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Unpredictable weather, scarcely populated areas and long distances can be strenuous for Search and Rescue (SAR) responders in Northern Norway. Because operations are time and location sensitive, responders are heavily relying on maps— from planning out resources for response to navigation and information communication. Despite of being indispensable, maps and mapping processes are overlooked in research regarding SAR. With this presentation I seek to explore complex networks of maps and mapping practices that take place during SAR missions, with special focus on information communication.

My research is situated in Posthuman tradition, more precisely – New Materialism. It emphasises entanglements as a constitutive force, challenges dichotomic worldview and extends agency to more-than-human actors. Consequently, my point of departure is to analyse maps as interacting actors and as networks *per se*, where heterogenous interactions take place. In this manner performativity and representation of maps are processual outcomes of interactions, not pre-given features.

Focusing on maps as networks allows me to expand the research from immediate surroundings to processes which happen on different spatio-temporalities. This takes me through various “construction sites”: I conduct interviews with people working on rescue boats, helicopters, coordination centre, as responders on land, or with map modelling, and analyse documents related to mapping and SAR, such as international manuals, regulations, incident or exercise reports.

Preliminary findings show that maps deployed in SAR missions are everything but unified, ranging from paper maps to GPS tracking devices. The responders in the field could be using several mapping platforms at a time, differentiating between maps due to their technical capabilities. Different practices of employing maps are intertwined with the need for information flow and external conditions.

Digital maps require complex networks containing different data sets and data acquiring tools. Within these networks data communication and translation happens on various levels and includes strings of interactions between matter, international and national regulations, radars, waves, signs and symbols.

New Materialism might not have a clear cut answer of how to improve future work practices of emergency responders. However, this perspective can contribute in shaping them by exploring multiple layers of information communication and translation taking place when maps are employed within SAR operations. Unravelling the “black box” of maps and their complex interactions provides a possibility to see where and when practices can have unexpected outcomes.

Exploring Future Work Practices for Information Sharing and Achieving Common Situational Understanding in Disasters