NATURAL DISASTERS: ALTRUISM, INTERESTS, AND OPPORTUNITIES[1]

CLOVIS ULTRAMARI[2]
TAMI SZUCHMAN[3]

Context of Research and Methodology

This article discusses the assumption that natural adversities may, paradoxically, suggest positive externalities. It distances itself from the perspective of seeing the "good side of tragedy"; however, it seeks to understand if the strategic viability of such externalities is socially appropriate. The article begins with an account of the integration of these results into a larger piece of research and develops its argument according to two sets of interviews that are referenced in the theory. Its conclusions reaffirm the assumption; however, it warns of a necessary skepticism in relation to a "pragmatism" that could reduce the importance of structural changes in the human/nature relationship and its social attributes.

The two sets of interviews conducted and analyzed depict two complementary perspectives. In the first case, a previously published study (Ultramari, 2013) is taken up, which sought to identify potentialities arising from adversities from the perspective of local governments. This case depended on a series of at least two interviews per municipality with local agents involved in post-disaster action after heavy rains and landslides in the Mountain region of Rio de Janeiro State in 2011. That disaster caused the death of approximately 1,000 people (235 of them not found by the time of the interviews), in seven municipalities (out of a total of 15 affected). The interviews for this case were performed a year after the disaster (January 2012), and sought to understand any changes in the reality, not only in terms of emergency services, but especially in structural changes in the urban context. Two technicians were interviewed in each of the local governments, supplemented by an interview in each of the local Civil Defense agencies, the Civil Defense of the State of Rio de Janeiro, a media outlet (Jornal Diário de Petrópolis), and a non-governmental organization (Instituto Ambiental Ecosul). This first set

2. Architect, doctor in Environment and Urban Development by the Federal University of Paraná. Post-doctor by the George Whasington University and by the Massachusetts Institute of technology / MIT. Professor at the Graduate Program in Urban Management at the Pontifical University of Paraná and at the Graduate Program in Environment and Development of the Federal University of Paraná. E-mail: ultramari@yahoo.com
3. Architect by the Pontifical University of Paraná, Master and Phd candidate in Urban Management by the same University. Teaches Architecture and Urbanism at the Positivo University, Brazil. E-mail: tamiszuchman@gmail.com

of interviews was organized according to the same methodology of the second and with the same investigative purpose.

For the discussion of the perspective of the international agencies, selection for the interviews was decided by: the distinction of the institute on the international stage–confirmed by the volume of available resources—by the territories and goals of operation, and by their capability in constructing networks of contacts. In this case, 18 interviews were carried out in Berlin, Hamburg, and Washington, DC (in October 2012), with the following institutions: American Red Cross; Interaction; Disaster Risk Reduction Program (Virginia Tech State University of Virginia); International Organization for Migration; Global Giving; International Institute for Strategic Studies; Global Disaster Response; Habitat for Humanity/International; Habitat for Humanity/Indonesia; Interaction; Center for Technology and National Security Policy/National Defense University, STAR-TIDES Project; Climate Change and Security/Reclaiming Heritage Project Team: Technische Universität Berlin/Centro of Public Policy/Universidad del Chile; and World Future Council. The three cities were chosen for the role that they exert in their countries as decision-making centers and for the concentration of a significant number of such agencies. In Germany, the research counted on the support of the Hafencity University, and in the United States on the support of the George Washington University/Trachtenberg School of Public Policy and Public Administration.

In general, the interviewees showed fear of seeing their pragmatic stances publicized, of revealing conflicts with their institutional principles and, in the specific case of the international agencies, of breaking the confidence of donors. In all cases, the realization of the interviews exposed difficulties that, if on the one hand reduced the expected analytical potential, on the other, revealed significant institutional realities of the agencies and the local public administrations. One difficulty is justified by the growing fear of the agencies of seeing their pragmatic postures publicized and thus revealing conflicts with their principles and consequently breaking bonds of trust with donors. Another smaller, but more suggestive difficulty is in the operational sense: some representatives of the agencies that had made themselves available to provide testimony for the research could not do so on account of being directed to emergency actions in the field; in the case of Rio de Janeiro, despite one year already having passed since the disaster, the daily life of the local governments and agencies of Civil Defense remained compromised by the demands created by this adversity. Despite the possible unavailability of the agencies to express an opinion about their activities, there was an institutional diversity in the areas of housing, community organization, architectural heritage, animal protection, and emergency actions in general.

The major part of the research in which the present discussion is inserted has as its main interest the determination of how major disasters can suggest long desired changes in societal relations and in the physical-territorial organization of contemporary cities. With the aim of guaranteeing a more comprehensive vision in relation to the topic at hand, a range of areas of institutional action were sought: housing, community organization, urban and architectural heritage, animal protection, and emergency actions in general.

The article is structured in three parts that discuss the adopted hypothesis. The first of these parts is entitled "Solidarity, Media and Governments" and presents the act of solidarity not only as a selfless act, but one influenced by the media and governmental actions. The second part, "Aid Agencies: Valued and Criticized," reveals specific and distant interests of an institutional unit constructed uniquely for supportive ends. The third part, "Opportunities," values the strategic and pragmatic vision observed by the interviewees.

Solidarity, Media and Governments

In the study of disasters, mono-disciplinary visions were positively advanced for a more comprehensive, obligatory understanding. However, there are still scientific perspectives, not definitively understood, that could indicate new possibilities of positive changes: some transitory, others of a structural nature. The tsunami in Asia, for example, in addition to the human and economic damage, is remembered as an opportunity for the establishment of peace and institutional advances (Renner et al., 2007); Hayakawa (2013) discusses the capacity of disasters to accelerate important decisions, but which remained dormant owing to political and administrative barriers; agencies such as the World Bank (see 2014) emphasize the importance of *lessons learned* as references for new public policies; Khasalamwa (2009), Roberts (2000), and Mannakkara et al. (2014) show confidence in the opportunities for reconstructing a more just society and a human/nature relationship better qualified than in pre-disaster times. In these cases, the distinction in the traditional understanding in respect to pre-disaster, disaster, and post-disaster remains as: 1. prevention, mitigation, preparation and alertness; 2. response activities during the emergency or immediately after the event has occurred; and 3. the cyclical medium and long-term recovery process (see, for example, Johns Hopkins, 2008; Red Cross, 2008). However, in the case of the discussions suggested by the interviews, a distinction was highlighted arising from corporate situations that sometimes differ, sometimes overlap, and sometimes are replaced when characterizing each of these moments.

In both sets of interviews conducted for this study, the recognition of positive externalities is evidenced by proposals not only of "rebuilding" but of "rebuilding better." A technician at the International Organization for Migration (in an interview, 2013), for example, reports that the work following the major earthquake in Haiti initially concerned itself with the immediate construction of houses; however, it soon became clear that the most important thing was building them in an innovative way that followed a comprehensive understanding of the city. Such a perspective would have been spread by the pronouncement of former President Clinton (2006), but it was also previously incorporated into guidelines for post-disaster housing of the United Nations (1982), which must meet the "urgent, temporary, and permanent sheltering needs of the survivors of the disaster" (p. 11). Regarding these potential externalities, the interviews also reveal that they arise under the actions of various agents, but especially in the synergy between media, governments, and aid agencies. A Civil Defense technician from the State of Rio de Janeiro (in an interview, 2012), for example, exemplifies this fact describing the valo-

rization received by the Civil Defense agencies from the municipalities of the Mountain region of Rio de Janeiro from the moment that the 2011 disaster was reported by national and foreign media: "Some municipalities in our region did not have such agencies and in others they were lacking in equipment and the personnel to act." At times, even more significant changes in government structures were also observed, and they were not restricted to matters of administrative or operational organization:

> Before the 2011 disaster, the municipal Civil Defense in Sumidouro had little meaning to the population; currently, it is the most valued of the departments of the city council and is sought out by citizens when buying or renting a house, when they want to know what is right and what is wrong. (Technician of the local government of Sumidouro/ RJ, in an interview, 2012)

At first, the role of the media gains prominence in becoming an observer and fomenting public policies; as is highlighted by several studies, it plays a decisive role in the way society sees itself when subjected to disasters, searching for an explanation for the adverse event, accountability for the damage, and in identifying who can put forward or provide solutions.

> Media makes big impacts on actions involving disaster response. Habitat for Humanity Indonesia got a lot of funding because of the exposure in the media. Donation reduces or even stops when the disaster ceases to be exposed on the media. (Technician from Habitat for Humanity/Indonesia, in an interview, 2012)

Olsen et al. (2003) explore this question by analyzing a number of international aid programs. For them, the media do not act independently, but see their actions valued when combined with the complex interests of governments and the capacity of the aid agencies. If, on the one hand, the media reporting about a disaster and on the aid agencies willing to work there is fundamental; on the other hand, its excessive exposure can lead to management difficulties. From its strong placement in the media, the immediate reaction of donors to the Asian Tsunami in 2004/2005 generated an excess of resources surpassing the ability to apply them properly (BBC, 2006 and Yahoo News, 2007), and the confirmation that some disasters, understandably, but not justifiably, elicit more sympathy than others.

These understandings are reiterated in the interviews. A technician from the International Organization for Migration (in an interview, 2012), for example, in remembering the repeated droughts in the African Sahel, speaks of the media monotony that made potential donors ask themselves *one more time?* Similarly, citing the earthquake in Haiti and the tsunami in Asia, he confirmed the media fascination with some specific disasters, reacting to them in an unpredictable, patternless manner. In fact, the reported media activity suggests one more component in the construction of the concept of solidarity, in the need to better understand it (Ultramari, 2013), and even the importance of viewing it skeptically.

In terms of public policy, these questions would imply a necessary skepticism about aid flows, as remembered by Adams (2003): the poor relationship between the impacts of a disaster, the attention shown by the media and the amount of viable donations can configure an equation involving little "solidarity." In some cases, the paradoxical character of having "little support for support" can also result in negative externalities. This is the case presented by Djankov, Montalvo, and Reynal-Querol (2008), in discussing the obstacles to the economy of the areas or countries affected by disasters in the face of a large volume of donations that can replace the population's interest in local products.

Despite the importance of what is conventionally understood as humanitarian action in the strictest sense, international aid projects tacitly go beyond the favorable reaction of those who need it, adopting ethical standards and institutional policies (Hettne, 2010). Curtis (2001) deepens the discussion and highlights the historical discrepancy between what is donated and what materializes, defending the idea that disbursements were never made solely on the basis of need. Research on the relationship between the amount of donated resources and their impact reveals disparities and a myriad of divergent interests. Oxfam (2000) calculates the donations of the European community in 2009 to Kosovo and the rest of the former Yugoslavia at $207 per person; in the case of Sierra Leone this proportion reached a mere $16. Similar conclusions are found in the Gerdin et al. (2014) study on the necessary information for making reports in post-disaster situations, and Hummell (2014) in his work on the international flow of resources. To temper this vehement criticism with a perspective closer to that observed in the interviews, Stumpenhorst et al. (2011, p. 589) point out that sincere intentions, non-utilitarian behavior, and altruism cannot be minimized, as the human being does not act in terms of "income, wealth, and power maximization alone."

The interviewees recognize factors that may tarnish supportive intentions, such as revealing an exaggerated belief in altruism; however, they recognize the existence of opportunities to be appropriated and the role of the media and governments—for good and for evil—in this appropriation. Overall, for the interviewees, the importance of these two agents is not limited to the simple broadcasting of a disaster, but to reinforcing the explicitness of other interests of support, fostering the debate on potential not easily recognized in the strategic capture of opportunities that could emerge from such situations and the absorption of the necessary operational changes. The earthquake in Haiti—always referenced by interviewees—allowed the Médecins sans Frontières organization, supported by the international media, to publicly declare that "in case you want to donate funds to Haiti, you should also do [so] to Africa" (technician from the International Organization for Migration, in an interview, 2012).

Postures like these advocate the idea of international solidarity not only as growing and welcome, but also as necessarily freed from the interests of the donor.

The interviewees also revealed that disasters have particularities for gaining more or less media space and call attention to the importance of how communities organize, communicate with their peers and government representatives, and have their original ties reduced or strengthened. The mentioned examples confirm that communities with low levels of organization are more dependent on the filters of the media for their particular

interests and, therefore, are limited in their communication with the outside world and weak in the explanation of their demands. Scientific literature and interviews reiterate the importance of how the community understands itself and is perceived by others, such as the media and governments. Moeller (2008), in discussing the *CNN effect,* states that "it is less journalists than politicians who are the prime movers behind any 'effect.' Governments remain the agenda setters in international affairs" (p. 9). Similarly, respondents suggest that governments influence what should or should not be published and warn that the lapse of time between the disaster and its placement in the media is fundamental in the materialization of opportunities. Once the daily lives of the affected populations are rebuilt, the images of appeal capable of raising feelings of support are rare, chances of receiving financial, technical, and operational aid reduce and, what is more important, possible opportunities lose resonance (technician from the International Organization for Migration, in an interview, 2012). There is thus a time to insert the disaster in the media and a time when it continues to arouse interest—facts that influence the volume and destination of internalized resources. Some demands are immediately satisfied by spontaneous support; others, despite being "pacified" by promises of remedies, return to lie dormant, attracting little interest from the media and other actors with influence on public policy proposals (Lewis, 2008). In the practice of the aid agencies, this fact ideally is already integrated into their strategies, considering that the time factor is fundamental for the competitiveness of promises of more permanent transformations (Guerreiro, 2012).

Efforts to return to the pre-disaster situation of normality and strategies to uncover deeper changes in the communities that receive external attention reveal themselves to be influenced by an equation composed basically by media, governments, and a sense of solidarity. In general, interviewees showed themselves to be pessimistic in the application of this equation. However, benefits were identified in deepening strategies to grasp a difficult to control process, but one that is adequate to signal major corporate and institutional changes. This topic is continued in the following issues.

Aid Agencies: Valued and Criticized

Aid agencies are organizations dedicated to the raising and distribution of resources and to operational tasks in times of emergency. In considering their less evident characteristics, possibly distant from a strict humanitarian interest, characterizing them and understanding their purpose of action remains a difficult task: "it is, among other things, an ethos, a cluster of sentiments, a set of laws, a moral imperative to intervene, and a form of government" (Ticktin, 2014, p. 274). Not only are there multiple defining variables of such agencies, but these variables also reveal a growing institutional complexity; from today's simplistic idea of humanitarian action, they have evolved into specialized organizations with international legal bodies and influential global relations from a "sovereign authority to place a humanitarian imperative above national interests and security" (Nascimento, 2015).

Despite the explicitness of the meaning of aid, the agencies are subject to strong criticism. Martens (2005) risks questioning their existence, proposing to replace the

current complex network of relationships by a centralized structure that brings together donors, communities, and receiving states. Roth (2014) reiterates skepticism about their performances and highlights that they are becoming increasingly important "as the international human rights movement, and particularly the big global organizations, have gained prominence, they have become the subject of growing academic interest, much of it critical" (p. 72). Hopgood (2014), with reference to the specific case of the United States, points out that such agencies are very strongly aligned with government practices, and may even subdue their morals in the interests of power and resources.

The growth and visibility of aid agencies move in the same direction as the criticism that they receive. On the one hand, Stoddard et al. (2009) estimate a growth of 6% in the number of people linked to aid agencies in the first decade of the twenty-first century; on the other hand, Gilman (2010) and Carbonnier (2014) see in this growth an increase in their professionalism and operational capacity that is not always matched by better results. Ticktin (2014), apart from the criticism concerning possibly improper practices of agencies, denounces the strong engagement between humanitarian aid and scientific production, highlighting the risk in the combinations of good intentions and investigative or methodological weaknesses.

Since the year 2000, the most common criticism is the approximation of the practice of aid agencies to neoliberal public policies. In terms of performance, Fadalla (2008), in studying the relief activities in Sudan, speaks of a neoliberal agenda undertaken deliberately, and Clarke (2010), in discussing various actions in Africa, reports the existence of a "humanitarian diaspora" subservient to the interests of similarly neoliberal governments. Brauman (2004) makes use of the term "aid industry" and is skeptical of the defense that the agencies are better prepared than governments to respond to emergencies. Ticktin (2014) recognizes the potential of humanitarian aid in constituting an "international order, as a regime of care and also violence, and as exclusion as much as inclusion" (p. 281).

The literature review on this topic—criticism and skepticism in relation to solidarity—shows different results from those obtained with interviewees, where the understanding is less critical and the debate focuses on possible improvements in the performance of the institutions that they represent. The diversity of international aid agencies allows their classification according to different variables. In practice, the categorization more relevant is that based on their methods of obtaining resources (technician of the International Organization for Migration, in an interview, 2012). Similarly, a technician of the American Red Cross (in an interview, 2012) reinforces this reasoning, highlighting those that obtain funds directly from donors ensure greater influence on the global level, and are capable of defining priorities according to their own interests. The procedures of acquisition and provision of resources are then the most remembered features in establishing a typology of aid agencies:

> There is a large diversity of NGOs […] the Red Cross, for example, gets money from individuals. It makes a huge difference! […] In our case [Global Giving], we rely on donations through the internet, we are number one in Google when people become aware of an accident

and decide to find ways to donate money. (Technician from Global
Giving, in an interview, 2012)

Considering the ways in which financial resources come to those who really need
them, there is another categorization: the agencies that implement support actions in the
field and those that rely on local partners to do so. In the first case, they have allowed
short cuts in the internalization process of donations and therefore are more autonomous
in formulating strategies of opportunity appropriation or even in taking actions beyond
the emergency (technician from Global Giving, in an interview, 2012). Agencies can
also be differentiated according to the speed with which they gain international renown:
some evolve rapidly from the action of small groups of people to large-scale organizations
(those working on climate change in recent years, for example), and there are those that
build their institutional strength over decades, adapting to new demands and new sce-
narios (technician from Global Giving, in an interview, 2012). These new scenarios are
indeed phenomena that impact the availability of resources, the feasibility of important
partnerships, and the observation and seizure of strategic opportunities. For the techni-
cian from the International Organization for Migration (in an interview, 2012) "priority
is quite important [...] now, we are interested in Syria. For reasons that are not easy to
understand, certain situations generate more attention than others." For a technician of
the American Red Cross (in an interview, 2012) "There are emerging donors [...] Brazil
is already on the list of big donors: not only a new donor but also a substantial one." In
the last decade, advances were observed not only in relation to the internal structure and
administrative functions of these agencies, but equally in the expansion of the interaction
between them at the international level. What had been proposed in many administrative
management manuals has been adopted in a complex way and always with the intention
of resource optimization and a better approach to donors (technician of the American
Red Cross, in an interview, 2012).

Other trends observed in the actions of international aid agencies refer to the
search for results outside of the post-disaster moments and not directly related to the
event. These tendencies relate to the identification of the potentialities discussed above
and result from a strong pragmatism in the everyday actions of the agencies.

> Complexity in an emergency situation is huge! […] There is a lot of
> money for disaster relief but it does not last for more than 3 years.
> […] But the ideal way of doing it is to make a house in a way [that]
> it results [in] permanen[cy]. [...] In Haiti, we worked not only with
> the accident but with a successive history of problems. You have to
> be flexible, adaptable. In Pakistan you have more space to build the
> house than in Haiti. Good will sometimes does not work! (Technician
> from Interaction, in an interview, 2012)

Experience is gained by an institutional flexibility that now characterizes support
agencies, by rich circumstantial relations with a world that is foreign to them and by an
explicit learning with local representatives.

From the perspective of the interviewees, such trends indicate requirements for changes in the way they act, always suggesting greater flexibility in performance and greater involvement with the local community (technician from Interaction, in an interview, 2012). Seen in the long-term, these changes accumulate complexities, experiences, and expand the role and importance of the agencies. This means, on the one hand, greater visibility of their actions and thus a greater submission to criticism; on the other hand, it is possible to observe a strong capacity of their structures to demands that go beyond the time of emergency and also for the seizing of opportunities. Such complex trends, allow only partial observations: sometimes disappointments, at others times, weak signals that justify optimism and the formulation of strategies other than those purely operational.

Opportunities

The literature indicates that disasters induce society to think about itself and its future (Lima, 2008). Similarly, the interviewees confirm this fact and show confidence in the opportunities for communities or countries that may result from them. Changes in how communities perceive themselves and relate to social and political contexts are repeatedly mentioned in the interviews: "I definitely agree there are some unexpected benefits following great accidents" (technician from Global Giving, 2012); "Yes, we have identified an array of alternatives both here in Germany and Chile" (technician from Reclaiming Heritage Project Team, in an interview, 2012); "Human beings learn with their own lives much faster than with somebody else´s" (technician from the American Red Cross, 2012).

The intrinsic characteristic of the emergency, unexpected, unforeseen, or indirect gains, far exceed the essential objectives of people and agencies involved in a reconstruction process. However, these gains are difficult to measure. From the perspective of their more specific objectives (construction of residential units, for example), an aid agency may obtain quantitative results of little consequence; analyzed from the perspective of products (for example, the adoption and diffusion of new construction techniques or implementation of explicit new channels of demands to government agencies) a result with more lasting changes may be revealed. Interviewees (2012) are explicit: a technician from the Reclaiming Heritage Project Team mentions the knowledge gained in terms of architectural heritage reconstruction after the earthquake in Chile in 2010 and its subsequent use. A technician from the Instituto Ambiental Ecosul mentions gains in credibility for animal protection movements after their actions during the disaster in Rio de Janeiro; a technician of a local newspaper who followed the same disaster spoke of a growing and widespread awareness of the risks on the part of the community.

It not only matters in confirming the existence of possible externalities, but also in understanding how to properly make them flourish and be grasped. This is an understanding commonly demonstrated by respondents, in reiterating that the post-disaster recovery is no longer sufficient and that the strategic proposals in the time following the emergency are equally important. A technician from the International Organization for Migration (in an interview, 2012) explains: "Maybe people in Haiti did not take these opportunities,

but they were there […] Disasters provoke […] a more sophisticated and broader desire to see things change." Nakagawa and Shaw (2004) observed a similar situation in analyses of the disasters in Kobe, Japan, in 1982, and Gujarat, India, in 2001. Such positive understandings of action, results, and the emerging opportunities, are understandable from the point of view of the institution represented, but they are questioned if seen from the overview of international assistance. Thomaz (2010), in discussing the response of international agencies and, above all, the Brazilian representation in the days following the earthquake in Haiti, reveals a less auspicious reality where there persisted a "complete absence of any form of aid. It was the failure of this whole apparatus associated with the idea of 'international aid,' the failure of the 'white world,' which I could assist in Haiti" (p. 23). Despite a more evident optimism, this fear observed in the literature can also be found in the interviews. Confirming this view, a technician from the Civil Defense of the State of Rio de Janeiro (in an interview, 2012), speaks of an "institutional selfishness" in referring to the specific interests of each of the support agencies, which work according to their own interests, do not return their analysis to the community, and do not remain for the necessary time: "This is a problem that characterizes voluntarism in general, in Brazil and abroad."

Similarly, In the practice of the agencies, it is considered essential to understand where the leaders are located, who they represent, and who regulates them or can leverage them. In general, the respondents confirmed the singular importance of coordination with local leaders, the integration with organizations, and the understanding of relationships with governments. The last aspect draws attention to the fact that, from the standpoint of international agencies, even against a trend of reduced state intervention and a strengthening of the role of the private sector, opportunities are also found in the traditional and criticized government structures. In some cases, these same structures seem to emerge revalued by the population and reinvigorated institutionally.

> In disasters I worked with the most devastating ones; despite economic and political factors, governments tend to take a more aggressive approach. In the last 15 years, there has been a lot of pressure for more governmental responsibility and more public participation. (Technician from the American Red Cross, in an interview, 2012)

Adversities, while they incite evaluations of the population in relation to their governments and encourage institutional changes, confirm the dependence of their neediest segments on government action, at least as a catalytic element in the presentation of their emergency demands. Among the disappointments that governments have done much less than was expected is a careful reiteration of their importance: "we never give any money to government, we give directly to those who really work. This is our main reason to do something" (technician from Global Giving, in an interview, 2012). Therefore, the description of government involvement is done on two levels: they are repeatedly criticized for not acting, but always recognized as potentially important in reconstruction processes.

In fact, the 2011 disaster emphasized how fragile local people are in articulating and securing their rights to a minimum level of quality of urban life. Likewise, it was confirmed that adversities, such as those described, can help communities to formulate, paradoxically, their demands with more clarity and vehemence than in normal times.[i] The ineptitude of governments to act immediately as catalysts during emergencies and in the decisive moments that follow allows the population to better observe and understand the inability of its representatives to meet even the basic demands. Taken from this perspective and for cases like those studied, positive factors may gain relevance and signal deeper corporate and institutional changes that are highly desirable and capable of justifying a strategic optimism. Reported cases in the post-disaster moments also reiterate the traditional roles being played out by the traditional actors. According to the interviews, community organizations, the media, and the support agencies themselves are constantly cited not only as guides of a reconstruction process but also as potential trustees of new, emerging, and previously unknown advantages. Yet at the same time the emergence can be seen to be important to new social actors, repeating the overriding values that in other times would have appeared weak.

Final Observations

The scenario advanced in this article is a growing submission to situations of risk and catastrophe, resuming the idea of "urban inflections" (Ultramari and Duarte, 2009) that indicates two distinct moments increasingly defined by large-scale adversities: those that precede and follow a certain tragedy. This scenario is also characterized by significant progress in addressing these adversities, albeit with a reduced demonstration of interest and capacity to identify and grasp potential positive externalities.

More than once, the interviews for this study revealed their idiosyncrasies and circumstances; however, there were no dismissive opinions—they were reiterative and complementary, suggesting a recurrent pattern of positioning. This pattern was confirmed by the interviewees' recognition of increases in the number of natural disasters, by their relationships with global climate change, by a necessary confrontation of environmental injustice, and also by a scenario of opportunities to be strategically grasped. Natural disasters create opportunities capable of reviewing and re-positioning agents and their relationships, minimally within the involved community or in the city that they belong to: not only fostering new social relationships, but also eroding or amplifying long existing ones. Wants and needs long recognized, but not implemented, such as the proper and fair use of urban land and the adoption of more inclusive planning procedures, are then expected to be adopted in public policy. Ways to change the usual transience in the adoption of these new practices still need to be investigated and evaluated in different social, economic, and institutional scenarios.

Even though advances to stages beyond *mere* post-disaster reconstruction require additional efforts and routinely raise setbacks, testimonies presented in interviews confirm a belief that a return to the natural state of things is possible, but not in all cases.

In the context of the number of disasters and their impacts, there is a recurrence of the defense of prioritizing prevention over the action of reconstruction, acting on an

emergency with immediate relief, working together with the local community, and promoting solidarity. Although there are no doubts about the correct priority given to these practices at the theoretical and practical level, the interviews for this article showed a desire and even some tendencies to move on, even if in a non-linear form.

Many different *rationales* can be adopted in the discussion of solidarity regarding the processes discussed here. Solidarity, more and more, has shown itself to be solid as an immediate help for disasters worldwide; however, there still remains aspects that should be better scrutinized and that could be broadened or eliminated in the interests of those who need it most. In addition, and despite deserving the highest consideration in terms of its original intrinsic value, solidarity must also be understood according to skeptical and strategic visions.

The research confirms what has long been observed, namely, that the media has an important role in emergencies that goes beyond the simple reporting of events and publicity of possible failures and oversights of governmental actions. The interviews repeatedly announced strategic and pragmatic attitudes as absolutely necessary, despite acknowledging that they are difficult to understand and appropriate. Such attitudes can, for example, increase and improve the chances of internalizing resources and of proposing contentious but necessary changes; however, *the window of opportunity* opens for a limited time and it offers an obstructed view.

It can be said that each interview was characterized by dystopian scenarios: cumulative crises, inefficiency of governments in facing adversity, and sometimes generalized disillusionment. The conclusions may further emphasize these negative and pessimistic features. The deliberately optimistic positioning already adopted in this research project demands the search for other confirmations. The opportunities identified here are not exempt from criticism or the risk of being used uncompromisingly, or for the benefit of minorities; likewise, they are not easily implemented and, unfortunately, are not believed to be abundant.

> Opportunities are open in a world context, but temporary. There is a momentum that policy makers, donors, and NGOs are more interested in than in others. That is the moment too, to say "here it is—the blueprint to change everything." However, the fundamental causes of the crises are not really faced. (Technician from the International Organization for Migration, in an interview, 2012)

Seemingly contradictory attitudes emerge during major disasters: optimism and pessimism, disappointment and new opportunities, support, and strategy are some of the dialectics that disasters impose on or offer us.

Repeated observations from representatives of aid agencies selected for this research encourage a more scathing conclusion in terms of possible optimism; continuous investigations on the so-called positive externalities will have to be better understood if they were previously framed in this manner.

Note

i   "Normal" is used ironically, suggesting almost a generalization of unmet demands of the areas hardest hit by the disaster.

References

ADAMS, William C. Testing geographical bias in international news: Whose lives count? In MILLER, Toby (org.). **Television**: Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies. Oxford: Routledge, 2003.

BBC / British Broadcast Company. 2006. Charity redirects tsunami money. [accessed July, 11, 2006]. Available at http://www.bbc.co.uk

BRAUMAN, R. et al. From philanthropy to humanitarianism: remarks and an interview. The South Atlantic Quarterly. Volume 103, Number 2/3, Spring/Summer, pp. 397-417, 2004.

CARBONNIER, Gilles. Reason, emotion, compassion: Can altruism survive professionalization in the humanitarian sector? Disasters, 39(2): pp. 189−207, 2014.

CLARKE, K.M. New spheres of transnational formations: mobilizations of humanitarian diasporas. Transforming Anthropology. Volume 18, Issue 1, pp. 48-65, April, 2010.

CLINTON, W.J. **Lessons Learned from Tsunami Recovery**: Key Propositions for Building Back Better. New York: Office of the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery, 2006.

CURTIS, Devon. Politics and Humanitarian Aid: Debates, Dilemmas and Dissension. Report of a conference organized by ODI, POLIS at the University of Leeds and CAFOD, London, 1 February 2001. [accessed on 20 March 2015] Available at http://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/295.pdf

DJANKOV, Simeon; MONTALVO, Jose G.; REYNAL-QUEROL, Marta, 2008. The curse of aid. Journal of Economic Growth n. 13, pp. 169-194, 2008.

FADALLA, A. H. The neoliberalization of compassion: Darfur and the mediation of American faith, fear and terror. In COLLINS, Jane L.; DI LEONARDO, Micaela; WILLIAMS, Brett (org.). **New Landscapes of Inequality**: Neoliberalism and the Erosion of Democracy in America. Santa Fe: School for Advanced Studies, 2008.

Gillman, Nina. **Interagency Coordination During Disaster**: Strategic Choices for the UN, NGOs, and other Humanitarian Actors in the Field. Kiel: Kiel University, 2010.

GUERREIRO, A. Um ano após tragédia, obras de prevenção na região serrana do Rio não foram concluídas, diz Crea, UOL Notícias, 11, Jan., 2012 [accessed on 11 January 2011]. Available at http://noticias.uol.com.br/cotidiano/ultimas-noticias/2012/01/11/obras-deprevencao-de-deslizamentos-na-regiao-serrana-do-rio-nao-foram-concluidasdiz-crea.htm

HETTNE, Bjorn (2010). Development and Security: Origins and Future. Security Dialogue, Special Issue on the Security–Development Nexus Revisited, vol. 41, n.1, pp. 31-52, 2010.

HAYAKAWA, Iuri. Fenomenologia dos acidentes naturais: estudo de caso do momento expandido das potencialidades identificadas em Porto Príncipe, Curitiba e Concepción. Tese (Doutorado em Gestão Urbana). Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Paraná, 2013.

HOPGOOD, Stephen**. The endtimes of human rights**. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014.

HUMMELL, Beatriz. Geografia das solidariedades: inequidades no fluxo internacional de recursos em situação pós-desastre no período 2000-2010. Tese (Doutorado em Gestão Urbana). Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Paraná, 2014.

JOHNS HOPKINS CENTER FOR PUBLIC HEALTH PREPAREDNESS; RED CROSS. **Public Health Guide in emergencies. Washington**, 2008. [accessed on 20 June 2016]. Available at http://www.jhsph.edu/research/centers-and-institutes/center-for-refugee-and--disaster-response/publications_tools/publications/_CRDR_ICRC_Public_Health_Guide_Book/Chapter_1_Disaster_Definitions.pdf

KHASALAMWA, S. Is "Build Back Better" a Response to Vulnerability? Analysis of the Post-Tsunami Humanitarian Interventions in Sri Lanka. Norwegian Journal of Geography. Vol. 63, pp. 73–88, 2009.

LEWIS, James. The Worm in the Bud: Corruption, Construction and Catastrophe. In BOSHER, Lee (org.). **Hazards and the Built Environment**. Milton Park: Taylor and Francis, 2008.

LIMA, M.L.P. Tragédia, risco e controlo: uma releitura psicossocial dos testamentos de 1755. Revista Análise Social do Instituto de Ciências Sociais da Universidade de Lisboa, vol. XLIII, pp. 7–28, 2008.

MANNAKKARA, Sandeeka; WILKINSON, Suzanne; POTANGAROA. Build back better: implementation in Victorian bushfire reconstruction. Disasters. Vol. 38, n. 2, pp. 267-290, April 2014.

MARTENS, Bertin, 2005. Why Do Aid Agencies Exist? Development Policy Review. Vol. 23, n. 6, pp. 643–663, November 2005.

MOELLER, S.D. Considering the Media's Framing and Agenda-Setting Roles in States' Responsiveness to Natural Crises and Disasters. Paper presented in the Harvard-World Bank Workshop 29–31st May 2008. Cambridge: Harvard Kennedy School, 2008. [accessed on 23 September 2011]. Available at http://www.hks.harvard.edu/fs/pnorris/Conference/Conference%20papers/Moeller.pdf

NAKAGAWA, Yuko; SHAW, Rajib. Social Capital: A Missing Link to Disaster Recovery. International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters, Vol. 22, n. 1, pp. 5–34, March 2004. [accessed on 2 July 2015]. Available at file:///C:/Users/Cl%C3%B3vis/Desktop/socialcapital2004.pdf

NASCIMENTO, Daniela. One-step forward, two steps back? Humanitarian Challenges and Dilemmas in Crisis Settings. Journal of Humanitarian Assistance, Feb. 18th 2015. International Center at Tufts University. [accessed on 20 March 2015]. Available at http://sites.tufts.edu/jha/archives/2126

OLSEN, Gorm Rye; CARSTENSEN; NILS HØYEN, Kristian. Humanitarian Crises: What Determines the Level of Emergency Assistance? Media Coverage, Donor Interests and the Aid Business. Disasters, vol. 27, n. 2, pp. 109–126, 2003.

RENNER, Michael; CHAFE, Zoë; MASTNY, Lisa. Beyond Disasters: Creating Opportunities for Peace. World Watch Report. Vol. 173, 2007.

ROBERTS, P. The Evolution, Definition and Purpose of Urban Regeneration. In ROBERTS, P.W.; SYKES, H. (org.) **Urban Regeneration:** A Handbook. London: Sage Publications, 2000.

ROTH, Kenneth. The end of human rights? The New York Review of books. October 23, 2014. Volume LXI, n. 16, 2014.

STODDARD, A. et al. **Providing Aid in Insecure Environments:** 2009 Update. London: Overseas Development Institute, 2009.

STUMPENHORST, Miriam; STUMPENHORST, Rolf; RAZUM, Oliver. The UN OCHA Cluster Approach: gaps between theory and practice. Journal of Public Health. Vol. 19, pp. 587-592, 2011.

TICKIN, Miriam. Transnational Humanitarianism. The Annual Review of Anthropology, Vol. 43, pp. 273-289, 2014.

THOMAZ, Omar Ribeiro. O terremoto no Haiti, o mundo dos brancos e o Lougawou. Revista Novos Estudos, nº 86, pp. 23-39. São Paulo: CEBRAP, 2010.

UNITED NATIONS. Shelter after Disaster: Guidelines for Assistance. New York: United Nations, 1982. [accessed on 15 June 2016]. Available at http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/E4FE896AFFF16709C1256CB10056558E-undro-shelter1-jul82.pdf

ULTRAMARI, Clovis. Vulnerabilidades, resiliências e crises cumulativas urbanas. São Paulo em Perspectiva, v. 20, n. 1, jan./mar. Fundação Seade: São Paulo, pp. 109–122, 2006.

ULTRAMARI, Clovis; DUARTE, Fabio. **Inflexões Urbanas**. Curitiba: Editora Champagnat, 2009.

ULTRAMARI, Clovis. 910; 7; 365. Land Use Policy vol. 34, pp. 125–133. Centre for Rural Health and Community Development, University of South Australia, Australia, 2013.

WORLD BANK. **Learning from megadisasters:** lessons from the great East Japan earthquake. Washington, 2014.

YAHOO NEWS. French watchdog says reallocate excess tsunami aid, by Emmanuel Jarry. [accessed Jan. 22, 2007]. Available at http://news.yahoo.com/s/nm/20070103/india_wl_nm/india282176

NATURAL DISASTERS: ALTRUISM, INTERESTS, AND OPPORTUNITIES

CLOVIS ULTRAMARI
TAMI SZUCHMAN

Resumo: Adversidades são recorrentemente investigadas pela perspectiva de impactos negativos, ação emergencial que demandam e exacerbação das desigualdades sociais que revelam. A partir da perspectiva de agentes locais e de agências internacionais de apoio, o artigo discute as paradoxais potencialidades ou externalidades positivas em contextos pós-desastres, a solidariedade como fator que se qualifica para além do altruísmo e o papel da mídia e do estado como agentes reguladores dessas mesmas solidariedades e oportunidades. Apoia-se em dois conjuntos de entrevistas: 1. Agentes municipais atuantes na resposta ao desastre natural de 2011 no Estado do Rio de Janeiro; e 2. Representantes de agências internacionais de ajuda. Conclusões indicam que há avanços significativos no contexto estudado e que potencialidades oportunizadas por momentos pós-desastre são concretas, porém de difícil apreensão e assimilação por políticas públicas.

Palavras chave: Agências Internacionais de Ajuda; Desastres Naturais; Solidariedade Internacional.

Abstract: Adversities are mostly investigated and debated according to their negative impacts and to the emergency action they demand. This article presents the results of research on the paradoxical potentialities (positive externalities) that might emerge from them. Its main approach is provided by interviews with local agents responding to the 2011 Disaster in the State of Rio de Janeiro and by international aid agencies. The main topics discussed here are: solidarity as an asset that goes beyond altruism, the distinguished role of the media and the state as regulator agents of such solidarity, and the increasing importance of international aid agencies. This empirical study is based on a series of interviews with selected international aid agencies according to their global activity and volume of resources administered. The conclusions indicate that potentialities may be recognized as real assets in post-disaster action; however, they are not easily understood by policymakers.

Key words: International aid agencies; Natural disasters; International solidarity

Resumen: Desastres se investigan sobre todo desde la perspectiva de sus impactos negativos y de sus exigencias emergenciales. Este artículo presenta resultados de investigación sobre los potenciales paradójicos que puedan resultar de ellos. Presentamos un debate sobre el

potencial desde la perspectiva de actores locales frente al desastre natural de 2011 en Rio de Janeiro y de las agencias de ayuda internacionales. Los puntos de interés mayor son: el rol de la solidaridad como algo más que el altruismo, los medios de comunicación y el estado como reguladores de esta solidaridad, y la creciente importancia de la agencias internacionales de ayuda al nivel local y global. El estudio empírico se fundamenta en una serie de entrevistas con personal de agencias de ayuda internacionales con distinción en su actuación global y cantidad de recursos disponibles. Resultados sugieren la concretude de estas potencialidades, pero estas siguen siendo poco consideradas por políticas públicas.

Palabras clave: Organismos Internacionales de Ayuda, Desastres Naturales, Solidaridad Internacional.