



## Call for contributions

### "CLOUDBURST — Dictionary of natural catastrophic hazards" — an interdisciplinary geology & languages project

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Natural hazards have existed since the beginning of time, and it is humankind's job to deal with natural processes across the globe, wherever and whenever they arise. These processes are usually classified into environments (maritime, coastal, terrestrial), elements (water, fire, earth, air), phenomena (wind, snow, lava), events (earthquakes, hurricanes and cyclones, floods and tsunamis, avalanches, rockslides, landslides, volcanic eruptions, wildfires) or even thematic issues (climate change processes, for example ice caps, glaciers, drought, heatwave). These classifications are completed in the language of the classifier— observer, victim, scientist, practitioner—and the terminology used will be rooted in their respective native languages, which means that they will draw on different linguistic and cultural worldviews to describe a natural hazard observed, suffered, expected or feared. However, the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, in its non radical version, holds that a native speaker can only see the world through the prism of their native language, and so cannot cognize something that their native language has no cognate for. As these worldviews are complex and involve culturally hermetic constructs, they tend to continue to exist and evolve on parallel trajectories. In terms of perception, then, not everything can be spoken, and in terms of communication, within what does get spoken, not everything can be understood. As with common natural disasters, such as storms and cloudbursts, humankind has learned to live with it, overcome it, and move ahead.

Connections are made, but without any real pattern, as need or chance dictates. Communication in the sphere of risk, hazard, resilience, disaster management and mitigation does get through, as best it can, with the resources at hand and with varying degrees of success, but the real bridges for shared communication, such as glossaries, dictionaries, bilingual or even trilingual handbooks, are hard to find. In today's world of globalized connections, dataflows and networks, we feel that working on a tool designed to address this gap would be a valuable and promising endeavour. Even the most basic

comparison of terms in French, English Spanish and German—terms like *risk*, *danger* or *life-threatening*—demonstrates how far perceptions can diverge based on the word used, and thus how linguistic and cultural misunderstanding can occur. Any successful written and oral communication thus hinges on a solid knowledge of the meaning and connotations of the words and expressions employed. However, a firm conceptual grasp is often hampered by the absence of equivalent constructs (for example, there is no French term for *cloudburst*) or the presence of false friends ( *hazard* in English vs. *hasard* [which means luck or chance] in French). Our objective here is to facilitate this grasp: by devising a dictionary of natural hazards in four languages, encompassing not just core terms and concepts but also the linguistic definitions and inter-cultural explanations needed to contextualize them. Our rationale is that a firm understanding not just of the words but also the non-equivalences, semiotic gaps and their potential repercussions is the key to sharper and more efficient use of the lexicon.

As part of this publication project—which is framed to help address challenge 4 of the Clermont-Ferrand-led I-Site initiative "CAP 20-25" —we intend re-appraise and re-impel current research on risk management in disaster-vulnerable zones. Work will begin in four languages (French, English, Spanish and German) before later expanding out into eight other languages spoken in the countries and regions most engaged by the issues being addressed (Italian, Portuguese, Greek, Indonesian, Filipino, Japanese, Chinese, and Russian).

The work will be a collaborative effort between French and foreign researchers, targeting broad diffusion within the scientific community but also reaching out to a wider audience, including lead players in the social, economic and political communities. Any reader interested in geological, biological and human heritage will be able to find information they need inside. The added value of the dictionary will stem from the fact that it builds bridges between two sets of viewpoints: between different geographic zones, and between natural scientists and social scientists. Ideally, there is complementarity and efficiency to be gained if contributors can work in interdisciplinary pairs. Their specialist areas will be

- either in geology and meteorology: specialization in volcanology, slope stability, earthquakes, tsunamis, storms, droughts, hazard, risk
- or in foreign languages and cultures (specifically English, Spanish, Italian, French, Portuguese, Greek, German, Indonesian, Filipino, Japanese, Chinese, and Russian): specialization in interculturality

Workgroups can be based on the contributors' own proposals or via the coordinators. As a first step, please send a scientific research cover letter proposing the term set to be defined and translated along with a CV listing your publications.

Under a negotiated contract with Springer, we aim to deliver a multi-authored, multi-lingual practioner dictionary for terminology in natural disaster and management within two years of the start date of this project.

(traduction : ATT, Glen McCulley / Andrew Harris)

Provisional timeline:

send-out of cover letters: 01/08/2018

project launch: 01/09/2018

publication: 2021

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