

RISKING THE FUTURE: VULNERABILITY, RESISTANCE, HOPE

An International Conference on the Risk Humanities

Durham University, UK

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Keynote Speakers:

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Walter Mignolo

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Risking the Future exposes a tension at the heart of contemporary thinking around risk and its effects, and in particular the role of risk in either blocking or facilitating access to possible futures. On the one hand, the phrase is cautionary, a reminder that the future is at risk and that risks have to be calculated and managed to avoid or learn to live within catastrophic circumstances. On the other hand, the phrase is hopeful, a recognition that a certain type of risk is necessary to generate a speculative opening to a future worth living. In this way, although risk manifests in complex historical and contemporary patterns across the economic, legal, ecological, social, cultural, aesthetic and political spheres, it is most urgently felt where the exercise and effects of power are tied to potential loss and gain, and where these losses and gains shape the lives of those least able to resist them.

In this light, rethinking the relation of risk and futurity suggests a tension between the calculation, management and adoption of risk on one hand, and what it actually means to live a life at risk on the other. For those living in fragile circumstances – situations in which race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion and poverty intersect in ways that render existence itself radically vulnerable; situations in which it is increasingly difficult to avoid or resist political instability, conflict, economic precarity, health crises, and ecological catastrophe – the question of risk exists at a very different intensity, and has very different implications than it does for individuals, groups and even whole societies who regard risk principally in terms of its calculation, distribution and management undertaken to guarantee continued flourishing, often in the very systems that place the vulnerable at risk.

We seek to bring these two paradigms of risk – of calculation and precarity – into conversation, perhaps necessarily into conflict, in order to challenge existing discourses regarding risk and its relation to the future. We seek to explore the ways in which thought might take risks in order to realign itself with those most at risk. We seek to open new and risky avenues for speculative, interdisciplinary research, reimagining the way in which risk thinking might turn an increasingly threatening vision of the future towards a politics of hope.

We warmly invite you to submit a title and abstract of **300 words** for papers of **20 minutes** rethinking risk and its relation to the future from the perspective of the critical humanities and humanistic social sciences. Please include a brief biographical note of up to 200 words outlining your broader research interests.

The deadline for the submission of abstracts is **18 April 2016** and should be emailed to fragile.futures@gmail.com.

Suggested topics

- Risk and futurity: uncertainty, contingency, irreversibility, possibility
- Fragility, vulnerability, precarity and the precariat
- Hope, resistance, commitment
- Kinopolitics: displacement, migration, perilous crossings, border thinking
- Spaces of risk: thresholds, boundaries, containment, camps
- Decolonial aesthetics and politics
- Aesthetics of risk: representing, mediating and performing the future
- Freedom and unfreedom: open futures, blocked futures
- Existential risk: threat, conflict, poverty, disposability
- Accumulation by dispossession: capitalism and risk, risking capitalism
- Markets: distribution, flow, asymmetry, crisis
- Sexualities, genders, queer ecologies, queer futures
- Systemic edges: peripheries of/at risk, belonging and non-belonging, inclusion and exclusion
- Ecologies of/at risk: environmental anxiety, slow violence, ruination, catastrophe
- Histories and futures of risk: opportunity, intervention, invention, reinvention

General information

Risking the Future is the launch event for the *Matariki Risk Humanities Network*, an inclusive, interdisciplinary, international research network based in the Matariki Network of Universities (Dartmouth College, Durham University, Queen's University, University of Otago, University of Tübingen, University of Western Australia, and Uppsala University). It aims to foster collaborative research both within the network and with external partners. The *Matariki Risk Humanities Network* proposes to critically examine a constellation of interwoven concepts – risk, contingency, fragility, vulnerability, precarity, crisis, threat, security, resilience, trust and hope – in their broader transhistorical and transcultural dimensions by stimulating an interdisciplinary

conversation centred in the strong tradition of critique historically prevalent in the Humanities, but open to a range of methodologies and approaches. For further details, please consult the preliminary website: <http://matarikiriskhumani.wix.com/matariki-risknetwork>.

Conference organizers

Marc Botha (English Studies, Durham University)

Francisco-J. Hernández Adrián (Modern Languages and Cultures and CVAC, Durham University)

Organized with the support of

IHRR – Institute for Hazard, Risk and Resilience, Durham University

CVAC – Centre for Visual Arts and Cultures, Durham University

Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Durham University

Directorate of the Matariki Network of Universities

Conference venue

Risking the Future will be hosted at **St. John's College, Durham University**, in the heart of Durham City. Accommodation will be available at the college, and there are a variety of hotels and B&Bs within easy reach of the conference venue. Travel to Durham by rail and air is straightforward from most regional and international destinations. A modest conference fee will be charged to cover venue and catering costs, which will include lunches and regular coffees/teas. Further travel, accommodation and registration details will be provided in due course, and will be available on the conference website.

Conference website

<https://riskingthefuture.wordpress.com/>