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The paper presents case studies where disasters provided a window of opportunity for change that included social action with (potentially) positive effects on the environment. The research literature was screened for empirical cases in support of societal changes with a focus on environmental issues, and a more in-depth case study of the extensive tree felling after the storm Gudrun in Sweden 2005 was also conducted. The case study is explored through available research as well as “grey” literature to identify societal actions taken after the storm that had – or not – an effect on environmental conditions. With the help of the framework presented by Birkmann et al. (2010), the study aims to characterise the nature of these anthropic changes. The framework was modified to focus specifically on societal actions implemented because of an “open window”, and the environmental effects of the actions. This enabled identifying changes with a positive/negative and intended/unintended effect on the environment, as well as determining if a change was based on formal or informal decisions. Several cases identified in the literature provide empirical support for the theory that disasters can generate a window of opportunity for positive environmental change. However, open windows are not always exploited, as is apparent in the case of the storm Gudrun.

Birkmann, J., Buckle, P., Jaeger, J., Pelling, M., Setiadi, N., Garschagen, M., . . . Kropp, J. (2010). Extreme events and disasters: A window of opportunity for change? Analysis of organizational, institutional and political changes, formal and informal responses after mega-disasters. *Natural Hazards*, 55(3), 637-655. doi:10.1007/s11069-008-9319-2

Rethinking disasters and social change: Beyond hope and despair