

Risk KAN Working Group past4future

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Working Group Members: *We welcome you to join our new working group!*

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Rationale

Climate change and extreme events are a primary concern worldwide, and are common features of future scenarios that address not just environmental, but also societal trajectories. The past provides us with an evidence base of how climate change and extreme events have shaped the fates of communities towards either growth and complexity, or decline and collapse. Yet, this increasingly rich source of knowledge often remains constrained within disciplinary boundaries and, most crucially, largely overlooked in climate action debates and policy thinking.

The Risk KAN Working Group **past4future** focuses on past climate changes, extreme events and their societal impacts (health, demography, technology) as reflected in the palaeo-environmental and palaeo-societal (i.e., archaeological and historical) records respectively. It is challenging but necessary to try and understand both the environmental and cultural impacts in terms of their constituent components, i.e. impacts on climate, biodiversity, terrestrial and marine productivity as well as health, demography and teleconnections. Our ambition is to work towards a close alignment of palaeoenvironmental and 'palaeosocietal' records taking into use novel methods and different forms of engagement. In expanding our evidence-base for environment-society interactions in this way, such coupled datasets form the basis for constructing extreme event/disaster scenarios that are evidence-based, realistic and culturally relevant. By bringing a direct human interest into palaeo-environmental and -climatalogical science, we can begin to develop powerful narratives of past environmental changes and extreme events in relation to the human impacts and the ways in which individuals, communities and societies handled these. Building on efforts by relevant PAGES working groups as well as IHOPE, this Risk-KAN Working Group, anchored at Aarhus University's Laboratory for Past Disaster Science will establish a network of environmental scientists, archaeologists, and environmental historians who will bring their collective knowledge and expertise to bear on the issue.

Aims & scope

Our explicit aims include (i) aligning available palaeo-perspectives terminologically – within and between disciplines – and in terms of time scales with recent and contemporary examples of extreme events and (ii) deriving more standardized and case-transferable methods that can be used to study past human-environment relations. Integrating archaeological, historical and environmental history perspectives in an environmental-interdisciplinary meta-laboratory, the WG will engage with factors and mechanisms of resistance and disruption that shape the relations between people, climate and environments over time. In this respect, the proposed WG will explore multi-scalar approaches to extreme events, moving beyond the contingencies of ‘now’ and ‘episodic’ to more fully develop a temporal perspective that can contextualize anomalies and trends. Cases of past societal collapse in the context of changing climates afford considerable scientific and public attention. The proposed Risk KAN Working Group endeavors to use this momentum to create effective outreach and dissemination strategies that include, for instance, museum stakeholders and science communicators. The WG will develop a platform to bring together *academics* working on the impact of environmental and climate extremes on society – past and present – and *public and private institutions* working on public awareness, policy-making and implementation strategies concerning Sustainable Development Goals.