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RICHARD STUART OLSON a,b, JUAN PABLO SARMIENTO a & GABRIELA HOBERMAN a,b
a Latin American and Caribbean Center, Florida International University, Miami, FL, USA
b Department of Politics and International Relations, Florida International University, Miami, FL, 33199, USA

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Establishing public accountability, speaking truth to power and inducing political will for disaster risk reduction: 'Ocho Rios + 25'

RICHARD STUART OLSON1,2,*; JUAN PABLO SARMIENTO1 AND GABRIELA HOBERMAN1,2

1Latin American and Caribbean Center, Florida International University, Miami, FL, USA
2Department of Politics and International Relations, Florida International University, Miami, FL 33199, USA

The problem is that disaster risk reduction (DRR) is still more a zone of political darkness than of light. Therefore, the purpose of our contribution to this theme issue is to illuminate at least some of that zone of political darkness and to suggest a more proactive, but for many career professionals a personally problematic, way forward for DRR. The career problematic derives from the fact that the way forward would involve moving from applauding the emergence of elected and/or appointed champions (from mayors to cabinet ministers to presidents/prime ministers) for action to raising the political costs of inaction by leaders not otherwise disposed. The essential element of this way forward would be greatly enhanced public accountability. We will draw preliminary accountability lessons from the Haiti earthquake catastrophe and the Chile earthquake disaster 2010 events towards the conclusion of this paper as we outline a possible future paradigm.

Keywords: paradigm; politics of disaster; public accountability; vulnerability reduction

1. The 'politics of disaster' in 25-year perspective

At Ocho Rios, Jamaica, in the meetings of 1984, and despite relatively recent major disasters in Latin America and the Caribbean that had major political effects (including earthquakes in Managua in 1972 and Guatemala in 1976, and Hurricane David in Jamaica in 1979), an explicit focus on what has come to be called the 'politics of disaster' was largely missing.1 Metaphorically speaking, it was a blip on the 1984 radar screen – present but low and not tracked. Indeed, the best one could hope for in most professional meetings of that time were discussions of disaster or emergency management 'policies', as if those were somehow immaculately conceived and did not require political processing.

Much has changed in 25 years. Now, the political aspects of disasters, and especially the political leadership and commitment ('political will') required for truly effective disaster risk reduction (DRR), loom large as concerns and at times even dominate the professional radar screen. The problem is that DRR is still more a zone of political darkness than of light. Therefore, the purpose of our contribution to this theme issue is to illuminate at least some of that zone of political darkness and to suggest a more proactive, but for many career professionals a personally problematic, way forward for DRR. The career problematic derives from the fact that the way forward would involve moving from applauding the emergence of elected and/or appointed champions (from mayors to cabinet ministers to presidents/prime ministers) for action to raising the political costs of inaction by leaders not otherwise disposed. The essential element of this way forward would be greatly enhanced public accountability.
The seriousness of the issues surrounding DRR, and the stakes involved for communities and countries with literally millions of people at risk have been recently highlighted by a pair of 2010 events: the Haiti earthquake catastrophe and the Chile earthquake disaster. We will draw preliminary accountability lessons from these hazard events towards the conclusion of this paper as we outline a possible future paradigm.2

2. DRR: two paradigms, one old, one new

The dominant traditional professional paradigm for engaging in DRR has been, and in fact remains, ‘meeting, talking, writing – and hoping’ (MTWH). The core of this paradigm has been for scholars, professional practitioners and technical experts interested in DRR (or ‘mitigation’ in earlier times) to meet in various venues to share information and experiences, write up and exchange the results, and wait for a political and/or policy champion to emerge in a country or community and then support that champion.

The MTWH paradigm was already well established in 1984 at the Ocho Rios meeting and had not changed much by the 2009 Montego Bay meetings. The problem is that, meanwhile, vulnerabilities have increased massively in most Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) countries because of population growth and, especially, unplanned and ‘uncoded’ urbanization. As we will develop further below, the most recent example is obviously Port-au-Prince, Haiti, with the 12 January 2010 earthquake that killed at least 230,000 people out of an estimated urban population of between 2.5 and 3 million. To be fair, a more optimistic Latin American counter-example would be with the Chile earthquake and tsunami of 27 February 2010, which together killed 521 people.3 The problem is that most hazard-prone countries in the LAC region fall closer to the Haiti side of the continuum than to the Chile side.

A very different and much more proactive paradigm for DRR is thus indicated, which we are calling here the ‘inducing political will’ (IPW) paradigm. Under the IPW paradigm, political and economic elite decision making with risk implications for a community, region or nation would be subject to public monitoring, evaluation and reporting. The idea underlying this paradigm shift is to literally force DRR onto political and policy agendas at all relevant levels and across all relevant sectors and provide a combination of spotlight and microscope on development/redevelopment proposals or actions that have hazard – and therefore risk – implications. The key to this new ‘IPW’ paradigm for DRR lies in establishing unprecedented levels of accountability, a concept that itself requires substantial explanation.

3. Accountability: definition and application

‘Accountability’ as a concept has become iconic and needs to be rescued, even from its friends and advocates, as Dubnick (2002) has so cogently noted. Indeed, accountability has become ‘one of those golden concepts that no one can be against’ (Bovens, 2007, p. 449). The problem with being invoked as a panacea, however, is that ‘the concept has become less useful for analytic purposes and today resembles a dustbin filled with good intentions, loosely defined concepts, and vague images of good governance’ (Bovens, 2007, p. 449; see also Bovens, 2005, 2006). That is, accountability has become too many things to too many people, the net result of which is overuse on one hand and a loss of utility on the other. The solution, we would argue, is to define it relatively closely and apply it to particular policy domains.

Working from Paul (1992), Manin et al. (1999), Mulgan (2000), Behn (2001) and Moreno et al. (2003), John Ackerman offers this definition of accountability: ‘a pro-active process by which public officials inform about and justify their plans of action, their behavior, and results and are sanctioned [positively or negatively] accordingly’ (Ackerman, 2005, p. 6). This definition has two principal advantages: (1) it is forward-looking and thereby...
avoids the trap of examining only ex-post actions, which gives accountability a potential role in policy agenda-setting, and (2) it recognizes that rewards, not just punishments, may properly be associated with accountability.

Informed by a partially overlapping but then subsequent literature, including Mulgan (2000, 2003), Strøm (2000, 2003), O’Connell (2005) and Koppell (2005), Mark Bovens has critically observed that accountability now ‘often serves as a conceptual umbrella that covers various other distinct concepts, such as transparency, equity, democracy, efficiency, responsiveness, responsibility, and integrity’ (Bovens, 2007, p. 449). Eschewing such a broad approach, Bovens posits a more succinct and much more operationally useful definition:

(Accountability is) a relationship between an actor and a forum, in which the actor has an obligation to explain and justify his or her conduct, the forum can pose questions and pass judgement, and the actor may face consequences (Bovens, 2007, p. 450).

Developing an analytic framework for accountability, Bovens (2007, pp. 454–455) then explains that an ‘actor’ may be an individual or an organization as agent, the ‘forum’ serves as the principal in a principal–agent relationship and the ‘obligation’ may be either formal or informal, as may be the consequences. Bovens then identifies four core questions that must be answered for accountability to have analytic meaning in any specific domain and context: (1) What is the forum? (2) Who is the proper actor/agent to render account? (3) What is to be explained and justified? and (4) Why should the actor/agent feel obligated to participate?

The problems with the Bovens definition of accountability are that (1) it is not adequately forward-looking and therefore seems to discount policy agenda-setting or at least agenda-influencing possibilities, (2) it makes the forum rather passive and (3) it emphasizes at least implicitly negative consequences. One solution, which we adopt here, is to synthesize the strengths and insights of the Ackerman and Bovens definitions to yield the following:

Accountability is a relationship between an actor and a forum, in which (a) the actor has an obligation to explain and justify his or her plans of action and/or conduct, (b) the forum may pose questions, require more information, solicit other views, and pass judgement, and (c) the actor may see positive or negative formal and/or informal consequences as a result (see Figure 1).

This accountability definition and Figure 1 schematic, combined with the four core analytic questions from Bovens, will allow us to identify and confront issues surrounding accountability when attempting to apply it to specific policy domains and contexts, such as DRR. As noted above, this ‘coming to grips’ with real-world DRR-accountability is crucial if the shift to an IPW paradigm is to be even remotely viable.

Before turning to the complex of issues surrounding DRR-accountability, however, we have to delve into another definitional problem, the one surrounding the ‘disaster’ concept itself. It is a definitional thicket all its own.

4. Disasters and ‘DRR-accountability’

In a famous aphorism from the US Supreme Court about limits to freedom of speech, Justice Potter Stewart once said that he was unable to define hard-core pornography, but he ‘knew it when he saw it’. The same aphorism could easily be applied to the term disaster, where the academic community that focuses on disasters has spawned a literature of its own, including two major edited books (Quarantelli, 1998; Perry and Quarantelli, 2004) where 23 international contributors essentially came to 23 different definitional conclusions.

The academic debate continues and shows no sign of consensus, but we would like to single out for later use here an earlier definition from Anthony Oliver-Smith and Susanna M. Hoffman
(1999), who conceptualized disasters as ‘crises socially constructed’ characterized as (a) being non-routine and destabilizing, (b) causing uncertainty and disorder, and (c) posing at least the spectre of social–cultural collapse (1999; drawn from pp. 22–30).

For its part, the upside of a United Nations (UN) definition of anything is that it is globally recognized (globally accepted is another matter). The downside is that many UN definitions appear to result from committees, where many interests and perspectives manifest. In 2009, the UN offered that a disaster is ‘a serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society involving widespread human, material, economic or environmental losses and impacts, which exceeds the ability of the affected community or society to cope using its own resources’ (UNISDR, 2009, p. 9).

For the purposes of this paper, we are going to largely follow the initial 2009 UN definition of a disaster but add in a good portion of the Oliver-Smith and Hoffman (1999) conceptualization, which yields the following:

A disaster is a social crisis characterized by a sense of great uncertainty, significant disorder, or potential collapse in a community caused by a serious disruption in its normal functioning and involving widespread human, material, economic, or environmental losses and impacts that exceed the community’s ability to cope using its own resources.5

The point of all this is that disasters result from the interaction between a hazard event (e.g. earthquake, hurricane or toxic release) and vulnerabilities. That is, no hazard event is automatically a disaster; a hazard must have human and/or environmental vulnerabilities to act upon to qualify as a disaster. Indeed, one of the classic formulations of disaster research is hazard × vulnerability = risk (see Blaikie et al., 2003), which highlights that the probability of a hazard event in a remote and unpopulated area (for example, a major earthquake in many parts of the Aleutians) carries little to no risk per se because its occurrence would not interact with significant human and/or environmental vulnerabilities. In contrast, the probability of exactly the same hazard event in a highly urbanized area (for example, in Central America) would carry great risk, especially if the area were characterized by deficient construction and ill-advised land-use patterns – which brings the discussion here back to DRR.

The problem with ‘DRR’ as a concept is again not the lack of definition, but rather their number. The UNISDR (2009, p. 9) has defined DRR as:

The concept and practice of reducing disaster risks through systematic efforts to analyse and manage the causal factors of disasters, including through reduced exposure to hazards, lessened vulnerability of people and property, wise management of land and the

![A Modified Schematic of the Bovens Accountability System](image)

**FIGURE 1** A modified schematic of the Bovens accountability system
environment, and improved preparedness for adverse events.

While perfectly understandable from an organizational mission perspective, this broad DRR definition does not provide the kind of focus we need to address the ‘four core questions’ of the adapted Bovens framework for effective accountability. Therefore, we wish to emphasize vulnerability reduction in this policy domain and define DRR as:

a set of coherent and systematic actions designed to reduce the physical, economic, social and environmental vulnerabilities of a given community or component part of a community to its most relevant hazard or hazards. More specifically, for a given community or component part of a community, DRR constitutes actions designed to reduce the probability that losses from its most likely hazard events would exceed the resources required for effective local coping.

5. Analysing DRR-accountability: more easily said than done

With the concepts of accountability, disaster and DRR now at least manageably defined for our purposes here, we may start addressing, as a prelude to the IPW paradigm, those four core questions posed by Bovens. As we will see, the answers are highly problematic because:

1. There are no established forums or ‘principals’ for actors as ‘agents’ to regularly explain and justify their DRR actions, which is exacerbated by the fact that (a) the major DRR deficiencies in most communities result not from decisions and actions per se but rather from non-decisions, inaction and/or merely symbolic actions, and (b) the media, often advanced as a possible default forum for DRR-accountability, is highly flawed for that purpose because of its short attention span and difficulty in capturing and explaining complicated issues with deeply rooted and often historical causes.

2. Multiple actors, including in the private sector, are required for any substantive DRR achievements, which raises the ‘who’ or ‘many hands’ issue (see Thompson, 1980) for effective DRR-accountability. This tendency towards confusion on the ‘who’ or agent question for accountability is especially problematic in disaster contexts when a traumatized community is paying at least temporary attention to causal questions about risk, but has little or no background information or documentation on pre-event responsibilities.

3. It is not immediately clear ‘what’ is to be accounted for in the short term when DRR deficiencies or failings in a community may not be glaringly revealed for 50–100 or more years, which circles back to the ‘who’ and ‘many hands’ issues because the ‘what’ has to be associated with someone or some organization as agent for a DRR-accountability system to function.

4. There are remarkably few political and economic leaders who feel any ‘sense of obligation’ to explain themselves on DRR issues except in the aftermath of a disaster, at which time rather sterile and self-serving blame management strategies (‘spin’) seem to take precedence over any forthright attempts at identifying disaster loss causes and clarifying DRR-accountabilities (usually plural in fact).

These interconnected problems of forums for principals and agents, their identity, the substance of accountability and sense of obligation are well illustrated, both negatively and positively, with both the Haiti and Chile earthquake events of 2010.

6. The 2010 Haiti and Chile events: preliminary accountability lessons

The total death toll from the 12 January 2010 magnitude 7.3 earthquake off the coast of Haiti near the capital of Port-au-Prince will never be known with any exactitude, and the more official estimates of 230,000 killed may turn out to be low. From an accountability perspective,
however, exact numbers do not matter. What matters is how an urban environment fuelled by an export-oriented industrial and agricultural model would evolve in such a way (Port-au-Prince had a population of less than a million as late as the mid-1980s) that extreme vulnerabilities were created – despite the fact that Haiti had historic earthquakes and well-documented hazard maps from both the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency and its own Faculté des Sciences of the Université D’Haiti.

In fact, highlighting the vulnerability creation of the last several decades in and around Port-au-Prince was a small number of well-engineered and well-constructed buildings that came through the earthquake essentially unscathed. So, what preliminary accountability lessons may be drawn from the Haiti catastrophe? First, a relatively small number of building owners and their design professionals saw their structures in long-term investment perspective, were aware of the area’s earthquake risk and used appropriate anti-seismic provisions. Their design and construction decisions were based, however, on rational calculations and voluntary adherence to professional norms – not on adherence to any code or regulation, which leads to the second point.

Lacking in virtually all aspects of effective governance, Haiti, even the capital, had no record of land-use planning and, crucially for the 12 January earthquake, no record of an enforced building code. Buildings just ‘went up’ in the words of one observer, because there were no established location and construction permit and supervision processes. That is, from an accountability perspective, no development ‘actors’ in Haiti felt any obligation to pass any of their siting or building plans by any ‘forum’ (which in effect did not exist anyway), nor were there any negative formal or informal consequences for their not doing so. In effect, this was a precise multi-decade non-decision making and inaction recipe for creating the massive urban human vulnerability that only required a major (not even a great) earthquake to become a national catastrophe.

The 27 February 2010 magnitude 8.8 Chilean event (a great earthquake, releasing more than 170 times the energy of the Haiti event) and resulting tsunami present an interesting comparison with Haiti, but really more of a contrast. The earthquake and tsunami occurred in the final days of the outgoing left-centre Bachelet Administration and the incoming centre-right Piñera Administration. The official death toll has been set at 521, with all the victims identified by name, but the Government of Chile has been careful not to separate those killed by the tsunami from those killed in the earthquake, perhaps because the tsunami deaths could easily be attributed to the highly public intra-governmental warning-alert system failure discussed below.

Chile has established sets of land-use regulations, but they are dispersed among different levels of government, as is their enforcement. The country has also adopted a series of building codes starting in 1972, including a code for seismic resistance in 2003. In a 2009 paper, Ernesto Cruz estimated that approximately 25 per cent of Chile’s built environment, including infrastructure, housing and larger structures, was highly vulnerable. Cruz also estimated that only 2–3 per cent of the post-2003 built environment (mostly in the rural areas) did not conform to the new codes.

While hardly optimal, as evidenced by the death toll, at least 15 major building collapses and serious structural damage to infrastructure, the Chilean combination of land-use regulation and a series of progressively more strict and enforced building codes made the 27 February 2010 event a disaster rather than a nation-changing catastrophe. That earthquake event was, after all and to repeat, magnitude 8.8, the fifth largest earthquake ever recorded, and would have likely been a catastrophe without the DRR countermeasures already in place in Chile.

More specifically tsunami losses and their causes, however, were, and will continue to be, debated in Chile for some time to come, because there was a clear and publicly admitted communications and decision-making breakdown within the Chilean government, a story that was followed closely by the media in the weeks following the disaster. The core issue was a communication gap
between the Chilean Navy’s Hydrographic and Oceanographic Service (‘SHOA’ in Spanish) and the Ministry of the Interior’s Office of National Emergencies (‘ONEMI’), which led to the cancellation of a tsunami alert at 4:56 in the morning (the earthquake occurred at 3:34 in the morning). A series of tsunami waves, however, continued to hit the Chilean south-central coast and offshore islands, including the two largest – after the alert’s cancellation.

From an accountability perspective, in the pre-2010 disaster period in Chile, development ‘actors’ faced both land-use regulations and building codes, and clearly took them into account when siting, designing and constructing buildings of all types. While further detailed research is needed on the exact nature and functioning of the ‘forums’ in Chile associated with these review capacities and how formal/informal consequences were factored in, the important fact is that such forums existed and influenced development and construction decision making. While sterner tests likely await when a large seismic event occurs closer to Santiago, the capital of 6 million people, the result of a reasonably successful accountability system prior to the 2010 event in Chile was modest life loss, in stark contrast to Haiti six weeks earlier.

With the Haiti and Chile case lessons in mind, and given the very real conceptual challenges to establishing effective DRR-accountability systems discussed previously, we may now turn towards the future. The question becomes, ‘For DRR-accountability, what would the new Inducing Political Will paradigm entail in most countries, especially in the context of the four core questions drawn above from Bovens?’ The answer is an accountability strategy that would empower DRR advocates to ‘speak truth to power’ – and to do so safely and effectively.

7. The IPW paradigm: a five-step strategy

7.1. Step 1

Conduct pristine investigations. One of the primordial problems in most hazard-prone communities is the existence, and then the enforcement, of a requirement that any development plan, land-use change or construction/reconstruction project be evaluated on risk criteria (natural, technological or in combination). The result in most countries is a hodgepodge of uncoordinated development or redevelopment projects where precious little is known (or at least documented) about their hazard vulnerabilities and therefore their risks. When a hazard event occurs and those latent risks become manifest, turning areas into major loss sites, accountability is thus rendered difficult by the lack of pre-event documentation and the ‘many hands’ problem.

The solution is to set up ‘DRR councils’ as legally and functionally autonomous bodies from the local to the national levels free from conflicts of interest and with independent financing and adequate review capabilities to evaluate the risk components of all construction, development and redevelopment projects. These reviews must be of unassailable (‘pristine’) quality so as to render them invulnerable to effective technical challenges in the courts and/or the media. These reviews would then be made publicly, permanently and freely available so as to establish a baseline risk assessment ‘record’ of all projects. That is, in terms of the original Bovens questions, publicly establishing ‘DRR councils’ would resolve much of the ‘forum’ problem for effective DRR-accountability systems.

7.2. Step 2

Speak truth to power. It is not enough to establish a publicly available risk assessment baseline for all construction, development and redevelopment projects. Equally important is to establish a public record of having informed the appropriate decision makers (public and/or private) of those findings from the local to the national level. This record would have to include the responses, or in some cases the probable non-responses, of those decision makers, which establishes accountability not only for subsequent actions but also, and most importantly, for subsequent
inactions. This step would cut straight to the heart of the very common phenomenon of risk acceptance non-decision making, where explicit calculations and discussion of risk do not even achieve place on the agenda of considerations. That is, publicly establishing ‘having spoken truth to power’ would resolve much of the ‘obligation to explain and justify’ problem for effective DRR-accountability systems, especially after the creation of DRR councils as outlined above in Step 1.

7.3. Step 3

‘Lay it all out’ – publicly. It is quite normal, if unfortunate, that the people who live and/or work in various developments and structures are not aware of their risks until a hazard event occurs and they or their families, friends or co-workers become victims. It is equally common that the elites who make the decisions to build in certain places and use certain design and construction practices do not live and/or work in those places; indeed, it is much more frequent that they live and work in markedly safer places. That is, the political and economic elites who are ‘accepting’ risk often do so for others and for future generations (they are in effect projecting risk onto others), not for themselves or their progeny. Moreover, those ‘others and future generations’ are almost always unaware of the risks that have been accepted on their behalf.

The solution is a corollary to both Step 1 and Step 2: The independent body of Step 1 assures that the people actually living and/or working in a particular place or structure are fully aware of the Step 2 risk assessment baseline record of that specific place and the subsequent political and economic elite non-decision making and actions/inactions about its risks.

7.4. Step 4

Create guilty knowledge and authority accountability. One of the most common blame management strategies of political authorities after a major disaster is ‘we didn’t know,’ which is a combination of ‘ignorance defence’ and ‘accountability shift’ to a prior administration, government or even regime. While this is not unreasonable in some cases given long recurrence intervals for many major hazards, very few major loss sites are truly unknowable. The scientific and engineering knowledge about certain locales and certain types of structures is simply too deep in the 21st century for this type of strategy to be credible under any reasonable scrutiny.

The solution is to provide publicly, and in some ways theatrically (a press conference and web postings for example), each new administration or government with the catalogue of hazards, vulnerabilities and consequent risks in every part of every town, city and region of the country. Properly recorded, in one fell swoop this eliminates the ignorance defence while also tying the incoming administration or government to the non-decision making and actions/inactions of their predecessors, also reducing the effectiveness of the accountability shift ploy. While not perfect because it is difficult to hold current officeholders responsible for non-decisions and actions/inactions decades earlier, the fact is that most political elites have party identification and multi-generational ‘lineages’ to which they often lay claim – until a disaster occurs and they have to try to distance themselves from, or even disavow, those lineages. That is, publicly establishing ‘guilty knowledge’ would resolve much of the ‘who’ problem for effective DRR-accountability systems.

This hazard–vulnerability–risk assessment catalogue would then be matched, again publicly, with a set of programmes and projects to rectify the identified risks. The overall DRR result would be to publicly create guilty knowledge among the political and economic elites about the risks in their societies and what is or had been technically possible to have reduced them. That way, when a disaster strikes they would have, metaphorically, no place to hide politically and perhaps even legally. That is, publicly establishing a ‘rectification plan’ would resolve much of the ‘what’ problem for effective DRR-accountability systems.
7.5. Step 5

Prepare for the consequences – and a solution. Speaking truth to power with a broadly accessible public record and establishing DRR-accountability for elite non-decision making and actions/inactions will not be popular with the relevant elites. Professionals with in-country positions, companies or careers should expect a negative, if not a hostile, reaction from authorities and other elites, and so they must be prepared for pressures to withdraw or desist. A solution, however, would be for them to become part of a transnational alliance of 8–10 DRR experts who would be on call to come to their public defence, if necessary in person. Such a group could not only validate the more technical aspects of the analyses, but also attract additional media attention to the DRR issues and thus reinforce the shift to the IPW paradigm.

Looking ahead, and failing a shift to this new IPW paradigm that might force real attention to DRR in the 21st century, one cannot but be pessimistic about avoiding truly stunning losses that appear set to result from the massive vulnerability creation of the 20th century. That is, a continuation of the old MTWH paradigm would seem to guarantee that we will see not simply more disasters, but more outright nation-changing catastrophes.

Notes

1. Not generally well known, there is a substantial politics of disaster literature, and it emerged in essentially three generations or waves, the most recent major contribution being Boin et al. (2009). See also the work of Olson and Gawronski (2010), which catalogues the literature back to 1925.

2. This paper was being finalized when the BP-Gulf of Mexico oil well blowout and subsequent petroleum leakage occurred, which raised and continues to raise fundamental accountability questions within the US Government and between that government and the private sector. For reasons of time and space, however, that case will have to be explored in a separate paper.

3. These cases should provide rich comparisons or, more accurately, contrasts. The senior author here has made a preliminary effort with www.forbes.com/2010/04/05/earthquake-infrastructure-haiti-chile-opinions-contributors-richard-s-olson.html.

4. This definition has its own pedigree as a more flexible (i.e. less restrictive) version of a much earlier and more severe definition by disaster research pioneer Charles Fritz (1961, p. 655).

5. In some cases, for example in small countries such as Samoa, the affected ‘community’ may be the entire national society, so we are simplifying here by eliminating the ‘society’ term.

6. The concept ‘non-decisions’ has a specific meaning in political science, where it refers to issue suppression or the power to keep issues off public, institutional and decision agendas. That is, non-decision making is not in fact ‘deciding not to decide’, which leaves a documentable trace, but rather the power to keep a troubling issue from even achieving an agenda position where ‘deciding not to decide’ is an option.

7. Chilean seismicity is much greater than that of Haiti, and a Chilean aphorism holds ‘cada presidente tiene su terremoto’ (‘every president has his earthquake’). Coming during the interregnum between Bachelet and Piñera, the 27 February earthquake could be said to have caught two presidents.

8. One potential model would be the independent Electoral Commissions found in various Latin American countries in particular.

References


