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Knowledge in humanitarian emergencies
Poster proposal

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Obtaining reliable information is crucial for humanitarian workers who aim to respond to a catastrophic situation. In this context, there are many possible sources of information (e.g., local population; journalists; authorities), but only a limited time to gather data, analyze them and respond to the situation. This project examines the characteristics of information production and diffusion in humanitarian emergencies from a social epistemology (SE) perspective.

Traditionally, information is obtained by specialists who perform an emergency assessment in the field. In the last 5 years, a new way of gathering data has emerged called the digital humanitarian approach. It uses social media information from people directly affected and therefore requires no specialist in the field. Based on a **case study** from the 2015 Nepal earthquake, this project investigates how traditional and digital humanitarians collected data about the number of housing destroyed in order to act accordingly to the needs.

My **research question** is: are these two approaches generated the same results from the same event (e.g. how many houses destroyed and where)? If it is not the case, from a social epistemology perspective, which approach has an epistemic superiority?

The **goal of the research** is to identify specific epistemic strengths and weaknesses from traditional and emerging practices for data gathering from our case study.

The **empirical material** will come from different sources. For the traditional approach, I will use my past experience in Nepal with *Doctors Without Borders* and semi-structured interviews with humanitarians in the field at that moment. For the digital approach, I will use *MicroMappers* data available on the internet. I feel like facing a lot of **empirical methodology challenges** with this study. I would like to reflect on how to gather my own data and on how to compare the results obtained by both approaches in order to be able to reflect about it in an epistemic perspective.