

ESF Exploratory Workshop on

**Imagining Chaos:
State of Exception in Law and
Fiction**

Copenhagen, 7-10 December 2011

**Convened by:
Henrik Palmer Olsen ^①, Isak Winkel Holm ^①, and Kristian Laut ^①**



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The Exploratory Workshops scheme is one of the key instruments of the Science Strategy “pillar”. Each year, ESF supports approximately 50 Exploratory Workshops across all scientific domains. The focus of the scheme is on workshops aiming to explore an emerging and/or innovative field of research or research infrastructure, also of interdisciplinary character. Workshops are expected to open up new directions in research or new domains. It is expected that a workshop will conclude with plans for specific follow-up research activities and/or collaborative actions or other specific outputs either within the frame of ESF (e.g. prepare the ground to develop a [Forward Look](#) or a [Research Networking Programme](#) proposal; publication of a Policy Briefing...) or for submission to the EU 7th Framework Programme or to other European or international funding organisations.

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Main Objectives of the Workshop:

In recent years, the collapse of legal structures has been a prominent theme in legal studies as well as in cultural studies. Until now, however, there have been few attempts to unite the legal and the cultural studies approach to the state of emergency – and none on the field of disaster research.

The legal and the cultural studies approaches to the state of emergency converge on the level of social imaginaries rather than that of academic vocabularies. We suggest the concept of social imaginary—partly overlapping with the concepts of ideology, myth, phantasm, political theology etc. – as a name for the repertoire of cognitive schemes that structure our perception of and orientation in a given social order. In the case of the state of emergency, the underlying cultural assumptions about order and disorder, about security and violence, about predictability and contingency are vital to any assessment of the quantity and quality of the disaster.

However, the social imagination of disaster is not homogenous. At the one end of the spectrum, 'exceptionalists' perceive the state of emergency as a total breakdown of the social order; at the other end pole, 'non-exceptionalists' imagine the same kind of human tumult as a peripheral phenomenon only lightly touching a resilient social order. The task of the conference *Imagining Chaos: States of Emergency in Law and Fiction* is to explore how law and fiction negotiate the various ways of conceiving disorder on the following three levels:

Additional Information:

The conference is interdisciplinary in its essence. Not only does it bring together papers from different academic disciplines (legal studies, cultural studies, sociology, political science, etc.), the individual papers themselves will also make an attempt at crossing the borders between law and fiction in order to explore the deep grammar of disaster imagination.

Friday, December 9th, 2011 - *Chaos of the State*

- 10.00-10.45 **Eyal Weizman:** *Presentation title tba*
Director of the Centre for Research Architecture at Goldsmith's College,
University of London, UK
- 10.45-11.15 *Discussion*
- 11.15-12.00 **Leonard Feldman:** *The Culture of Law and the Doctrine of Police
Emergency*
Hunter College, The City University of New York, US
- 12.00-12.30 *Discussion*
- 12.30-13.30 **Lunch**
- 13.30-14.15 **Lisa Grow Sun & RonNell Jones:** *Presentation title tba*
Brigham Young University (BYU), Utah, US
- 14.15-14.45 *Discussion*
- 14.45-16.00 *Coffee break*
- 16.00-17.00 **Parallel sessions:**
- Track 1: Radical Measures** **Track 2: Injustice**
Moderator: **Jacob Ladegaard** Moderator: **Kristian Cedervall Lautu**
- Track 1: Radical Measures**
- Ellen Turner:** *Agatha Christie and Justice Outside Law: Legalised Murder
and the Second World War*
- Isak Winkel Holm:** *Disaster Fiction and Foundation of Justice: Social
Imagination of Order from Kleist to Zombies*
- Susanne Krasmann and Karin Loevy:** *Imaging the Unknown Threat:
the Case of Targeted Killing*
- Track 2: Injustice**
- Karen Margrethe Simonsen:** *Presentation title tba*
- Silvia Chirila:** *The Representation of Chaos in Toni Morrison's Novels*
- Alice Brown:** *Moliere: The Social Order Adapted to Circumstances*
- 17.00-18.30 **Concluding Remarks and follow-up activities**
Henrik Palmer Olsen
- 18.30 *End of workshop*
- 19.00 **Conference dinner**

Saturday, November 10th, 2011

Morning

Departure day

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Objectives of the ESF Standing Committee for Social Sciences (SCSS)

The mission of the **ESF Standing Committee for Social Sciences (SCSS)** is as follows:

- to promote high quality social science research at the European level;
- to bring 'added value' to nationally funded research through European collaboration between ESF Member Organisations;
- to help support innovative research ideas and approaches emanating from the scientific community, and
- to play an institutional role in strengthening European social science research infrastructure.

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