future issues.

A number of the original and adapted materials (e.g. on forest fires, the H1N1 pandemic, the nuclear accidents) published in the double issue focus on the “lessons learned” (or “not learned”) by communities and civil protection organizations.

Finally, the double issue presents a number of resources (manuals, new books, research projects, curricula for peace, new international mechanisms, etc) to enhance disaster management and conflict transformation.. There are links to the original sources for further details. With regard to G-20, as a new informal international mechanism for crisis-resolution, it may be more effective as an integral rather than a “complementary” mechanism of the UN structure.

The editor looks forward to original contributions, in accord with the integral orientation and the philosophy of the website, for greater diversification, more in-depth analyses of mass events and more regular publication of the *Emergencies Bulletin* (NP).

### 9<sup>th</sup> European Sociological Association Conference-A Brief Activities Report by

**Nicholas Petropoulos**

The 9<sup>th</sup> conference of the ESA was held in Lisbon, Portugal, 2-5 September 2009. The writer participated in two relevant professional activities. The **first** of these involved the establishment and coordination of a new Research Stream, RS14, on “Chronic Regional

include a few running battles between cops and kids in black; this is Europe, after all.)

A decade ago, in an op-ed in the *New York Times* published after Seattle was shut down, I wrote that a new movement advocating a radically different form of globalization "just had its coming-out party." What will be the significance of Copenhagen? I put that question to John Jordan, whose prediction of what eventually happened in Seattle I quoted in my book *No Logo*. He replied: "If Seattle was the movement of movements' coming-out party,

then maybe Copenhagen will be a celebration of our coming of age."

He cautions, however, that growing up doesn't mean playing it safe, eschewing civil disobedience in favor of staid meetings. "I hope we have grown up to become much more disobedient," Jordan said, "because life on this world of ours may well be terminated because of too many acts of obedience."

Source: *The Nation*, 30, November 2009.

<http://www.thenation.com/doc/20091130/klein>

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*Review of The Fire Dogs of Climate Change: An Inspirational Call to Action* by Sally Andrew, Findhorn Press, 2009, <http://sallyandrew.findhornpress.com>

Ilan Kelman<sup>21</sup>

"In the Chinese Year of the Fire Dog (February 2006-2007), I opened my heart a little to the Earth" (p. 10) writes Sally Andrew as the first sentence in her book *The Fire Dogs of Climate Change: An Inspirational Call to Action*. Her discoveries send her into despair at the wreck that humanity is making of the planet, followed by elation at those around the world who select different pathways—pathways that reduce and undo the damage. Her focus is contemporary climate change, one of humanity's many environmental and human catastrophes.

*Fire Dogs* is 142 pages plus a greenhouse gas emissions flowchart. The book is balanced between Andrew's personal journeys and facts about climate change, covering the science and actions necessary to tackle the problem. These chapters are interspersed, continually keeping the reader engaged with different writing

styles, a plethora of ideas, and varying perspectives of the same challenge.

Andrew's exploration to understand and constructively deal with the horrors that climate change brings is based on her previous anti-apartheid activism and personal battle with a debilitating illness. The personal anecdotes are highly emotive, conveying the meaning of learning about the mess that humanity has created of the Earth—and what can and should be done to change.

*Fire Dogs* becomes an impressive collection of inspiring examples, on action and on technology. That clever separation ensures that the reader does not fall into the common trap of assuming that technology can and will be a saviour. Instead, much more is needed. Andrew's educational examples, including an "Educator's Guide," further reinforce the need for education, behavioural change, and attitude change, rather than investing all expectations in technology.

While some might criticise the heavy focus on referencing websites, that appeals to and is relevant for those who most need to change to deal with climate change and other sustainability concerns: those who are affluent enough to have internet access. Consequently,

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<sup>21</sup> Center for International Climate and Environmental Research, Oslo. <http://www.ilankelman.org/contact.html>.

Andrew is astute in admitting and emphasising the root causes of climate change.

It is not simply greenhouse gases, but that “Our Western Capitalist approach to development has failed. We cannot continue with ‘growth’ and ‘development’ that is driven by profit, rather than the needs of this planet and the life (including people) that lives on it.” (p. 44). We cannot solve problems through similar solutions that created them. For instance, the author makes a well-argued plea against nuclear power, providing common sense for a debate that is often obscured by the factoids and half-truths of the pro-nuclear lobby.

Similarly, Andrew asks pointed, poignant questions that are often sidestepped: “There is no choice about whether to switch over to renewable energy. The question is when: now or later?” (p. 52). Highlighting fundamentals leaves room for direct arguments on solutions that are often trampled in rhetoric, such as Andrew’s common sense and accurate description of how sustainable energy solutions create jobs—not harm the economy as is usually claimed without evidence by the fossil fuel lobby.

The major approaches presented by *Fire Dogs* are all given a healthy dose of realism. Examples are the succinct descriptions of the

advantages and disadvantages of biofuels and carbon capture and storage. Andrew raises needed questions about today’s use of wind energy and then explains the importance of alternative approaches involving wind energy. As such, the book does not paralyse with fear or hopelessness. It grasps the problem, personalises it, and pragmatically explains what can and cannot—what should and should not—be done.

Some minor inconsistencies emerge, such as page 74 both supporting Sea Shepherd (who are “opposed in principle to all whaling by any people”) and implying solidarity with indigenous lifestyles and peoples. Many indigenous groups prefer sustainable whaling to flying in more tinned food. Nonetheless, Andrew writes and acts from the heart, while remaining refreshingly hyperbole-free, such as mentioning but not emulating Bill McKibben’s call for 350 ppm or less which favours style over substance.

Instead, one chapter asks “How Can You Make a Difference?” and then provides practical answers. *Fire Dogs* thus achieves its aim of “An Inspirational Call to Action” but goes further. A call to action, yes, but also providing what you need to make your own blueprint for acting.

