

# **Disasters in the Making: Intermingled Nature of Human and Non-human Agencies in U.S. Disaster Discourses**

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## Abstract

In recent years, the climate change has increasingly made us to collide with issues in which the spheres of human and non-human agencies overlap. Since nature and natural phenomena are increasingly becoming politicised and used for politicking, the question of human and non-human agency has become a significant societal theme. One such phenomenon, which illustrates this tendency, is that of hurricanes.

In my doctoral dissertation, I study how human and non-human agencies intermingle in the hurricane disaster discourses in the United States between 1890 and 2010 using American newspapers as my primary sources. In this paper, I analyse how hurricanes became politicised through distributed collective agency. My methodological point of departure is Bruno Latour's Actor-Network -theory, which postulates that agency is not a human specific intrinsic feature, but a consequence from the collision of human and non-human.

I aim to supplement analysis of historical research since, despite the criticism of many environmental historians, agency has mostly been seen as a human specific attribute, especially in political instances. History, if it has taken nature and environment into account at all, has in general, and for long time, been studied through a strict nature culture dichotomy, which I aim to overcome.

## Author information

**Atte Arffman** (MA) graduated from University of Jyväskylä in July 2019 and started his doctoral studies in January 2020. In his doctoral dissertation, he studies how hurricanes become politicised through distributed collective agency using American newspapers as primary sources. Arffman's main interest is in environmental history and he seeks to build his expertise on the matter of human and non-human agencies as well as studying the nature-culture dichotomy in political instances. Furthermore, Arffman is interested in the changing relationship of humans and nature as well as the mediatization of the society.

### Contact Information

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**Monday, 21 June** - Session 10 - **10,30-12,00 CET (Webex)** - Panel – *Environmental Policies as a Multi-Layered Discursive Phenomenon*

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