



## **The Politics of a Hurricane: How Metaphors and Metaphorical Models in the German Press Coverage frame the Hurricane Katrina.**

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Natural disasters like earthquakes, hailstorms, storm surges or hurricanes always lead to massive media coverage, as a close look in different daily newspapers shows (Döring 2003; Döring 2005). They seem to have a – sometimes – short-lived but extreme effect on society as well as on the media. One point that is often neglected is the fact that disasters occur in unique socio-historic and geographical contexts that exert an impact on patterns of interpretation which in many cases go beyond the so-called “natural” phenomenon itself. This also seems to be the case concerning the hurricane Katrina in August 2005 in which the storm not only opened-up concerns about estimated flood risks, flood protection measures taken or the future of coastal engineering, but also entered the realm of the social inasmuch as the people who could not fly from the flooding were mainly African Americans stemming from lower social classes. Facing a storm and the following flooding that most of the inhabitants of New Orleans have feared for years the hurricane Katrina gained its political dimension via different types of metaphors (Jäkel 1997; Lakoff/Johnson 1980) in the mass media that helped to understand and focus on questions of social inequality and flood protection. This paper investigates the metaphorical patterns and representations underlying the news coverage of the hurricane Katrina in the German newspapers *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and *Die Welt* (Weingart/Engels/Pansegrau 2007). The main hypothesis is that the metaphorically infused domains of discourse (Massen/Weingart 2000) about the disaster serve as a reservoir for turning mayhem into meaning and at the same time produce a political slant on the connection of race, class, poverty and vulnerability in the course and the aftermath of the disaster (Jakob/Schorb 2008). The paper thus addresses the German media perceptions and responses to Katrina and analyses how and why the hurricane became highly politicised entity (Giroux 2006).

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