

Michael Guggenheim, Bernd Kräftner, Judith Kröll

"In the event of.. “

Anticipatory and participatory politics of emergency provision

Abstract

The project focuses on provision and care in the event of anticipated emergencies. These provisions serve as vanishing points to imagine different concrete futures. During the project we gather several versions of emergency provisions that we test under experimental emergency conditions. Our aim is to find out about how to live a good life – in the face of anticipated futures.

This approach is based on the observation that societies are driven by reactions to disasters scenarios, but that the methods how to prepare for those scenarios, even though they are of tremendous importance, belong to the so-called grey sciences and are largely hidden from public debate. By grey sciences we refer to formal and informal actors like logistics, heritage protection, household economics, allocation and regulation authorities, quality managers, insurance organisations, and psychologists that are involved in decision-making.

Our first aim is to bring the various logics of these disciplines together into one arena, confront them with everyday practices of emergency provision and develop from this new forms of emergency provision. To do so, our second aim is to intertwine the artistic and scientific epistemologies: the question of how to “enact” and create methods at the borders of science and art to re-create, re-calculate, mediate and change the methods for defining, calculating and comparing methods to assess emergency provision is a crucial part of the project.

The project proceeds in three steps. First, we conduct performative ethnographic fieldwork that investigates current methods to analyse and constitute emergency provision in contemporary western societies, from logistics and economics, cultural property protection to individual household emergency provision; from food storage, civil defence to neighbourhood care. In a second step we develop an extended version of Delphi method. By doing so, we intend to elaborate, together with emergency provision experts, both lay ones and professionals, new disaster scenarios that specify different situations for which we may need emergency provision. It is also an attempt to enrich the notion of disaster that is usually restricted to threats to life and limb. In the third step we, the team members themselves, will undergo a metamorphosis from investigators to actors who will enter the shelter. We isolate from the environment and withdraw from everyday life, to envision and experience the future that is inscribed in the objects that have been gathered during research: objects with more or less elusive properties and of more or less calculative power.

Thus the project explores the potentialities of both, the artistic and scientific research and how they can contribute and enrich the question of methodology in science and the arts. Finally it is an opportunity to investigate the relationship(s) of science and art to the question of governance.