

Disaster Bioethics

Macro-triage in disaster planning

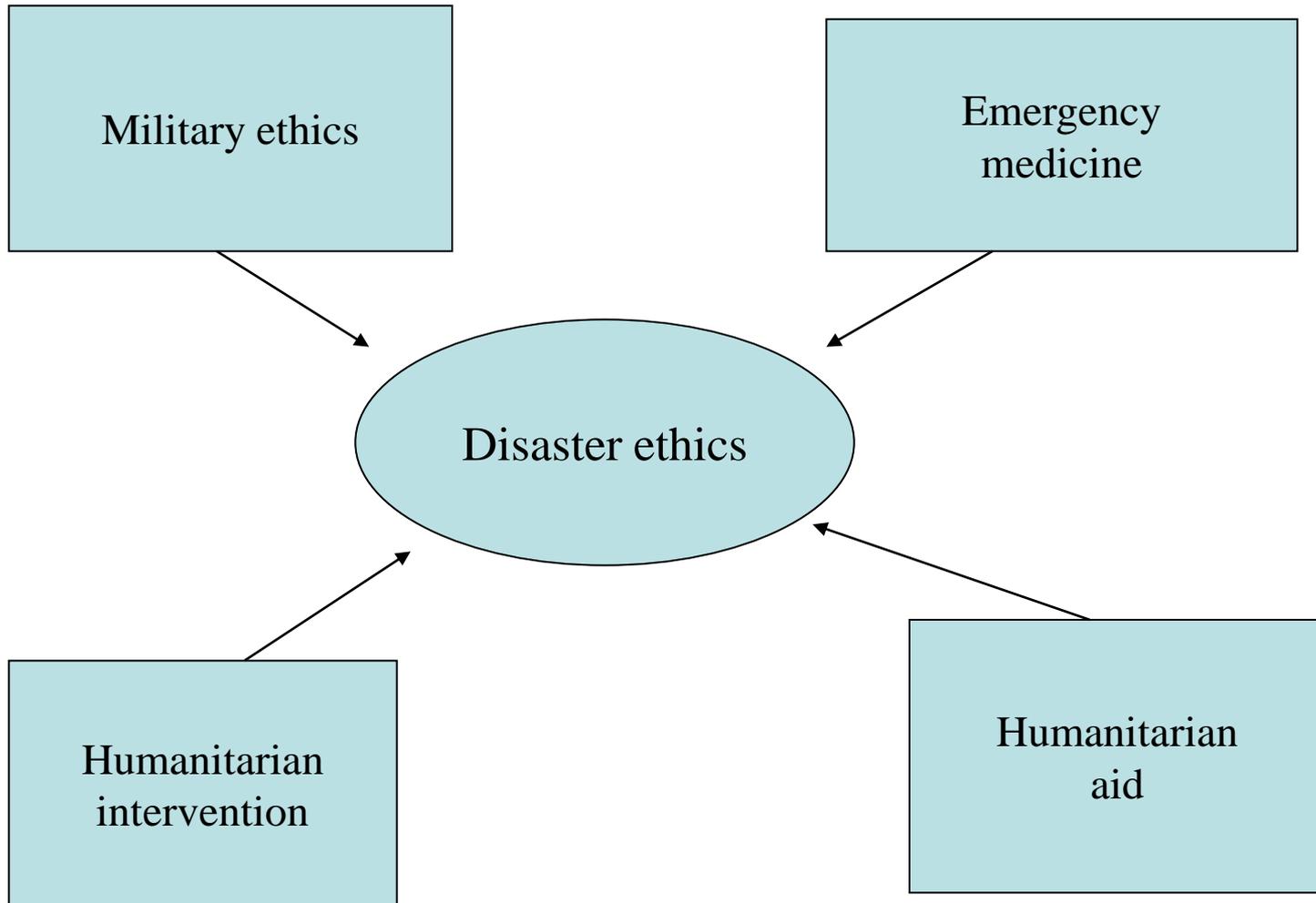
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What is Disaster Bioethics?



Title: “Macro-triage in disaster planning”

MACRO

In engineering ethics: micro-ethics – macro-ethics

Pellegrino: philosophy *in* medicine – philosophy *of* medicine

In bioethics: ethics *in* – ethics *of*

‘macro’ perspective:

- How are disasters approached at a global level?
- Which disasters will have what kind of response?
- Short-term and long-term goals of international assistance?

Title: “Macro-triage in disaster planning”

TRIAGE

Baron Larrey in Napoleon’s army

- Ordinary triage: order of treatment
- Extraordinary triage: who will be treated

Triage in disasters:

- Micro-ethics: prioritisation of victims
- Macro-ethics
 - introduction of military discourse: not focus on individual interest; ‘salvage value’; saving lives not important as such
 - paternalistic discourse

Title: “Macro-triage in disaster planning”

DISASTER PLANNING

Disaster response planning:

“preparedness” instead of “prevention”

‘macro’ perspective:

- catastrophic threats regarded as security threats, no longer as primarily public health problems (emerging diseases → bioterrorism → disasters)
- politics of security:
 - protecting - national territory
 - population
 - vital systems (essential for social and economic life)
- particular logic of action: global living conditions of populations (poverty) outside scope of preparedness

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The moral geography of disasters



Identifying an event as a ‘disaster’ already introduces us into a particular moral framework

What is a disaster?

“humanitarian disasters” or “emergencies”

Complex : man made

human violence, conflict

Natural

wide spread public
sympathy and
generosity

Different moral category:

- no human responsibility, no human causation, nobody to blame
- pure, innocent victims, no human evil
- unqualified call for sympathy and solidarity

What is a disaster?

natural



man-made

traditional philosophical discourse of nature versus human beings

introduction of a moral geography that only emphasizes the origin:

→ reduced vision of cause and responsibility

→ ethics is only apparent in the response

what makes a disaster a disaster is not its origin but its impact on human beings

January 2010: Haiti: magnitude 7.0: 316,000 people killed

February 2010: Chile: magnitude 8.8: 500 persons killed

March 2011: Japan: magnitude 9.0: 25,000 persons killed?

A natural disaster?

2010 earthquake in Haiti

- Poorest country in western hemisphere
- 80% of population below poverty line



1492: Columbus; Spanish colony (gold)

1697: Richest French colony (sugar, coffee)

1804: First black-led republic

Until 1947: indemnities paid to France (80% of national budget)

1915-1934: US occupation: introduction of forced labor

└───┬───> Country ruined: no infrastructure, land deforested, overall poverty

A natural disaster?

2005 Hurricane Katrina

Byron Newberry: Katrina: Macro-ethical issues for engineers. *Science and Engineering Ethics* 2010; 16: 535-571.



Many failures in Hurricane Protection System

Complex interplay between natural processes and human activity: disaster was built into human engineering and political decision-making

Mississippi river delta: 'delta-switching' every 1,000 years



Bruges, capital of West Flanders, ‘Venice of the North’



‘brugge’

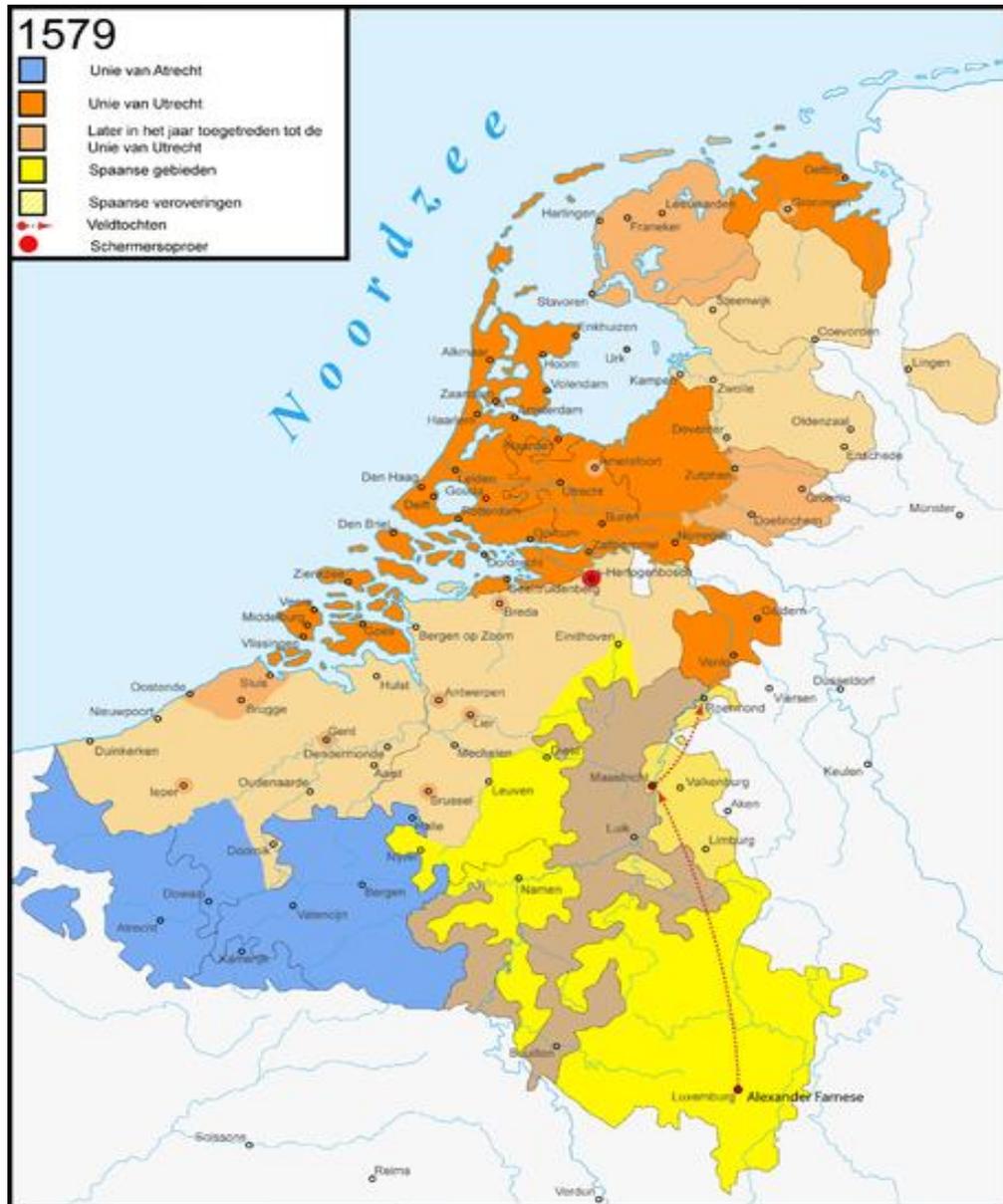
= ‘landing stage’,
‘port’



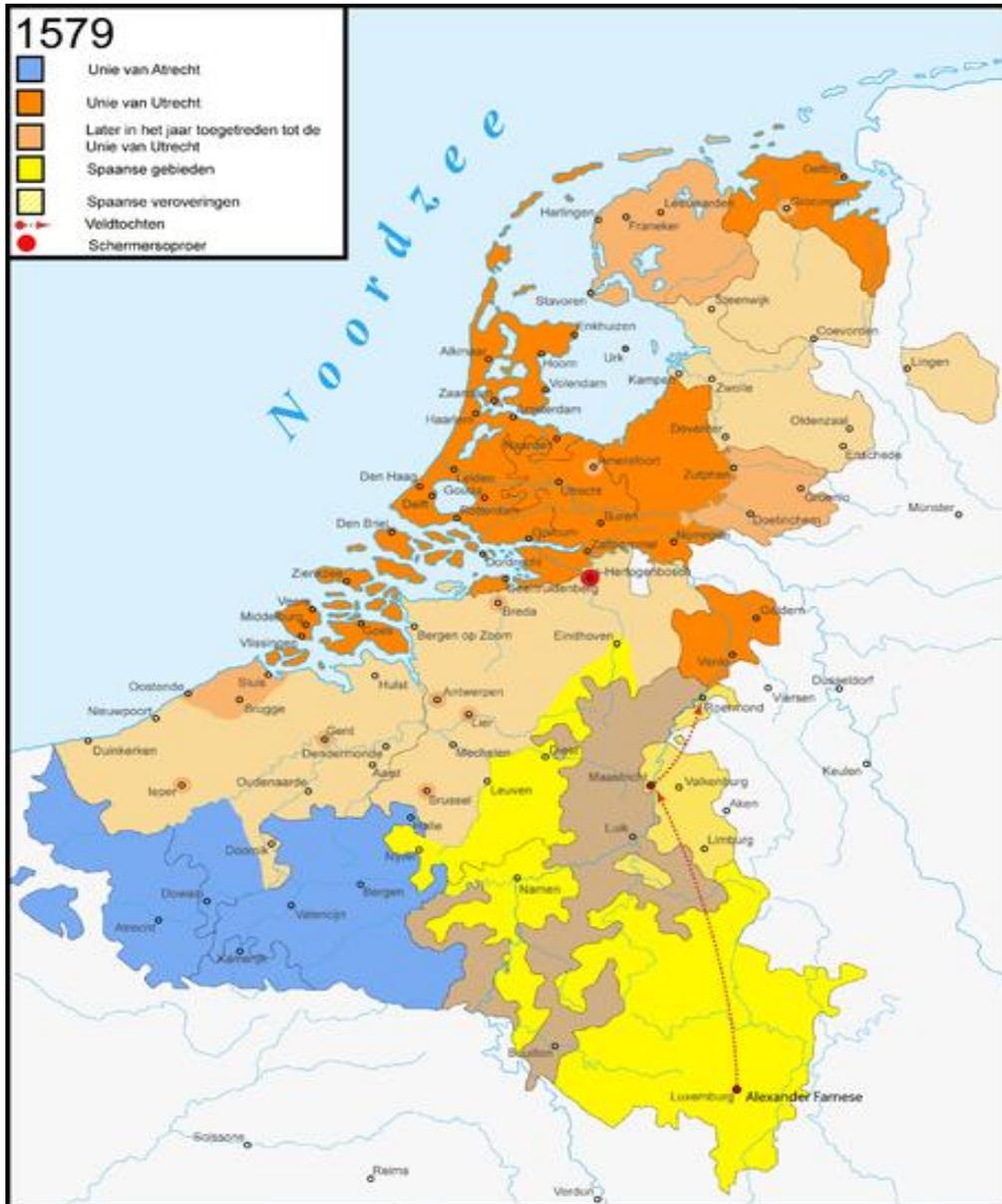
Until 1050 seaport

Bruges: now 10 miles from the sea



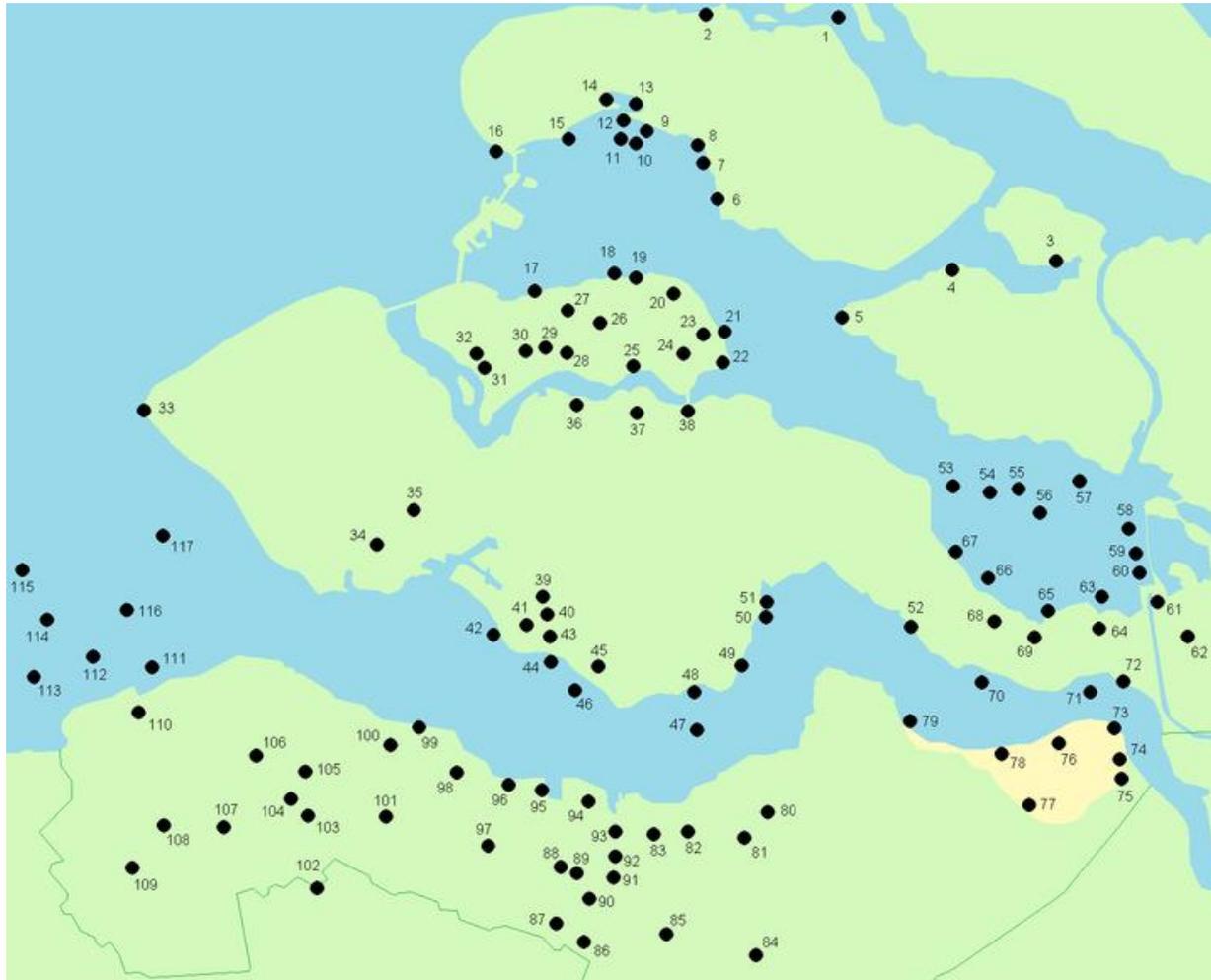


The Netherlands in the 16th century



The
Netherlands in
the 21th century

Drowned villages (117 villages disappeared; 14-16th century)



1530: St Felix storm



Natural disasters?

Netherlands'

“the low countries”

Most of the country below
sea level

Lowest city 7 meters/ 23 ft
below sea level



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The moral geography of humanitarian relief

Self-evident ethics: paradigm of the good Samaritan,
disinterested and purely philanthropic



Humanitarian aid



Humanitarian intervention

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Primordial ethics of humanitarian aid became problematic

- International aid as instrument of foreign policy

1918 Fourteen Points (President Woodrow Wilson)

1949 Four Points (President Truman)

more developed countries have a moral obligation to help less developed countries

- End of the Cold War: military interventions justified with humanitarian arguments

Basic notion: rescue of the innocent and helpless



Distinction between humanitarian aid and humanitarian intervention is disappearing

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Disasters and conflicts are now included in the same logic of humanitarian relief

Emergence of global norms of human rights and human dignity



States are subject to a higher normative order:

underlying conception of global moral community
or shared humanity

- Bioethics → Global bioethics
- Common humanity/ cosmopolitanism
- Global/universal principles
- Moral imperative to assist and
intervene



New language of
humanitarianism

Rony Brauman: “mission
civilisatrice”

Bernard Kouchner: “emergency ethics”

change from aid to action: ethics in action

‘humanitarianism’ = ‘doing good’

- Fundamental value of this discourse: human life
 - * politics sacrifices; humanitarianism saves
- Combines solidarity and compassion; the rational and the emotional
humanitas, humanité
 - humankind: ethical category including all human beings
basis for solidarity (no distinction)
 - humaneness: concern for other human beings
basis for compassion (no distance)

Didier Fassin

2009 *The empire of trauma. An inquiry into the condition of victimhood*

2010 *Contemporary states of emergency. The politics of military and humanitarian intervention* (with M. Pandolfi)

2010 *La raison humanitaire. Une histoire morale du temps présent*

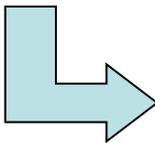
Critical analysis of humanitarian discourse

- Humanitarianism as ‘politics of life’

- radical inequality of lives: differences made ‘bare life’ to be assisted and the ‘political life’ that is freely risked (*zoe* of populations vs *bios* of citizens of the world). Not all lives have the same value

- specific attitude towards the other: vulnerable, traumatized: creation of victimhood

- humanitarian testimony: the witness who testifies vs the victims whose suffering is testified:

- 
- the logic of compassion is replacing the demand for justice
 - focus on individual assistance; the social and historical context is irrelevant

New debate on humanitarianism

Value of saving human lives

→ We can never challenge the politics that permits war, famine, and suffering

human rights

→ Instead of the language of needs and compassion we should use the language of human rights and dignity

- humanitarianism will be more than just a moral endeavor but will be integrated into a moral-legal framework and anchored in institutions
- rights dignify rather than victimize; human rights make people equal and more powerful
- it generates policy imperatives as expression of international responsibility
- it provides a focus on structural, long-term aid (common humanity beyond extreme events)