

# MANUFACTURING PANIC: AFFECT AND CONTAGION THROUGH WEATHER NEWS

Alptug Oken

*Rutgers University, New Brunswick, USA*

**Abstract:** Given the intense emphasis on weather forecast news in the US media, this study will approach the news as “affective mediated phenomenon” in a search for the problems which motivates practices or depletions. Through the ontological readings of ‘affect’ in the recent literature on “affective turn”, it aims to open up a new platform to analyze the fundamentals of relationality within televised and online weather forecasting and their extension in the society. I will focus on the Facebook group “Stop the Weather Channel from naming Winter Storms” which was created as a resistance to the everyday production of affective threat-values of The Weather Channel (TWC)’s naming of storms. I will analyze both the shared images from TV (via YouTube videos) and user comments on them utilizing Brian Massumi’s notion of “affective facts” and Anna Gibbs’ notion of “affect-contagion”. I will argue that, weather news produces affective registers which trigger continuous processes of re-making of the bodies as if it is a real situation. Thus, through the affective reality of anticipated alternatives created by weather news, performative threat-value of the thought-signs increases. I will show instances of mimetic relations between the bodies as anxiety formation through the portrayals of practices of emptying supermarkets, showing “signs” through visualized narration of cloud

movements, and live-connections to the “scene”. Media’s emphasis on faces, values and rhythms of resonance with the portrayed bodies in anxiety from the previous storms works as an activation contour of affect-contagion. Weather news produces a form of subjectivity through affective mediations of technical means which amplifies audiences.

**Keywords:** Affective turn, media theory, media and culture, weather news, contagion

## I. INTRODUCTION

Casey in Vannini et al argues that “the weather is persistent in our bodies. The clouds may sail away with the wind, but they remain within us, as our clouds, our overcast skies, our horizon line, forming an ‘idiolocalism’” (Vanini et al, 2012 : 373). As it is interesting to note the relationship between the body and the weather and ‘remains’ of weatherly phenomena in our bodies, it opens up more questions than it answers. First and foremost of these questions is “how is the relationship between the ‘body’ and the ‘weather’ mediated?” And, how could one explicate

how 'remains' in the 'body' functions? Thus, what I am interested in current study is the mediation of this relationship between weather and bodies through weather forecast news.

In this paper, I will talk about 'multi-faceted theatrical aspect' (Guattari, 1995) of weather forecast news in their relationship with 'affect'. This study asks how the weather forecast is communicated through TV and through internet. What is the relationship between 'affectivity' and 'weather news'? How does 'affect' operate to engender movements among people in accordance with or in resistance with each other? How can 'affect theory' help to explicate the mediated weather communication and its consequences? What could these consequences be, can they be altered, and what happens when it is altered or cannot be altered? Following these questions, this study problematizes approaches to studying weather forecasting on TV (and briefly on internet) through its theoretical argumentation via 'affect' and what scholars have called the 'affective turn' (Clough, 2007, 2010; Gibbs, 2008, 2010, 2011; Massumi, 2002, 2005). This is not to say that political economy of 'weather forecasting' is not important, as Smythe (1981) would argue for the media conglomerates' enthusiasm in shaping consciousness of the individuals. Rather than delineating a political economy or audience studies perspective, this paper will rely on the ontological readings of 'affect' through and its implications on the weather forecast news as mediated phenomenon, specifically by conceptualizing weather forecasting news as an 'affective communication'. Thus, this study aims to open up a new platform to analyze the fundamentals of 'relationality' within televised weather forecasting (and internet side) and the society.

This paper follows Bratich's utilization of Foucault's problematization which makes "reality intelligible and thus enable practices to 'take place'" (Bratich, 2005 : 244). As he argues, the ontological realm belongs to mediated subjective forces, media/human assemblage and "collective incentives of values, significations and affects" (Bratich, 2005 : 246). In other words, before arguing for branding, commodification, internalization of weather forecast, examination of media coverage or 'audience perception' of media coverage, weather forecast news should be approached as 'affective mediated phenomenon' in a search for the 'problems' which motivates 'practices' or 'depletions'.

## II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND ANALYSIS

### A. *A Framework for Understanding the Relationship Between Weather News and Society*

Weather forecasting has been studied from various research angles. Sturken (1998) studies the construction of viewers through weather news examining media coverage of El Nino. Miller studies portrayal of weather on TV news and its place in programming, arguing that meteorology embraces power struggles in 'risk society' through disciplining time, monitoring threats to people and penetrating to the 'social' (Miller, 2002 : 206). Vannini & McCright (2007) study the 'internalization of weather'. Green (2012) studies the 'immediacy' of telling the weather news. And Vannini et al. (2012) study 'experiences of weather' and how those experiences are embodied and triggered adjustments in people's selves. These approaches complicate the interaction between weather, place, body and self. However they tie

'experiences' of people to a 'place' taking the weather as a medium, while my approach views humans as mediated subjects through affective forecast news which un-bounds them from any certain place and time. This study enlarges the literature on weather forecast, focusing on the issue from the recent affective turn in media studies and complicates the portrayals and "perceptions" of the weather forecast news. According to Clough, what affective turn emphasizes is the movement, emergences and potentiality of the body (Clough, 2010 : 219). Thus, the struggle in the literature with the idea of process, side-perception, virtuality and aliveness unfolds in explaining weather forecast news as affective mediated communication in this research.

This study follows a definition of affect as discussed by Clough (2010), Gibbs (2010), Massumi (2005), and Shouse (2005). Affect is visceral perception, potential and emergent, it also includes uncompleted past actions, it has its own autonomy because it is virtual, in the sense that it is real; it exists but in a way that cannot be seen, it is about bodies' becoming (Massumi, 2002). Massumi defines affect as "a prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body's capacity to act" (Shouse, 2005: 1). Gibbs discusses 'affect contagion', a mimetic communication where experiences of people converge emotionally (Gibbs, 2010 : 186). According to her, 'affect' includes a rhythmic and contagious process of body-to-body impulses (Gibbs, 2010 : 191). Affect is contagious because of the feedback loops between experiencing individuals and observers (Gibbs, 2011 : 253). Massumi explains his notion of 'affective fact' through

discussing the future reality of threat which is continuously fed by a creation of uncertainty and preemptive actions, such as through positing double conditionals (would have, could have) of "war precautions" despite any lack of evidence (Massumi, 2010 : 54). So, he talks about how affective facts are built and posited through surplus reality of what has not yet happened (Massumi, 2010 : 66). He also emphasizes the significance of threat-values of alerts, triggering the performance and action-taking regarding the affective facts (Massumi, 2010 : 59). Massumi argues that the anxiety is not the prerequisite of an imitation, it is the state of nervousness which might be re-shaped by any individual (individual-social-collective<sup>1</sup>) later.

This research argues that affectivity of weather forecast news conducts further anxiety and resistance to challenge the monopolization of everyday life through the control of the future weather news. Thus, this study adds to Foucault's discussion of governmentality. Foucault focuses on the word "disposer" (i.e. to arrange) to explain that there is no one common good that the art of government implies. There is "plurality of specific ends" (Foucault, 2007 : 99). Thus, arrangement of things (economy, customs, etc.) as tactics to achieve these ends is crucial. This arrangement also includes the interplay of freedom and security as the government lets people to be free by producing its own freedom (in the future) through stimulating danger (Foucault, 2008 : 66). "The fear of danger" (Foucault, 2008 : 67) helps to rearrange the order of things. Massumi discusses fear as activation of a state of nervousness which is continuously reshaped by individuals through the intensity of the experience of the threat (Massumi, 2005 : 37). The art

of governmentality shows itself as a threat because of its looming futurity, which is “a form of futurity yet has the capacity to fill the present without presenting itself” (Massumi, 2005: 35). Weather news normalizes anxiety-paranoia and helps contagion to diffuse naturally in everyday lives of the people, as the news perpetually reminds people “daily threats” and train how to live in “nature’s hegemony”. This study will show how affective narration of hurricanes (or tornados, etc.) and affect-contagion among bodies take place through weather forecast news. I will provide an example on the resistance to governmentality of weather forecast news through providing comments from the Facebook group “Stop the Weather Channel from naming Winter Storms” where users resist the ways in which panic is manufactured and exploited through weather news.

*B. Act before the Future Comes: Analysis of Weather Forecast News*

The way weather forecast is reported has more significance than the content of the image. Content only adds a flavor to the affect, as content mediates the affective relations between the source and the body (and among the bodies). Among the shared images in the social media, some of them show how abnormal weather is inscribed into the human bodies and how they repeat the steps which have been done previously. Owner of the house in an image changes their wooden windows storm covers’ motto “Go Away Irene”, to “Go Away Sandy” portraying the inscription of the perception of weather to his body while his inscription of the weather to the wood crystallizes<sup>2</sup>.

The networked anxiety is population’s *affective attunement* as one would observe in occasional storm

alerts and in major perpetual warnings of hurricanes and tornados. AccuWeather.com news<sup>3</sup> on December 25, 2012 until May, 2, 2013 show how AccuWeather.com “warns” about the weather with occasional weather alerts. Here are samples from the headlines of the news: “Severe Weather Turns Deadly: Snow in Dallas, Little Rock Next” (Dec, 25, 2012), “Major Snowstorm invading the Northeast” (Dec, 27, 2012), “Photos: Brrr! Coldest Weather of the Season so Far” (Jan, 4, 2013), “Severe Weather to Return to the Gulf Coast This Week” (Jan, 7, 2013), “Nasty Cold Wave Heading for Part of the US” (Jan, 11, 2013). A “scientific voice” narrates them with the images of interactive maps, freezing photos of “helpless” people which boost the reality of the news. Availability of users’ comments sections below the news delineates the “actual condition” of the weather from where they are, which elevates the anxiety without presenting facts. Because of the warnings, reports and predictions by the weather forecast services, everyone can stop themselves (or can be stopped) before reaching the maximum panic level<sup>4</sup>. When anxiety is perpetually maintained, panic is controlled (Gibbs, 2008 : 132). In other words, people (collectively) want to save themselves in (and from) panic which is reminiscent of extreme individuality.

In WeatherNation TV, the host-meteorologist discuss the effectiveness of Hurricane Sandy (and the threats)<sup>5</sup>. He talks about it with its looming futurity through all the available forecasting models<sup>6</sup> in an implied-scientific method into the news. This scientific evidence-showing portrays the “urgency” of making “immediate” plans. Circulating images guarantee the upcoming postings with emphasizing gestures of his body. Furthermore, one can also talk about the after-

shock of Hurricane Sandy<sup>7</sup> where it did not actually hit severely – but expected to do so. As the ongoing investment on the imaging of the weather with the earlier footage (about historic hurricanes) continue in the news, different forecasts delineate different places of “hit”. When presumed reality fails in some places, the *experienced fear* turns into *content of fear*, a collection of the memory.

Daily updates of the weather news prepares people for the anticipation of “snowstorm” (as the images in May, 2, 2013 news in AccuWeather show, e.g. Fig. 1. and Fig. 2.<sup>8</sup>) as *affective tone* of the weather forecasts turn this process into an *everyday life event*. For example, the January 8, 2013 weather news in AccuWeather.com, (shown in Fig. 3.)<sup>9</sup> argues that “Texas Severe Storms to Bring Threat of Flooding, Tornadoes” and the news explicates that the winds from northern Mexico with the humidity from the Gulf may bring unusual January tornadoes which normally occur in March. Moreover, although the previous news was removed from the website about the formation U shape Jetstream, it was about the possibility of the emergence of a Jetstream from the upper-east coast of the US.



Fig. 1 Daily Updates 1

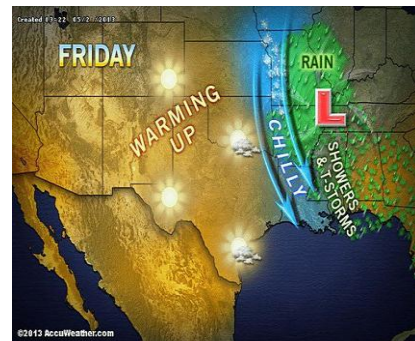


Fig. 2 Daily Updates 2



Fig. 3 Texas Storm

The combination of the news is narrated as: if this happens, then it *could* merge with the warm weather of southern US, which makes it as a U-shape stream, which *may* cause tornadoes. This news shows that even without the initial condition of future possible incident had not occurred, fear now can prepare the background itself as it does not need a ‘trigger’ after its autonomization (which can be considered as a

thought-sign having a material-quality such as being able to reactivate the body) (Massumi, 2010 : 42).

There are also double-forecasts, the forecast of the forecasts. As previously stated with the Texas example, double-forecast shows itself with the usage of double-conditionals: if the stream of winds that were not there (Northwest Coast) of the US enters towards the land, and if a completely separate stream of weather moves towards the south, then their converged impact "may" cause "severe" tornados. Thus, the capacity of weather to destroy is always there, as it is an *affective fact*.

Although it is not the real storm, the alert of the storm with empowered language of "showers" instead of "rains", "winter weather" instead of "snow" and "storm" instead of "winds" communicate affectively about the level of alert in the weather forecasts. Then, each news channel (whether it is online or TV) portrays its own way of communicating-through-bodily-experience (a form of mimetic communication) with individuals sharing photos and comments (anxiety) online (through Twitter and Facebook). As Massumi says "the affective reality of threat is contagious" (Massumi, 2010 : 58). Moreover, in the cities where it was expected for Sandy (and other hurricanes) to hit severely, preemptive action was taken because of the perceived threat, which is the domestic front of conditional logic. The news produces the conditions of the actual natural disaster through the footages of previous hurricanes and portrayal of their effects on "humanity", weather news reminded bodies how they can take preemptive actions<sup>10</sup>. In addition, Massumi argues that it is the performative threat-value which makes the alert a plausible trigger for action (Massumi, 2010 : 59). As portrayed in the

Accuweather videos cited here, the host's embodiment of the map, his/her interaction with it through taking-notes on it and imitating the weather with his/her gestures, combined with the portrayal of footages from the scene show the performative production of 'affective facts'. The phoenix-belief<sup>11</sup> of repetition of a hurricane idea is made real with affect's "power to make the heart beat faster, or the muscles to tense, or the skin to grow cold and clammy or to burn with a blush" (Gibbs, 2011 : 256). Massumi argues that the activation of fear makes the event real (forecasted snowstorm for example), as it is experienced in the fear, in its affective quality, until a pause for reflection (Massumi, 2005 : 38). He argues that, if recollection occurs after the reflection, then fear fades and becomes the content of experience.

One of the other dominant imagery is about *swarming*, a movement of *collective intelligence* (shopping during the anxious hours/days)<sup>12</sup>. The dominant themes are movement of the bodies (shoppers) to buy necessary items in the market to prepare for the big storm. What we see is bodies emptying supermarkets and abundance of "out of stock" signs on the market shelves. Thus, one of the significant experiences of "bad weather" is emptying the market shelves and stocking<sup>13</sup>. This is the shared milieu of experiencing traumatic bodies.

What affective weather forecast constitutes (or reassemble, reconfigure, reactivate) is the *swarming of the collectives* via a kind of collective intelligence (collective non-conscious). This individual-social-collective is mediated by hosts' exploitation of the technologies' affordances as they affectively communicate their "feeling of the weather" (Blackman and Venn, 2010 : 22). Thus, this affective

communication is “multiplied through technologies of attention such as video, television and cinema or teletechnologies which amplify, modulate and augment these intensities” (Blackman and Venn, 2010 : 24).

One can observe preparation for Hurricane Sandy through widely shared YouTube videos which show the *action-sharing* through a *shared-pulse*<sup>14</sup>. The narrator tells the story emphasizing that “as Sandy gets closer, hundreds of shoppers go to the supermarkets to stock on” while the images of this stocking were exemplified with the empty market shelves (with out of stock signs) and with people buying ample amounts of foods, drinks, and batteries. Interviews with the local people emphasize “they do not take any chances”, thus the news portrays the accumulation of anxiety through *affective social ties* which mimetically makes people *entrained* and portrays their *becoming* anxious through paranoia.

What is more interesting is the inclusion of suspicion with one interviewee’s comments about the possibility of Sandy. Despite the presence of non-believers of a possible great Hurricane, video is narrated through “what-if” and ‘just-in-case’ scenarios. This augmentation triggers the inclusion of non-believers to this anxiety-building-affective-machine. Moreover, there was also TV coverage of weather news with the preparedness extension programs tagged as “Are you prepared? You should be. Essential items to buy now before it’s too late”. This panic-manufacture creates an affective bubble of what should be done<sup>15</sup>.

Images, the story, the portrayal of previous disasters as the narrated futurity of the expected incidents function as thought-signs triggering the body. One would argue that individuals need not to be

present in the “event” where it occurs or where it is anticipated to occur. What is more interesting is Massumi’s discussion of transformation of anticipation of the event as its own threat. The event does not even necessitate a sign to be triggered, but because of the *experience’s affective surround*, the event takes control of the body (Massumi, 2005 : 41). That is how the process *autonomization of fear* turns into a way of life, through the *affective tone* of the forecasts (Massumi, 2005 : 42). For example, Weather.com shares an image as a world map which shows northern and southern America. Most of the image is highlighted with green color in order to show the potential threat of possible hurricanes. The massive highlighted area which covers most of the South America says “enhanced activity” for thunderstorm potential.

In addition, with the ‘interactive maps’<sup>16</sup> one can visualize (and experience) the possible catastrophe through the movements of the simulated hurricane and through his/her interaction with the map by clicking on the hurricane, getting details about it and using the ‘share’ function to spread the word about it. This simulated-action-sharing contributes to the regulation of fear (through this simulacrum of death)<sup>17</sup>. TWC video called ‘The Worst of Sandy’<sup>18</sup> shows how live coverage of the incident is crucial as it communicates the presence and narrates affective proximity of the incident.

The reporters’ trouble on standing near Point Pleasant Beach in New Jersey and their screams can be experienced “Look at Atlantic, look at how this wave comes”. On another scene “we already got water” in a nearby neighborhood galvanizing the affect in bodies with his own bodily engagement with Sandy (with

continues status updates saying phrases such as “last time we report” which delineates the quick and sudden progression of the events). Affective proximity is modulated by the weather news. People assemble and form this amorphousness into an anxiety-paranoia with affect-contagion.

Another form of affect-contagion is people’s resistance on the weather news portrayals and monopolization of the body. The technologies of meteorology are not only used to warn about the great Hurricanes or Tornados, their affect mostly stems from their *embeddedness* in everyday life through “regular” storm alerts. These alerts familiarize the bodies to the language of fear which teaches the “threshold” where to be calm and where to panic when a major storm hits.

There are online activist groups in Facebook who resist the dominance and fear attempted to be normalized further by TWC, such as the Facebook group called ‘Stop the Weather Channel from naming Winter Storms’<sup>19</sup>. They criticize the recent (beginning significantly towards the end of 2012) act by TWC naming winter storms (other than Hurricanes, etc.) and its damages in terms of anxiety-paranoia in the society. One of the cartoons shared in the group shows, “naming” is perceived as an action to regulate anxiety as it helps to remember the incidents. The image shows a second in a traffic jam where all the drivers are portrayed as worried over a snowflake they see in the middle of the road junction and don’t know what to do<sup>20</sup>.

Moreover, it also normalizes the extreme patterns of precautions taken during major Hurricanes (such as Katrina, or Sandy) by naming winter’s expected “winter-weather”. People may transfer their “shared-pulse” (Gibbs, 2010) which was imprinted on them

during the Hurricanes to the winter-storms with the execution of similar communication patterns through the weather news (as can be seen from the worried comments and memes in the Facebook page). One of the sharings about TWC news in the Facebook page is the news about “Winter Storm Pluto Recap” with an interactive map<sup>21</sup>. As usual, the news covers “scientific facts” about the height of the accumulated snow in addition to referring the snow with a name “Pluto”. One of the commenters under the news says “I never knew 3-6” of snow needed a ‘Blizzard Warning’” (Feb, 18, 2013, 2.45am), the other adds “It’s completely irresponsible to name winter storms and put them on the same impact level as named tropical systems. PLEASE STOP IT!” (Feb, 17, 6.41 pm). Moreover, February 12 status update of the Facebook group says in a satirical manner: “TWC must be singing the blues. They haven’t had the Red Breaking news banner in over 24 hours. Nothing to over hype. What will they do. I know they are biting at the bit to name tomorrow night’s snow on the east coast.” Another status update is from January 25 about Winterstorm Khan, one user of the Facebook page commented: “they put snow in capital letters as if its going to be a HUGE snow storm. in actuality, they are only calling for less than an inch for the majority of the mid atlantic and northeast. FEAR MONGERING has begun” (Jan, 25, 2.50pm); and other user says “i’m in the top left of the W in SNOW. we got ZERO. i was terrified throughout the entire event” (Jan, 28, 8.30 am)<sup>22</sup>.

Another status update is from January 21, which points out the unnecessary weather news of TWC headlined as “Winter Storm Jove: Messy Morning Commute for New England”<sup>23</sup>. One comment says: “We’re gonna get about 1 inch of snow and they name



the storm -which most of it will occur over the ocean anyway. Ridiculous and I hope they're feeling the heat" (Jan, 21, 6.02pm). January 18 status update sums up the general trend of the reactions about naming the winterstorms "Ok everyone lets come up with the name for the next event. Why don't we call it Winter. has worked for hundreds of years. But oh wait, TWC and NBC cant sensationalize it and create ad revenue selling winter. Better put a Name on each event this way we can say to X tire manufacture Look how many people followed Iago. You want to be a part of this. Give me your money"<sup>24</sup>. These users' comments also suggest that naming enacts the muscular memory as the possible events are simulated with this productive amorphousness. These brief references to the Facebook group emphasize TWC's exploitation of individuals' "synchrony of contagion" (Gibbs, 2010), mimetic knowledge and established affective social ties. Because, the affective reflexivity between the hurricane naming and winterstorm naming re-shapes the contours of life (Prada, 2006). This "contagion without contact" (Gibbs, 2008) transfers the presence of even unreported forecast of Hurricane anxiety-paranoia, contributing to the simulacrum created by TWC and other weather forecast services (such as AccuWeather.com). Because, by this way, looming futurity Massumi talks about, continued to be imprinted on people's skin as if they have to enact their previous experiences with their all available (and accumulated) affective quality (Massumi, 2005). In this mass coordination of affect, Massumi argues for the importance of television over other media as it is the event-habitual medium (Massumi, 2005 : 33). As much as this study agrees this notion in terms of capturing the spontaneity and liveliness of reporting the news as exemplified before, with the internet,

contagion finds other ways of presenting itself. Internet provides *re-living the event* (the report, the affective impact of a hurricane news for example) through logging in TWC (or Accuweather) website and viewing the footages (and re-reading the news) and visualizing the presence of the reporters on the spot of the incident (a hurricane, storm, etc) (as the bodies will remember the way "it" acted in previous similar events and warms-itself-up for the upcoming possibility of a 'major disaster'). Hanson argues that, "affectivity actualizes the potential of the image at the same time it virtualizes the body: the crucial element is neither image nor body alone, but the dynamical interface between them" (as cited in Featherstone, 2010 : 212). Weather news has the capacity to "fill the present without presenting itself" (Massumi, 2005 : 35). As the forecast shows various weather-forecast-models to guarantee the expected reality, but they still imitate 'its' (a hurricane's, a storm's) futurity, this forecast lets the diffusion of fear in its virtuality (as it is not real, but 'modeled' to be real in its predictability-through-probabilities but stays in its indeterminancy).

### III. DISCUSSION

As the cases in this paper show, the fear is experienced in the affective quality of the hurricane or snowstorm or even through the daily weather forecasts. And bodily memories turn the fear into a content which is stored in the anxious skin. In terms of weather forecast reports of hurricane, tornado, storm alerts, there is also a surplus threat remained and piled since the previous weather incident.

People (publics) adapt to the constructed reality of weatherly phenomena, such as preparedness for hurricane through doing exactly the same as who

experienced it, either them or others (mediated by the weather news), as a collective harmony between individuals' bodies. People are let to utilize all affective modalities to create *belonging* (Gibbs, 2010 : 191), which renders them as capitalist subjects of fear and consumption.

A shared pulse is constructed between weather news and people, and within the people, which pushes cognition on affect as it is also a linguistic rhythm<sup>25</sup>. Thus, mimetic communication helps to build "affective social ties" (Gibbs, 2010 : 202). Affective mediated communication is, captivating, deceiving, manipulating, mediating the bodies through mimesis and affective facts, creating an alternative (economic) reality. Alerts in the weather news are not meant to alter a specific cognition, they are activation contours perceived by the body. Thus, weather is "controlled" through technologizing it and "domesticated" through naming it (Sturken, 1998 : 5).

One could also argue that *fear*, which is generated through maps in weather forecast news about the 'possible' dangers shows that, affects can be real even though the events may be simulated. A risk society is being mapped by the technological maps supposed to present the weather conditions, yet they turn into a danger map of virtuality. Society is governed with the narration of the reminders of anxiety-fear with hourly updates. Through television screen with the narration of the weather forecast presenter, through the 'live' connections to the scene (such as connecting to Jersey Shore hot spots and retrieving the latest information about Hurricane Sandy and mediated experience of the Hurricane through televisual images), or through connecting 'Weather.com' and browsing across the recent videos, one could talk about "affective identification" (Kavka, 2008 : 27) with the Hurricane

Sandy. If viewers do not respond the anxiety produced by the weather forecasts, they will need to confront with panic. Viewers will recognize the affect of the other through affective knowledge produced at the site where the incident (for example, any hurricane) occurred before, is happening now or will expected to happen soon. Viewers invest on the images instead of a real hurricane with the weather news portrayals of possible hurricane simulations on the maps comparing the models (even stating what would each model expects) and with the examples of screen shots or captures from the previous hurricanes. And it turns out to be a more "real" event. These images are visual links between realities and affect, which regulate the anxiety of mediated hurricane.

The immediacy of weather forecast news shows how our bodies would be like when (and if) the forecast actualizes. Interpenetration of onscreen and offscreen calibrates the networked effect of weather forecast. People do not share mere contagion of reflexes, they share *nervousness*. Live broadcasts of correspondents' experience from the ground zero of the storm and hosts' bodily movement with imaginary world (maps) triggers the imagined reality of future anxiety.

#### IV. CONCLUDING REMARKS

I discussed how an approach of affective turn will be beneficial to understand the relationality of bodies and weather forecast news. Moreover, I extended the existing literature on weather news, offering deeper analysis in order to understand and approach this invisible yet identified engine (affect), through an analysis of YouTube<sup>26</sup> captions of TV weather news and screenshots, in addition to resistances to everyday

production of affective threat-values. Even though feeling of the weather is communicated through the weather forecast, it is a continuous process of re-making of the bodies in actual situations. As the bodies are traumatized, performative threat-value of the thought-signs increases because of the affective reality of anticipated alternatives through weather news. Thus, it is the plasticity (form-ability, shape-ability) of affect which present the options for the non-conscious bodily muscular memories to give the shape of the affect to individual-social-collectives. In other words, this paper discussed affective mediated communication of weather forecast news as a process in practice. This study argued, mimetic relations between the bodies (as in emptying supermarkets), "user-generated discontent" (Bratich, 2011) on the internet, and the engagements of hosts of weather news with the maps are produced by exploiting the affective contagion. So, what does exactly spread by this contagion? It is the non-lived complexity of suggestion, functioning of weather news as activation contours. Considering media emphasis on faces, values and rhythms, there is also affective resonance with the source. Affect spreads as it reforms, and as it reforms, it even spreads more in its future potentiality, conducting people's conducts.

All in all, "audience" is amplified by technical means as weather news produces a kind of subjectivity, sensibility or relationship with the world around. Also, as Berardi discusses the fear economy and security, he states that "the city of panic is the place where there is no longer time to get close to each other; there is no time for caress, for the pleasure and slowness of whispered words" (Berardi, 2011 : 74), because I would argue, it is time to act. Considering

that mobilizing publics can also be demobilizing or remobilizing other potentials, future research should examine 'future publics' and whether they are lost in this information warfare or acting on it.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank Jack Bratich for his feedback and support during my writing process of this paper. I would also like to thank the organizers of CCCS 2014 Conference, the participants and reviewers who provided valuable feedback for this paper.

#### ENDNOTES

- [1] This study uses this tripartite wording because, as Guattari argues: "The term 'collective' should be understood in the sense of a multiplicity that deploys itself as much beyond the individual, on the side of the socius, as before the person, on the side of the preverbal intensities, indicating a logic of affects rather than a logic of delimited sets" (Guattari, 1995 : 9).
- [2] "Irene" is the previous hurricane before "Sandy". Please see for a specific image example: Retrieved from: <http://p.twimg.com/A6TRDKVCMAAOWMq.jpg:large>.
- [3] The thread of the news can be seen at <http://www.accuweather.com/en/weather-news?page=71>
- [4] Massumi discusses affective modulation of the populace by the US government after 9/11 through 'maintaining' public anxiety by the new colored 'alert system'<sup>1</sup> (modulation of collective individuation) (Massumi, 2005 : 31).
- [5] Weather report of October 25, 2012, Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OKClduHiKxA>. Of interest here is the hosts' bodily movements: he moves toward 'inland' with the expected 'hook' of the Sandy in NJ/NY area, he waves his hands parallel to ground while shaking his head to right and left to explain the possible catastrophe here in inland and lifts his eyebrows up with the hands open and palms showing downwards trying to calm the listeners by only making them more anxious.

- [6] For example, they explain weather forecasts through US model (with flights into the eye of the storm, claimed to be the best), NAM model, European model, NOGAPS model and GFS model. The explanation of these models is beyond the limits of this paper. However, not explaining them contributes my points on affective communication as most of the people do not know the differences between them but use them as scientific language which supports the arguments of constituting the future event without the real event.
- [7] This is also relevant to any other Hurricanes such as Katrina or Irene or others. However, comparative analysis of all the hurricanes is beyond the limits of this paper. This paper only evaluates (and calls for future studies) the 'affect' in 'weather forecast news' in an interaction ('relationality') with the mediated subjectivities.
- [8] Image credit: Accuweather.com. The news website for the figures: <http://www.accuweather.com/en/weather-news/snowstorm-potential-for-omaha/11404310>
- [9] Image credit: Accuweather.com. Please see for the image and for details: <http://www.accuweather.com/en/weather-news/texas-tornado-threat-louisiana/3733882>. The images in Fig.1, Fig.2, Fig.3 are given to provide a background on daily weather communication. Accuweather.com does not name winter storms. Those images provide a sense of daily usages of graphic reminders about the weather conditions.
- [10] Of course, actions should be taken in order to protect people who live in those areas. My argument is, building up these kind of 'anxieties', people may get 'over-anxious' through regular weather forecast news, or even challenge the weather news narration of events as I will explain in the next section (which is also an affect-contagion).
- [11] In an on-going regeneration, but not as having an immortal life, as the bird 'phoenix'.
- [12] Please see for an example: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/image/4338416-3x2-700x467.jpg>.
- [13] Please see for examples of swarming and emptying supermarkets: [http://www.washingtonpost.com/rf/image\\_606w/WashingtonPost/Content/Blogs/capital-weather-gang/201211/images/empty-shelves.png?uuiid=gp0ENiqlEeKWto5qdSRVPw](http://www.washingtonpost.com/rf/image_606w/WashingtonPost/Content/Blogs/capital-weather-gang/201211/images/empty-shelves.png?uuiid=gp0ENiqlEeKWto5qdSRVPw).
- [14] Please see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mBJ8F6blxX0>, Weather News, News10NBC, October 28, 2012.
- [15] For a short clip of the news, please see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WdxA6RKaFvI>.
- [16] Such as the Hurricane Tracker, <http://www.weather.com/news/weather-hurricanes/sandy-triumph-of-the-models-20121102?pageno=7>
- [17] What I am suggesting is not the 'effect' of these images, rather, the 'affective presentation of these images with the footages of the expected event and their possible outcomes'. I am using these images as the 'trigger, enhancing, amplifying mechanism of the futurity of the event, as evidences by science to activate the contours of possibilities by communicating to all senses.
- [18] For the video, please see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TA1CPLm6Tl0>.
- [19] Please see: <https://www.facebook.com/StopWeatherChannelFromNamingWinterStorms>.
- [20] Please see the cartoon for the anxiety facilitated by the snowflake: <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=492849160777719&set=a.446446035418032.111435.446445438751425&type=1&theater>.
- [21] For the news, please see: [http://www.weather.com/news/weather-winter/winter-storm-plato-20130215?cm\\_ven=Facebook&cm\\_cat=fb\\_article\\_comment](http://www.weather.com/news/weather-winter/winter-storm-plato-20130215?cm_ven=Facebook&cm_cat=fb_article_comment).
- [22] Please see for the photo edited by the Facebook group user: <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=594290823933708&set=a.223098324386295.105971.205344452828349&type=1&theater> (The small photo is Facebook user's addition to the actual screen cap. The last comment refers to the white capital letters which says "snow". The users says that even they live in the area which says "snow" in the map, they did not get as much snow.)
- [23] The Weather Channel website removed this news from the webpage. However it is still present on the facebook page.
- [24] Although perceptions (and implications) about the political economy of the weather forecasts opens up another dimension (such as 'economies of affectivity in Prada (2006)), this dimension is beyond the limits of this paper.
- [25] This is more vivid in our contemporary societies with the attributed meanings attached to mobile phones as they take up most of the 'space' in people's 'times'. Following Guattari this is a reinvention of universes of reference,

"reappropriation and resingularisation of the use of media" (Guattari, 1005 : 5). Consider the 'default' applications in smart phones (either Android-based phones or Iphones). Every one of them is installed with a weather application which continuously reminds us the weather even when we are not 'attuned' to it. Thus, what we have (or will have) experienced by the weather forecasts on TV or on internet is (or will be) modulated (perpetually) by those mobile phones making "feelings feel" (Shouse, 2005 : 1). Because, as Shouse argues, it is not always the content which mediates the communication, it is the "affective resonance with the source of the message" (Shouse, 2005 : 1).

- [26] Because of the limits of this paper and time challenges, I used Youtube as a resource of televised weather forecasts. Further studies might choose to conduct a systematic analysis between specific dates on a specific weather channel or website in order to contribute to the discussions of this study.

## REFERENCES

- [1] [27] L. Blackman and C. Venn, *Affect. Body & Society*, 16(1), 7-28, 2010.
- [2] [28] F. Berardi, *After the Future*. G. Genosko, and N. Thoburn, Eds., Baltimore: AK Press, 2011.
- [3] [29] J. Bratich, "Amassing the multitude: Revisiting early audience studies," *Communication Theory*, 15(3), 242-265, 2005.
- [4] [30] J. Bratich, "User-generated discontent: Convergence, polemology and dissent," *Cultural Studies*, 25(4-5), 621-640, 2011.
- [5] [31] P. T. Clough, "Introduction," in P. T. Clough and J. Halley Eds., *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social* (pp. 1-34). Duke University, 2007.
- [6] [32] P. T. Clough, "The Affective Turn: Political Economy, Biomediated body". [Online]. Available: <http://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/management/documents/research/research-units/cppe/seminar-pdfs/2005/clough.pdf>.
- [7] [33] P. T. Clough, "The Affective Turn: Political Economy, Biomediated Bodies," in M. Gregg and G. J. Seigworth, Eds., *The Affect Theory Reader* (pp. 206-229), Duke University Press, 2010.
- [8] [34] M. Coté, and J. Pybus, "Learning to immaterial labour 2.0: Facebook and social networks," *Cognitive capitalism, education and digital labor*, 169-193, 2011.
- [9] [35] M. Featherstone, "Body, image and affect in consumer culture," *Body & Society*, 16(1), 193-221, 2010.
- [10] [36] M. Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-78*. M. Senellart Ed., NY: Picador, 2007.
- [11] [37] M. Foucault, *Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-79*. M. Senellart, Ed., NY: Macmillan, 2008.
- [12] [38] M. Hardt, "Foreword: What affects are good for," in P. T. Clough and J. Halley, Eds., *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social* (pp. ix-xii). Duke University, 2007.
- [13] [39] A. Gibbs, "Panic! Affect contagion, mimesis and suggestion in the social field," *Cultural Studies Review*, 14(2), 130-45, 2008.
- [14] [40] A. Gibbs, "Sympathy, Synchrony, and Mimetic Communication," in M. Gregg and G. J. Seigworth Eds., *The Affect Theory Reader* (pp. 186-206). Duke University Press, 2010.
- [15] [41] A. Gibbs, "Affect Theory and Audience," in V. Nightingale, Ed., *The Handbook of Media Audiences* (pp. 251-267). Wiley-Blackwell, 2011.
- [16] [42] D. Green, (2012) "The Dialectic of Weather Channel." [Online]. Available: <http://flowtv.org/2012/02/dialectic-of-the-weather-channel/>
- [17] [43] F. Guattari, *Chaosmosis: an ethico-aesthetic paradigm*. Indiana University Press, 1995.
- [18] [44] M. Kavka, *Reality television, affect and intimacy: Reality matters*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.
- [19] [45] B. Massumi, *Parables for the virtual: Movement, affect, sensation*. Duke University Press Books, 2002.
- [20] [46] B. Massumi, "Fear (the spectrum said)," *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique*, 13(1), 31-48, 2005.
- [21] [47] B. Massumi, "The Future Birth of the Affective Fact: The Political Ontology of Threat," in M. Gregg and G. J. Seigworth, Eds., *The Affect Theory Reader* (pp. 52- 71). Duke University Press, 2010.
- [22] [48] T. Miller, "Tomorrow will be ... Risky and Disciplined," in J. Friedman, Ed., *Reality Squared: Televisual Discourse on the Real* (pp. 203 -221). New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002.
- [23] [49] J.M. Prada. (2006) "Economies of Affectivity." [Online]. Available: <http://info.interactivist.net/node/5382>.

- [24] [50] E. Shouse, (2005) "Feeling, emotion, affect" *M/C Journal*, 8(6). [Online]. Available: <http://www.journal.media-culture.org.au/0512/03-shouse.php>.
- [25] [51] V. Sobchack, *Carnal thoughts: Embodiment and moving image culture*. University of California Press, 2004.
- [26] [52] D. W. Smythe, "On the audience commodity and its work," in M. G. Durham and M. Kellner, Eds., *Media and cultural studies: Keyworks*, (pp. 230-257), Blackwell Publishing, 2006.
- [27] [53] M. Sturken, (1998) "Desiring the Weather: El Niño, the Media, and California Identity." [Online]. Available: <http://www.usc.edu/dept/LAS/SC2/pdf/sturken.pdf>.
- [28] [54] N. Thrift, "Intensities of feeling: towards a spatial politics of affect," *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography*, 86(1), 57-78, 2004.
- [29] [55] P. Vannini, and A. M. Mccright, "Technologies of the sky: a socio-semiotic and critical analysis of televised weather discourse," *Critical Discourse Studies*, 4(1), 49-74, 2007.
- [30] [56] P. Vannini, D. Waskul, S. Gottschalk, and T. Ellis-Newstead, "Making Sense of the Weather Dwelling and Weathering on Canada's Rain Coast," *Space and Culture*, 15(4), 361-380, 2012.
- [31] [57] E. Wissinger, (2007) "Modelling a way of life: Immaterial and affective labor in the fashion modeling industry." [Online]. Available: <http://www.ephemeraweb.org/journal/7-1/7-1wissinger.pdf>.