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## "The Politics of Nature: Constructing German Reunification During the Great Oder Flood of 1997"

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Doering, Martin. "The Politics of Nature: Constructing German Reunification During the Great Oder Flood of 1997." *Environment and History* 9, no. 2, "Natural Disasters and their Perception" special issue (May, 2003): 195–214. doi:10.3197/096734003129342827. Natural disasters like earthquakes, tornadoes, hailstorms and floods always lead to massive media coverage, as a close look in the fait divers of daily newspapers proves. They seem to have a 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-historical contexts which determine the patterns of interpretation. This also seems to be the case concerning the Great Oder Flood of 1997, inasmuch as the disaster occurred within the singular process of German Reunification. The Oder Flood occurred at the time Reunification was really being experienced, and therefore efforts to dam the rising waters were metaphorically interpreted, especially in the German newspapers, as the joint fight of East and West against the flood. The flood gained its political dimension particularly via different types of metaphors that blend synchronic domains of discourse. This paper investigates the metaphorical patterns underlying the news coverage of the Flood in order to trace their constitutive role in the 'news speak.' The main hypothesis is that the metaphorical discourse about the disaster and nature in general serves as a metaphorical reservoir for illustrating and legitimising the abstract political process of the German Reunification. All rights reserved. © 2003 The White Horse Press

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