

Global/Transnational Perspectives on Civil Defense from the Cold War Era to the Present Day

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International Exploratory Workshop*

Exposé

Organizers:

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With the end of the Cold War now nearly a quarter-century gone, scholars of this conflict have embraced the opportunity to expand its study beyond traditional narratives of superpower competition, policymaking and the arms race. Indeed, the burgeoning field of *new cold war studies* embraced the cultural turn and has undergone a transformation to the global (see, for example, the special theme *new cold war studies* at the International Congress of Historical Sciences in Jinan/China 2015). The newest scholarship is dominated by inter- and transnational studies that focus on the multiple Cold War cultures emerging within, between and outside the bounds of the Eastern and the Western blocs. Examining topics like scientific-technological cooperation, sports events, art fairs, youth festivals or war monuments, these works are inspired by questions and methods brought forward by science and technology studies, media and visual studies, the history of emotions, memory studies and the studies of material culture (see for ex. Lindeberger/Payk/Vowinckel 2014, Sari Autio-Sarasmö/Miklóssy 2011, Oreskes/Krige 2015, Van Dongen/Hoeneveld 2015).

As for the study of public defense against nuclear weapons - or *civil defense* - and the management of emergency in the Cold War, however, the scholarship has been profoundly bound by a national bias. For quite some time, the main emphasis was laid on the United States, where the history of civil defense constitutes a separate subject within the ever-broadening, interdisciplinary field of Cold War culture (Winkler 1993; Oakes 1994; McEnaney 2000, Rose 2001, Grossman 2001, Garrison 2006; Davis 2007). Joining this body of literature, Sarah Robey's current research examines how civil defense complicated the relationship between American citizens and their state in the context of the global nuclear threat. It is only in the past decade, however, that civil protection efforts of European countries have received more scholarly attention. Moving away from the dominant American-centric narrative, historians, sociologists and media studies scholars have recently developed research projects on non-aligned states like Switzerland and Sweden, the two neutral countries with the most comprehensive, and by far the most costly, programs in civil protection. For example, media historian Marie Cronqvist studied the ritual dimensions of Swedish civil defense activities and messages as well as the close relationship between fear and safety, and welfare and warfare (f. ex. Cronqvist 2015). In their ongoing projects, Silvia Berger and Peter Bennesved focus on the emergence, social consequences and cultural impact of the elaborate shelter programs of Switzerland and Sweden, respectively. But there are also studies on Icelandic, German, British, Canadian and Russian civil defense efforts underway or just finished

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(Monteyne 2011; Burtch 2012; Grant 2010; Molitor 2011; Geist 2012; Johannesson 2015). In a comparative perspective, political scientist Edward Geist is currently working on a monograph on US and Soviet civil defense, historian Martin Diebel just finished his Ph.D. thesis on German and British civil defense programs and sociologist Michael Guggenheim supervised until last year a comparative project on Switzerland, Great Britain and India that analyzed civil protection as an encounter between state organization and the population (<http://organizingdisaster.net>).

All of these projects embrace the cultural turn and use frameworks that move well beyond simple organizational, institutional or policy studies. However, studies of public defense in the nuclear age have not yet illuminated its overt transnational and global dimensions. Thus far, scholars have only scratched the surface of the international reach of various national public civil defense images, films and campaigns, the cooperation among civil defense organizations, the bilateral accords between national civil defense agencies, the transnational circulation of technological and social knowledge between scientific experts, bureaucrats and defense intellectuals, and the close networks and friendships that developed amongst leading figures in civil defense and emergency planning worldwide. As Silvia Berger (2017) illustrates with respect to Switzerland, the nation's rise to a global player in the field of nuclear bunker design and technology was only made possible by a transatlantic flow of knowledge and the networks of cooperation with West Germany, Sweden and the US. Her work also hints at the fact that the history of civil defense as a system of concepts, practices and people that are bound by local and national objectives and interests, yet mobilized in transnational arenas and settings, still has yet to be written. For example, a first glance at foreign delegations and experts visiting the Swiss Federal Office for Civil Protection in the 1970s and 1980s reveal contacts with a myriad of countries including Italy, France, Belgium, Spain, Norway, Sweden, East Germany, Yugoslavia, Romania, Soviet Russia, Lebanon, Israel, Canada, South Africa, Japan, South Korea, Indonesia, Malaysia and the People's Republic of China. These encounters and exchanges, which crossed the East-West and North-South divide, suggest that future studies would benefit from considering civil defense as a form of global Cold War diplomacy. Another aspect that has not yet gained enough attention is the international cooperation in resistance to civil defense planning, especially in the 1980s, when tensions between the Superpowers rose again and non-governmental organizations like the *International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War* emerged as forceful global anti-civil defense actors (Kemper 2015). In the same decade, massive civilian protests against nuclear arms and civil defense programs took place in cities across the globe, another aspect that begs further scholarly attention (Monteyne/Farish 2015).

The previous scholarship is also marked by a strong temporal bias. The existing literature mainly focuses on the 1950s and 1960s, does little to address the 1970s and 1980s and even less the legacies of Cold War civil defense after the conflict ended and Soviet Russia disintegrated. Thus, few existing studies explore the persistence of civil defense images, programs and artifacts as epistemic registers, materials and affective resources since the Cold War. Of the rare exceptions are Stephen Collier and Andrew Lakoff (2008), who highlighted the continuities between the practices of knowledge, concepts and institutions of Cold War civil defense and contemporary "Homeland Security" in the US. Joe Masco (2014) showed, also focusing on the US, how the global war on terror mobilized affective and conceptual resources established during the Cold War era. In order to gain more insight into these legacies and (at times, problematic) continuities, scholars must also look to Europe. For example, Swiss civil defense bunkers built in the Cold War era pose as a material vestige of a prior risk (atomic warfare) a constant challenge to officials when they try to integrate them into today's *all-hazard* policy conceptions (Deville, Guggenheim, Hrdlickova 2014).

The aim of the workshop is to outline a new research agenda for global and transnational civil defense studies from the Cold War era to the present day. The workshop brings together an international cohort of scholars currently working in the field of civil defense history and disaster studies, including historians, sociologists, anthropologists, political scientists, and media scholars. In order to move the field away from the particularism of nationally framed and temporally restrained histories and promote a transnational and interdisciplinary mode of thought, the workshop will adopt an innovative format for

in-depth discussions that differs significantly from the conventional conference format of paper presentations and question-and-answer sections. Grouped into sessions with specific thematic and methodological approaches to the study of public defense and emergency management, the participants will first be asked to introduce their individual, nationally bound projects briefly and explain their methodological approach. In a second step, they will act as discussants in an exploratory dialogue that opens up uncharted terrain: guided by a moderator they will - based on their project and other projects introduced in the session - identify possible topics, research fields and corpora of research materials for a global/transnational history of public defense. At the same time, these discussions will maintain a critical eye on the limitations and problems of studying civil defense and emergency management across time, disciplines and (national) borders. The workshop also strives to highlight the little known legacies of Cold War civil defense in current national and international efforts to govern emergencies. By comparing participants' research projects, we will analyze institutions, logics, technologies, materials and affects of the Cold War era that persist to this very day.

The workshop brings together scholars from numerous institutions and various disciplinary backgrounds. As each of the invited scholars has adopted a specialized approach to civil defense and emergency management, working with different methodological angles on different levels of abstraction - from material approaches focusing on anti-terror technology and fallout shelters, to media and visual studies concentrating on images and films as affective resources to more abstract topics such as ideas of citizenship and forms of governmentality - the participants will contribute to a more complex and multi-layered discussion. Likewise, the invitation list consists of scholars of varying ages and levels of experience. The small number of participants and the exploratory style of the workshop will guarantee that everybody can contribute in a setting that is productive and open to deliberating, discussing and thinking in a way that a more formal conference setting would not provide.

List of participants

- Bennesved*, Peter: Postgraduate student in the History of Ideas, Department of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies, Umeå Universitet, Umeå, Sweden
- Berger Ziauddin*, Silvia: Assistant Professor (Oberassistentin), Department of History, University of Zurich, Zurich, Associated Member Center History of Knowledge, ETHZ/UZH, Switzerland
- Collier*, Stephen J.: Associate Professor of International Affairs, Milano School of International Affairs, Management, and Urban Policy, The New School, New York, NY, USA (to be confirmed)
- Cronqvist*, Marie: Associate Professor in Journalism and Media History, Department of Communication and Media, Lund University, Lund, Sweden (to be confirmed)
- Diebel*, Martin: Research Fellow, Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung, Potsdam, Germany
- Fridlund*, Mats: Associate Professor, Department of Engineering, Design and Production, Aalto University School of Engineering, Aalto University, Aalto, Finland
- Geist*, Edward: McArthur Nuclear Security Fellow, Center for International Security and Cooperation, Stanford University, Stanford, CA, USA (to be confirmed)
- Grant*, Matthew: Senior Lecturer in History, Department of History, United Kingdom
- Guggenheim*, Michael: Senior Lecturer in Sociology, Department of Sociology, Goldsmiths, University of London, New Cross, London, United Kingdom
- Kemper*, Claudia: Researcher in the "Postwar Era" research group, Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung, Hamburg, Germany
- Klinke*, Ian: Associate Professor of Human Geography, University of Oxford, Oxford, England
- Marti*, Sibylle: Wissenschaftliche Mitarbeiterin, Fernuniversität Hagen, Hagen, Germany, Member of the Doctoral Program of the Center History of Knowledge, ETHZ/UZH
- Masco*, Joseph: Professor of Anthropology and of the Social Sciences, Department of Anthropology, The University of Chicago, Chicago/IL, USA

- Molitor, Jochen: Research Associate and Ph.D. candidate, University of Cologne, Historical Institute, Cologne, Germany
- Monteyne, David P.: Associate Professor, Faculty of Environmental Design, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada
- Robey, Sarah: Ph.D. candidate in American History, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA, USA
- Stehrenberger, Cécile: Junior Fellow, Max-Weber-Kolleg für kultur- und sozialwissenschaftliche Studien, Universität Erfurt, Erfurt, Germany
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