Avoiding the Estée Lauder effect

Towards a social and political analysis of extremes, their impacts and management

Contents:

• What do we know about the political impact of extreme events?
• Can adaptation be a leverage point for deeper social and political change?
• What are the implications for science and policy?
A politics of disaster impact and its management

**A study on the political impacts of extreme events**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Political Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1899</td>
<td>Puerto Rico</td>
<td>Hurricane</td>
<td>Relief undermined nationalist movement</td>
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<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>Dominican Rep.</td>
<td>Hurricane</td>
<td>Reconstruction cemented dictatorial authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>East Pakistan</td>
<td>Typhoon</td>
<td>High losses fuel independence struggle</td>
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<td>1954</td>
<td>Haiti</td>
<td>Hurricane</td>
<td>Protests and unrest contribute to regime change: elite dictator – elite dictator</td>
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<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Nicaragua</td>
<td>Earthquake</td>
<td>Gross corruption in reconstruction feeds popular revolution</td>
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<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>Earthquake</td>
<td>Guerrillas use earthquake as oppositional discourse</td>
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<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Earthquake</td>
<td>Disaster appropriated as political symbol</td>
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<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Earthquake</td>
<td>Grassroots organizing for housing re-shapes urban governance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Nicaragua</td>
<td>Hurricane</td>
<td>Disaster management reconstructed as a technical specialism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>Earthquake</td>
<td>Temporary civil society presence repressed by secular state</td>
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<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Earthquake</td>
<td>Response reinforced civil society. Reconstruction criticised for exacerbating socio-cultural inequalities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>Tsunami</td>
<td>Response dampened conflict. Reconstruction increased tensions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>Tsunami</td>
<td>Reconstruction and peacebuilding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Hurricane</td>
<td>Limited popular scrutiny of underlying political processes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pelling, M and Dill, C (2010) Disaster politics: Tipping points for change in the adaptation of socio-political regimes, Progress in Human Geography 34, 21-37
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Narratives of political consequence

1. *Disasters provoke scrutiny of dominant ideologies*, political systems and institutions when they are perceived as being a product of maladaptive development. But the reconstruction period is less well scrutinised (New Orleans, Sri Lanka)

2. *Disaster can act as a trigger for popular mobilization* but sustained political activity/opposition requires discursive (ideological), organizational (social capital) and material (financial) support. (Mexico City)

4. *Local organising during response might be tolerated*, but in reconstruction elite political structures tend to re-emerge at the local and national levels recreating pre-disaster inequalities. This can also increase tensions and undermine gains in community cohesion made during response. (Turkey)

5. *Political leaders can regain or even enhance their personal or governmental legitimacy* in the aftermath of disaster, regardless of their culpability. (New Orleans)
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Key observations for building resilience and equity

1. Few cases of building back better. Pre-disaster inequalities are often exacerbated post-disaster by state patronage, civil society manipulation and international humanitarian competition.

2. Lack of support for new rights claims. Popular political mobilizations triggered by disaster typically concern ‘positive rights’ and are generally ignored by the same nations that champion ‘negative rights’ making it harder for gains in inclusive governance made during response and reconstruction to stick in post-disaster development.

3. The shift towards privatisation of security entails new forms of social contract(s) that are poorly served by existing legal or traditional social structures for accountability. Although the state has not disappeared as an administrative unit, (local and international) non-governmental organizations, and the private sector are taking increasingly important roles in designing, disseminating and directing programs for disaster mitigation, response and reconstruction.
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A view from the UN: the continuing failure of governments to mobilise political will and action to address root causes

By 2015 to:

1. Ensure that DRR is a national and local priority with a strong institutional basis for implementation
2. Identify, assess and monitor disaster risks and enhance early warning
3. Use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels
4. Reduce the underlying risk factors
5. Strengthen disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels

168 country signatories (2005)

3 = institutional commitment attained but achievements neither comprehensive nor substantial

UN ISDR (2013) Global Assessment Report
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*The Sustainable Development Goals as an entry point for political will?*

Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere

1.5 by 2030 build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations, and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters

Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

13.1 strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate related hazards and natural disasters in all countries

http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/focussdgs.html
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Enter the IPCC

Resilience
The capacity of a social-ecological system to cope with a hazardous event or disturbance, responding or reorganizing in ways that maintain its essential function, identity, and structure, while also maintaining the capacity for adaptation, learning, and transformation.

Transformation
A change in the fundamental attributes of a system, often based on altered paradigms, goals, or values. Transformations can occur in technological or biological systems, financial structures, and regulatory, legislative, or administrative regimes.

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Enter the IPCC

The SREX ‘Solution Space’
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Enter the IPCC

The AR5: Applications of transformation

• Transformative adaptation is that which seeks to make change in underlying and constraining development conditions/structures
  *eg new actors insert themselves*

• Transformative adaptation is that which follows the limits of adaptation
  *eg crisis migration*

• Transformative adaptation is big stuff, causing a fundamental change to receiving social-ecological systems.
  *eg extensive coastal engineering*

http://www.ipcc-wg2.gov/AR5/
Can adaptation leverage social and political change?

*Five empirical studies of transformation*

Sindh, Pakistan, flood

Niger, drought

West Bengal, India, flood

New York City, flood

Christchurch, New Zealand, earthquake

http://www.irdrinternational.org/projects/ria/
Can adaptation leverage social and political change?

*Five empirical studies of transformation*

**Pathway scale effects.** A tendency for the local level to carry the weight and costs of transformation. Transformation at the local level can enable resilience at higher systems levels, for example in regional development policy. All.

**Pathway lock-in.** Institutional structures are designed to be resistant to organisational transformation. Transformation is most likely when multiple local and external actors are aligned, in critique of established systems elements. All.

**Pathway competition:** Post disaster, emergent development approaches can be contradictory. West Bengal.

**Pathway experimentation.** Planned, technological and administrative reforms can allow for controlled opening of potentially transformative social and political space. New York and Sindh.

http://www.irdrinternational.org/projects/ria/
Conclusions

• Opening the full range of adaptive responses brings:
  - additional responsibility for decision-makers
  - the need to clarify values in decision-making

• Empirical research is needed to exemplify transformation pathways and consequences – from multiple scales/viewpoints.

• Research and policy development is needed that can identify early warning of social systems approaching transformation, or where transformative potential is being blocked.