tion? The researcher can then determine the relationship between information cost and humanitarian outcomes, derive non-trivial and testable hypotheses and legitimately ask for more empirical research.

This, in fact, may be happening already, or may soon happen, with the growth of intelligent agent research grappling also with humanitarian and disaster subjects. Military planners of 'operations other than war' are reportedly investigating some such potentials (see Pechoucek, Marik and Barta, 2001; see also website). They and others may find Feldbrügge's work helpful, if not for its formal models, at least as a node to many other relevant threads of disaster and management research.

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Heatwave: A Social Autopsy of Disaster in Chicago, Eric Klinenberg, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL (2002), 320 pp.

Between 14 and 20 July 1995, Chicago experienced a deadly heatwave. No less than 739 more residents died in excess of the weekly average for a July month. This was ten times as many as in the Northridge earthquake in California in 1994, twenty times as many as in hurricane Andrew, and still more than triple the casualty rate of the Oklahoma city bombings and the TWA flight 800 disaster. In fact, on the three peak days there were so many dead people that the morgues could not handle it; corpses were temporarily stored in refrigerated trucks donated by a meat processing plant. Police, fire department and many other city services were overwhelmed by the events. Yet, who remembers this episode as one of the worst disasters ever to hit the United States?

Sociologist and Chicago native son Eric Klinenberg set out to uncover the story of this 'forgotten' catastrophe. Inspired by the fieldwork tradition of the famous Chicago school of urban sociology, he spent months visiting some of the affected areas. He also observed and interviewed city officials, street-level workers from various city agencies, church workers and volunteer groups. Finally, he analysed press coverage of the event and observed journalists at work. All this was done to find out why so many, particularly elderly, people died, why so many of the deadly victims died alone and uncared for, why a disproportionate number of them were black and living in particular areas of town, and why a disaster of this magnitude became viewed predominantly as a freak event, i.e. a spell of nature rather than as the product of complex interaction between natural and socio-political factors.

It is to the latter that he devotes most space. Klinenberg argues that the scope of the disaster and the distribution of victims had, in fact, a lot to do with underlying urban problems: population ageing; the atomisation of families; the geographic concentration of high crime in certain parts of town turning them into 'no-go' areas for citizens and city services alike; the crumbling of civil society structures in the most deprived neighourhoods; and a city government that was firmly embarked on running the town in a business-like fashion, turning citizens into customers (but ignoring and effectively disempowering those residents lacking the skills and/or buying power to be effective consumers). Furthermore, when it comes to the crisis response effort, Klinenberg claims that the mayor and the leaders of the city agencies were very effective in symbolic crisis management, i.e., (re-)framing the crisis as exclusively a natural disaster and/or blaming private sector actors such as the electricity company for some of the worst breakdowns in service delivery. This was facilitated by the sensationalist yet essentially passive, uninquisitive reporting by the local media. At the same time, city officials (and journalists) had been much less effective in grasping the seriousness of the event at a time when a massive mobilisation of citizens and city personnel might still have helped to save large numbers of lives.

For students of crisis management, this book presents a marvellous case study of many of the classic patterns of urban crisis and crisis response dynamics. First, it shows how simple things like a few days of hot weather may cause a complex yet loosely coupled metropolitan area to transform into a tightly coupled, disaster-prone system: it is hot, everyone turns on aircos and fans, the power system fails, houses and offices heat up quickly, yet their inhabitants are deprived of information on what to do because their televisions do not work. Second, it demonstrates Barry Turner's now classic proposition that a growing risk that is allowed to incubate undetected (because the triggering factors are mundane and relatively 'invisible', but also because key actors are ill-

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disposed psychologically and organisationally to notice the warning signs), can develop into a major disaster (Turner and Pidgeon, 1997). A quote by the Chicago Health Commissioner tells it all (pp. 135–136, orig. italics):

> 'I was on vacation that week. I wasn't very far, though. I came back Friday evening to Chicago and I saw the news. *But I didn't get it.* I didn't get it Friday evening. On Saturday I was here in my office. *And nobody called or said anything.* On Sunday I was in my office trying to get caught up, and somebody called me from the mayor's office about using an office as a cooling station. And *that* didn't strike me as too much. On Monday morning when I came in there was a note on my desk from our public relations person because then everybody knew that a great number had died. And I have to tell you that *I really still wasn't getting it at all*'.

Thirdly, the book offers excellent insight into the symbolic politics of crisis response, specifically the rhetoric and communication strategies of government officials confronted with a crisis they perceive predominantly as a potential public relations disaster. By the time the heat wave hit Chicago, mayor Daley and his government had spent years trying to get rid of the city's notorious reputation as a poor, tough, ill-governed place. They were not prepared to have their hitherto successful campaign destroyed by a single catastrophe. And so Daley initially even refused to acknowledge that a disaster had occurred at all. When this became untenable because the Cook county coroner refused to compromise his numbers, Daley attempted a series of other techniques of denial, neatly summarised by Klinenberg in a table based on prior work by Stanley Cohen (2001; see also Bovens et al, 1999). One of them was classic commission politics, well-documented by Lipsky and Olson for the era of the U.S. inner city race riots of the sixties (Lipsky and Olson, 1977; cf. Platt, 1971): stacking the composition of the commission, controlling the editing of its report, and using euphemistic language to present its findings.

Klinenberg's study shows us that urban sociology has something to offer to crisis management analysis, although he can be faulted for not acknowledging the reverse: he dismisses the field of disaster studies all too quickly when he observes that it has produced hardly any findings about heat waves. That may be true, but many of the patterns of disaster victimisation, media reporting and government responses Klinenberg uncovers in an almost inductive fashion have been standard fare in disaster sociology and crisis analysis for decades (see Drabek, 1986; Tierney, Lindell and Perry, 2001). In addition, Klinenberg's study fits neatly into the small but precious sample of 'power-critical' studies of crisis management. His analysis of the city's response stands on the shoulders of pioneers such as Murray Edelman (1964, 1977), and fits the findings of a growing number of critical studies of foreign policy crisis behavior dating back to Halper (1971; compare Bostdorff, 1994), as well as the recent wave of studies looking at the politics of accountability and blame in 'risk society' contexts (e.g. Green, 1997; Steinberg, 2000; Hood, 2002). Like other authors working in the power-critical mode, Klinenberg does not always avoid blurring the lines between analysis and political commentary: the book, a commercial edition of a Berkeley thesis in sociology, in many places reads more as a 'J'accuse' towards the city government. Sometimes he attributes motives to city officials (such as his claim on p. 139 that so-called 'reinvented' local governments see managing public opinion as a key goal) without bothering to establish the empirical accuracy of these assertions in the case at hand. Klinenberg's persistent propensity to cast the bulk of the city's leaders in the role of villain may put off some readers, but for those who are prepared to look beyond the author's value judgments, this book has a lot to offer to understand the complex linkages between urban governance, urban risk and crisis management.

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