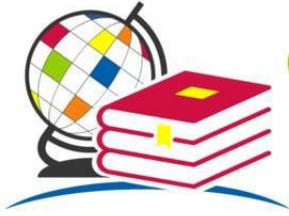


Natural Hazards and Disaster Risk Reduction Policies

Loredana Antronico - Fausto Marincioni
Editors





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Cover: A woman shovels mud from her driveway in the aftermath of the October 2010 debris flow that affected the Province of Vibo Valentia (Calabria, southern Italy).

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Preface

JC Gaillard¹

Disaster studies is mostly an Anglophone business. It is dominated by researchers publishing in English and circulating ideas framed from a western cultural perspective. This hegemony has contributed to stereotyped understandings of disaster risk and of what should be done to reduce this risk as well as how to respond to disasters. Perspectives that do not fit Anglo-Saxon ontologies (in their diversities) have largely been marginalised and voices from outside this realm have struggled to emerge.

Of course, there have been some noticeable exceptions. Back in the early 1970s, French Anthropologists have influenced the emergence of the so-called vulnerability paradigm (Comité d'Information Sahel, 1975; Copans, 1975) while, two decades later, members of La Red have contributed to the affirmation of the same ideas much beyond their Latin American base (e.g. Maskrey, 1993; Lavell and Franco, 1996). These initiatives have nonetheless been isolated and creative hotspots of disaster scholarships have long formed a patchy landscape of unconnected dots kept apart by ethnolinguistic differences. In consequence, many of these hotspots of disaster scholarship have long remained unknown to most researchers, policy makers and practitioners.

This is fortunately changing. Firstly, there is the rapid emergence of East and South Asian scholars followed by researchers from the Middle East and Africa whose increasing academic production is contributing to more balanced views. Such trend is also progressively expanding to other countries where there has been a long tradition of research on disasters but hitherto only accessible to those who master local languages. Indeed, efforts of language translation, while respecting and showing cultural differences, are on the rise. For example, a number of books in English have recently been edited by Francophone (Revet and Langumier, 2015; Vinet, 2017), Italoophone (Forino *et al.*, 2018) and Lusophone (Marchezini *et al.*, 2018) scholars.

The present volume by Loredana Antronico and Fausto Marincioni, although in English, contributes to further breaking these cultural silos. It features the work of an array of Italian researchers from different social science backgrounds. It also includes contributions from Spain, Portugal,

¹ School of Environment, The University of Auckland, New Zealand, e-mail: jc.gaillard@auckland.ac.nz.

Mexico and India, thus participating in a much welcome multi-cultural dialogue on issues around disaster risk and disaster risk reduction.

These fresh perspectives cover multiple dimensions of disaster risk, henceforth providing a wide panorama of current research initiatives in Italy and beyond. These range from the root causes of people's vulnerability and risk perception, to information, preparedness, risk reduction, emergency management, recovery as well as broader issues around governance. These topics are addressed from both empirical and theoretical perspectives, thus providing an array of diverse and unique views to inform how we comprehend disaster risk.

The case study of Mt Etna in Sicily is particularly interesting from the viewpoint of academic geopolitics. This volcano is obviously very well-known and has stirred much interest beyond the borders of Italy. In fact, most key references on local risk, from a social science perspective, available to non-Italian speakers have been written by Anglophone scholars rather than locals (e.g. Chester *et al.*, 1999, 2008; Dibben, 2008). It is therefore refreshing and welcome to be able to here read a chapter written by an Italian researcher who is actually based in the very city of Catania (Cannizzaro, this volume).

In a nutshell, this book is a must read for all academics desirous of expanding their academic horizon. It is an easy read with short and punchy chapters all providing a unique view on a particular issue of broader relevance. It is ultimately a key step towards connecting the dots of disaster studies beyond stereotypes and from culturally diverse scholarships.

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Natural Hazards and Disaster Risk Reduction Policies collects 14 original essays, of authors from all around the World, exploring strategies and ability of local communities to adjust to natural hazard and disasters. The volume, fostering the current scientific debate on disaster ecology, muses about the need for Homo sapiens to define its rights and responsibilities in environmental dynamics, including extreme events and disasters. In the end, the reflections about how to deal with hazard, vulnerability and disasters, highlights the ethical nature of disaster risk reduction; control of nature or adaptation to its cycles?

Loredana Antronico is a Researcher of the Research Institute for Geo-Hydrological Protection of the Italian National Research Council (CNR). She is author or coauthor of several papers published in international journals or presented at international conferences and workshops in the following issues: soil erosion, debris flow and flood hazard on alluvial fans, landslide incidence, landslide susceptibility and hazard assessment, landslide monitoring, and recently, geo-hydrological risk perception. Loredana Antronico is coordinator of research projects, on some of the cited issues, funded by National and Regional Administrations.

Fausto Marincioni is an Associate Professor at the Università Politecnica delle Marche at Ancona (Italy), where he teaches and carries out research on disaster risk reduction. He holds a Ph.D. in geography from the University of Massachusetts (USA) and is an editor of the International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction. Previous to the Università Politecnica delle Marche Marincioni has worked with the US Geological Survey, in Woods Hole, Massachusetts, and taught human and environmental geography at Long Island University (LIU Post) in New York.

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