

Local voices and action: concluding discussion¹

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Introduction

The underlying purpose of this special issue has been to foreground understandings of disaster risk reduction (DRR) from the perspective of local actors, particularly locally based NGOs, leading to consideration of means through which such actors in combination with other local actors can address “underlying risk drivers”. The study is situated within a body of work conducted by members of GNDR under the titles “Views from the Frontline”, “Action at the Frontline” and “Frontline”, all concerned with participative action research engaging local voices in collaboration with GNDR member organisations to investigate local perspectives on risk and disaster reduction, taking action on these findings locally and at policy levels. The genesis and development of the above programmes is charted in this issue in Gibson and Scott (2018). A majority of the contributors to the case studies at the heart of this issue were engaged in the co-creation of these programmes as well as in conducting them in their localities. These activities influenced their local level work, which is the focus of this special issue.

Norton (2018), in this issue, outlines an iterative process through which contributors collaborated to develop, analyse and discuss their eight case studies, both remotely and in a face-to-face workshop. The studies, documented in case study papers 4–11 and analysed in Gibson et al. (2018) in this issue, describe diverse contexts, actions and learning.

Reflecting their pedigree in emerging from “Action at the Frontline” programmes intended to promote sustainable and persistent community-level action and learning, the case studies extend beyond individual short-term “project cycle” interventions and depict established collaborations between the contributing NGOs and the communities in which they work.

They are focussed on current experience and action and therefore, whilst the dynamics of politics and power often emerge as themes, the historical and political underpinnings of the various contexts are not generally

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considered. They are more concerned with what is the case now, and with the “everyday politics” (Kerkvliet, 2009) with which they engage.

In addition, the case studies are concerned with the consequences of “everyday disasters” rather than with intense crisis events. These are events – identified for example in “Frontline” research consulting local people on their own priorities concerning disaster impacts – which are small scale, recurrent, diverse in nature but which combine to erode peoples’ lives and livelihoods (GNDR, 2017). In the realm of everyday disasters of environmental, social, economic and political origin, the boundary between disasters and development becomes blurred and options for action span a spectrum from specific DDR- oriented measures to broader actions concerned with poverty, underdevelopment, power and powerlessness.

In addressing the overarching question of the study, concerning underlying risk drivers and means of addressing them, several key ideas emerge from the individual cases, the discussion of them and comparisons between them. In addition, complementary contributions were invited from other sites, not associated with the GNDR programme. Three cases – one from Peru and Costa Rica, one from Brazil and one from Nepal – are considered, all focussing on the neglect of local capacities and knowledge in disaster response. These will form the basis for the concluding discussion, based on a conceptual backdrop and theoretical framework elaborated below.

Conceptual backdrop to discussion of the case studies and complementary papers A major challenge to progress in DRR and more broadly in development, of which it is an aspect, is in addressing what UNISDR (2018) call “underlying risk drivers” which it defines as “Processes or conditions, often development-related, that influence the level of disaster risk by increasing or reducing levels of exposure, vulnerability and capacity” (UNISDR, 2018).

According to Heijmans (2009), the concept of underlying risk drivers emerged from the experiential encounters of Fred Cuny as an engineer drawn into crisis response in Biafra and East Pakistan, recognising not only that response was often chaotic and poorly managed, but also that the impact of disasters was the result of poverty and vulnerability. Maskrey, conducting a risk analysis in Lima, recognised not only that risk exposure was the result of political and economic forces pushing the poor into unsafe housing, but that the poor had a voice and rights in addressing these problems (Heijmans, 2009).

Blaikie, Cannon, Davies and Wisner developed the “pressure and release” model published in “At Risk (1994)” capturing the concepts of vulnerability to hazards resulting from the chain of fragile livelihoods and unsafe locations, a consequence of dynamic pressures which, in turn, result from root causes, and it is this framing which now sits within the UNISDR lexicon.

Addressing dynamic pressures and root causes (which Blaikie et al. acknowledge are to a certain extent interchangeable terms in different circumstances) is a challenge which comes into sharp focus at the local level, where studies by GNDR (2009, 2011, 2013, 2017) and UNISDR (2015) indicate that a high proportion of disaster losses result from a complex mix of “everyday risks” in many cases resulting from such underlying risk drivers. The ability of local populations, civil society and other actors to address these drivers locally is limited, requiring change at other scales. How can such changes, for example, in the actions of governments, corporations and international institutions, be achieved? This question is particularly important for many civil society organisations, such as local NGOs, whose concern as noted above is often a mix of DDR and development – depending on addressing the “underlying risk drivers” which impede it. Is it possible to negotiate change within formal institutional structures, or does doing so simply lead to co-option or compromise? Many commentators

suggest impotence is indeed a consequence of increasing embeddedness of civil society actors (see e.g. Baird and Shoemaker, 2007; Edwards, 2008; Banks et al., 2015). However, if such actors decide to step outside institutional structures and attempt to disrupt them, they may become exposed through losing legitimacy, for example, by registration being withdrawn, through losing resources of funding being withdrawn, and through other repressive acts. Indeed, civil society actors report many such challenges to their viability through the “closing of space” for civil society (Civicus, 2017), which may dissuade them from disruptive action.

Faced with this dilemma, how do concerned civil society actors – in this study, local NGOs – proceed? How do they chart a course between engaging with institutional structures and risking co-option, or standing outside them and risking disconnection? The eight case studies presented in this special issue and the three external contributions form the basis for investigation and discussion of this question, individually and comparatively.

Theoretical framework

There has been growing consideration of the impact of “everyday risks” and “everyday disasters”. These small-scale shocks and stresses experienced by populations around the world, when aggregated, account for a surprisingly high proportion of losses at a local level. For example, UNISDR (2015) found that as much as 99 per cent of disaster records are attributed to extensive[1] risks, and “Frontline” local level research found that these resulted from diverse environmental, social, economic and political factors (GNDR, 2017). The impacts of everyday disasters are disproportionately felt by those in poverty and informality, not wrapped round with social protection:

The poorer you are the more losses you experience and the less you are able to deal with adversity. (GNDR, 2013, p. 6)

Extensive risk critically erodes development assets. (UNISDR, 2015, p. 94)

Whilst assessments of larger scale risk at national and international scale are highly developed (see e.g. GFDRR, 2014), understanding of everyday risk is much more limited, and often restricted to local communities where it is held and understood. For example, a World Bank GFDRR report presents a table of seven modes of risk assessment, of which only one is relevant to community level. The report further notes that:

[...] success has been comparatively limited in merging community-level understanding of risk with a national or subnational understanding of risk. This is a missed opportunity [...]. (GFDRR, 2014)

Institutional efforts tend to be focussed on preparedness and response to large-scale crises while everyday risk often lies “under the radar”:

Poverty, illiteracy and powerlessness reduce sensitivity to everyday risks and hence to disasters. In this situation abnormality is normality. Government is too far away, particularly in our part of the world.

Since donors like DFID/UK AID and USAID have persuaded our governments to privatise even primary education and primary health care, poor peoples’ relationship with the state has further weakened. This dimension needs to be addressed and highlighted aggressively as due to this disconnect linking local with national has become problematic. Sarwar Bari: Pattan Development Organisation, Pakistan (personal communication, 2018)

Donor institutions address the challenge of management and transaction costs for funding by disbursing funds in large tranches, which connect most closely with large-scale initiatives. The organisational status of recipients, their ability to implement projects at the necessary scale, the reporting and accountability requirements imposed and the very short time frames often imposed all militate against funding reaching to local scale, concluded:

Donors have introduced the business model even for development work including human rights, democratic/community development, governance improvement etc. in many countries including Pakistan. Large funding is now channelled through for-profit firms. This tends to lead to a clash of values. Sarwar Bari: Pattan Development Organisation, Pakistan (personal communication, 2018)

The secretary general of Civicus, Dhananjayan Sriskandarajah, consulted funders to establish why less than 1 per cent of aid goes directly to south-based local organisations, and listed five answers (Sriskandarajah, 2015):

- (1) lots of southern and smaller CSOs do not have the capacity to fill in all our forms, let alone spend our money effectively;
- (2) we do not have the administrative capacity to give smaller amounts of money;
- (3) we need to channel money through a few, trusted partners so that we can manage risk and comply with our own rules;
- (4) we have strict anti-terror and anti-money laundering rules that make giving directly difficult; and
- (5) we are under domestic political pressure to fund through CSOs in our home country.

International organisations such as UN agencies, INGOs and formal NGOs receive much of their funding through these channels and are therefore constrained to the goals and timescales imposed by donors. In some cases, agencies also receive substantial support from the public; however, this is often easiest to attract for high profile, newsworthy and emotive crises and catastrophes. Banks et al. (2015) suggest that:

Donor expectations and their demands for measurable outcomes within short and pre-specified time frames are ultimately incompatible with innovation, which requires a fundamentally different approach to development that is “flexible, long-term, self-critical, and strongly infused with a spirit of learning by doing”.

Local NGOs and other civil society entities often find themselves at the end of a “food chain”, which whilst engaging them as “partners” in theory, in practice, sub-contracts them as service providers (Baird and Shoemaker, 2007; Banks et al., 2015; Cooke and Kothari, 2001; Duffield, 2007; Lister, 2003). Goals and outcomes are externally defined and local actors are often shackled to project cycles which have limited relevance to the felt priorities of the local communities they work with.

Recognition of the gulf between large-scale initiatives and local progress is not a new idea. For example, the UN review of the 1995–2005 Yokohama Framework for Disaster Reduction concluded:

In addition to a lack of systematic implementation, cooperation and reporting of progress to reduce risk and vulnerability to disasters, contributors to the Yokohama Review process have identified the following gaps and challenges. (UN Review of Yokohama Strategy: UNISDR, 2005 p. 19, emphasis added)

And yet after another decade of the successor framework (The Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) on disaster reduction), the gulf still remains:

The possibility that disaster losses and impacts would continue to rise even if the HFA was in good part implemented is a real one [...] Implementation of the HFA is still dominated by a paradigm of disaster risk reduction. As such, efforts and resources continue to be concentrated in emergency management and preparedness, and in corrective or compensatory risk management. (Lavell and Maskrey, 2013)

These barriers to change which address local everyday risk and the “underlying risk factors” challenge “change agents” (Gibson, 2015). By aligning oneself with the institutions and organisations shaping policy and practice, it often proves impossible to change elements of that structure due to the interlocking elements, outlined above, devoted to keeping things as they are. This leads us to the question posed in the introduction. Is it possible to achieve change from within institutional structures, or does doing so inevitably mean becoming compromised, co-opted and losing the ability to achieve change? Through attempting to disrupt institutional inertia, do erstwhile change agents become exposed through losing legitimacy, losing funding and through other repressive acts?

The theoretical lens for this investigation considers the nature of these structures, and options for influencing them.

Structures of power and powerlessness

The title of this section acknowledges Gaventa’s (1980) early work “Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley”. Acknowledging his debt to Freire’s (1970) analysis of the imposition of power over the powerless extending to an ability to reframe beliefs and behaviour towards acquiescence of a situation of oppression, Gaventa charted these mechanisms in the coal-mining communities of Appalachia. Although a rich region, producing 65 per cent of America’s coal in 1974, its people lived in grinding poverty. The region’s wealth passed to absentee landlords and Gaventa depicts multiple elements of the structures of power, including complicity of local elites, local authorities and even elements of trades unions, along with manipulation of rules, imposition of sanctions and manipulation of the media resulting in eventual acquiescence and passivity in the face of enduring oppression. The themes of imposition of power to the detriment of local livelihoods, through multiple elements complicit with external locii of power and influence, are very close to our concerns in the present study.

The recognition that power is exercised not through direct binary confrontation between powerful and powerless, but through multiple dimensions, extends back to Gramsci’s analysis of the role of the “bourgeoisie”, the middle class of politicians, other professionals, business leaders and so on who acted together out of mutual self-interest to maintain a political status quo in their favour. Elaborating Marx’s analysis, he argued that in mainland Europe, the strength of these interrelationships was such that Marx’s anticipated proletarian revolution was unlikely, and that even if it was to occur, it would be overturned (Cox, 1983). It is this interlocking assemblage of powerful interests which Freire seeks to address through “conscientizing” the poor, bringing them to an awareness and understanding of the ways in which they are oppressed, and which Gaventa depicts in action in the Appalachian valleys. Foucault expresses a similar idea in

his work, speaking of “technologies” of power which extend beyond simple political acts and enlist many avenues of life in the service of controlling the powerless:

Central to Foucault’s work, and that of authors that have extended his remarks on governmentality, is the mapping of the role that seemingly nonpolitical technologies such as social work, teaching, town planning, and the human sciences play in the operation of contemporary power and governance in Western liberal societies. These technologies incite subjects to act upon themselves and thereby engage in self-production and regulation with certain effects. (Brigg, 2001, p. 241)

For Foucault, these technologies and indeed language itself foster acceptance and passivity amongst the powerless.

In this study, we are considering power and politics from the local perspective, and it is from this angle that the recognition of the subtle, multiple dimensions of power is most keenly felt. Power is experienced as the imposition of one world view, or “lifeworld” according to Habermas (1987), over another. A lifeworld represents, in Habermas’ thinking, the “body of taken for granted” and the exercise of power is to impose one particular body of taken for granted over another, devaluing the latter, to the extent as Freire and Gaventa argue that the powerless may even learn themselves to devalue their own perceptions.

Nevertheless, the seemingly powerless may exert power and demonstrate agency in ways unanticipated by external actors. Kerkvliet (2009) offers the case of the imposition of collective farming in Vietnam on rural populations by the government, where over a period of years, the subtle disobedience and return by peasant farmers, covertly and subversively, to more traditional farming methods whilst still giving the appearance of collectivisation resulted eventually in the government abandoning the collective farming policy. Similarly Long (2001) finds in cases from Zambia, Peru and Mexico that local people display considerable agency in reshaping policy and project interventions in line with their own understanding and priorities, sometimes subverting or resisting planned interventions. Gaventa discusses the political dimensions of interactions at such interfaces, recognising that while, in some cases, political spaces are clearly closed to participants a more subtle exercise of power is through “invited political space’s, in which participants are invited, the terms of engagement are determined by the hosts, often limiting the agency and voice of particular participants. He suggests that it is often necessary, in order for the powerless to achieve influence, to create new political spaces, opening up new space not under the control of powerful hosts, where participants have equal voice and influence. This is clearly to some extent a disruptive act but one often necessary to escape co-option and control by powerful authorities (Gaventa, 2004).

Regarding the question initially posed: whether concerned actors attempt to work within institutional structures or disrupt them, much of the above discussion suggests that engaging with formal institutional structures on their terms is likely to constrain and co-opt people within the goals of the powerful, subsuming them into their “body of taken for granted” and that therefore disruption of some form is a necessary act. Politics conducted at a local level can be seen as “Everyday Politics”, dynamically and informally creating spaces and actions, such as created political spaces. Kerkvliet (2009) sees the options, from this perspective, as more nuanced than those of confrontation and advocacy. He emphasises the informality of everyday politics,

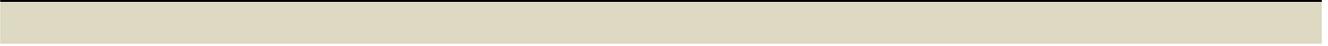
contrasting with organised political organisations, movements and actions, identifying four orientations of everyday politics:

- support – positive engagement with institutional policies;
- compliance – acceptance without positive endorsement;
- modification and evasion – subtly subverting institutional policies, rules, etc.; and
- resistance – deliberately resisting institutionally imposed policies and rules but not in an organised way.

He acknowledges that the last approach may lead, in turn, to more organised forms of resistance, such as advocacy, for example.

The meeting point between this understanding of everyday politics as an emergent countervailing force against structures of power and our concern to address everyday risk through tackling underlying risk drivers lies in the recognition that structures of power are responsible for these underlying risk drivers, and therefore local level action to address them will tend to take everyday politics as its starting point. As boundary operators at the interface between different actors at local level and also beyond it, NGOs have a particular interest in understanding how this plays out, which raises a further question of about the role of local NGOs as actors in local politics. Do NGOs align with local populations, or with the external actors with which they also engage? Heijmanns (2009) illustrates these options in the case of different framings of community-based disaster risk management (CBDRM) (Heijmanns, 2009). One frame explicitly recognises the exercise of power by local and remote elites, creating and maintaining vulnerability. She gives as an example the work of the citizen's disaster response network in the Philippines, which explicitly recognised its political dimensions. By contrast, UNISDR's framing in the HFA, also characteristic of some INGOs, regards CBDRM as a method for addressing the impact of natural hazards as external events, through physical measures, awareness raising and early warning to restore the status quo as far as possible. In doing so, it depoliticises engagement and action. A critical question as we consider the findings from the case studies, is the extent to which these cases illustrate attempts to achieve social change, addressing underlying risk drivers or alternatively reflect an acceptance of an institutional view of CBDRM characterised by projects focussing on education, awareness raising, early warning and physical measures with no intention to address underlying risk drivers.

Finally, the everyday politics of NGOs may extend beyond the local context. For example debates at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit about increasing the proportion of aid going directly to the local level reflected the ability of small South-based NGOs through their membership of networks to press for change in elements of the institutional system (IRIN, 2017). Everyday politics at this scale seems to demand persistence and inventiveness in the same ways as Kerkvliet (2009) argues is the case locally. Keck and Sikkink (1998) argue that transnational campaigns organised by networks of various kinds may achieve their goals by an appeal beyond their own constituency or location through an internationalised "boomerang effect" mobilising remote pressure for change. In the cases under consideration, the action scenes are primarily local, but the involvement of NGOs with GNDR, ADRRN and other networks suggests possibilities for a wider everyday politics.



Discussion of the case studies and complementary papers

Drawing on the concept of everyday politics as a means of considering how actors engage with the structures of power and powerlessness which configure risk and resilience, we turn to consideration of the case studies at the heart of this special issue and to the three complementary papers.

Local voices and action case studies

Discussion of the cases shows particular themes emerging, summarised in the list “Summary of themes emerging from case studies”. These were identified through considering the eight case studies in four pairs reflecting common elements between the cases. This discussion appears in “Drawing the case studies together: synthesis of case studies and group discussions” in this issue (Gibson et al., 2018):

Table 1: Summary of themes emerging from case studies:

- Collaboration and cohesion in small island contexts to address both disaster reduction and development (Kiribati and Philippines).
- Campaigning, lobbying, communications and social mobilisation in an attempt to bridge the gap between local concerns and the decision-making of government and other powerful actors (Pakistan and Vietnam).
- Innovation and local mobilisation to address shortcomings in government support for disaster reduction and development (Indonesia and India).
- Communications as a first base to influence behaviour of both communities and government (Cameroon).
- Social change through empowerment of women to act in disaster reduction and development (Nepal).

A qualitative analysis of the group discussions highlighted particular themes which appeared most important to discussants across all eight case studies. This was based on the record of 230 key points initially recorded on flipcharts during the discussions and subsequently coded and analysed. The method is summarised in Gibson et al. (2018). These are presented in Figure 1. The list “Summary of themes emerging from case studies” and Figure 1 are complementary, the former based on comparative consideration of the recorded case studies, and the latter highlighting dominant themes in the face-to-face discussions between the case study contributors. Figure 1 suggests that “local capacity, action and knowledge”, “innovations”, “collaboration”, “communications and information”, “role of local NGOs”, “Campaigning and development” and “Role of Women” were dominant themes in the face-to-face discussions. It suggested that these themes are all concerned with aspects of social influence and change. A headline theme in face-to-face discussion which does not appear explicitly as a theme in the list “Summary of themes emerging from case studies” is “role of local NGOs”, though this is implied (or a “taken for granted”) in all the cases. It is notable that powerlessness and marginalisation are not specifically highlighted. Again, it is suggested that the lifeworld or “body of taken for granted” of local NGOs and the communities with which they collaborate includes powerlessness, marginalisation and poverty as “givens”,

which form the basis for their work. This is clear (e.g. see Gibson et al., 2018) in the marginalisation of riverine communities described in the Pakistan case, in the stated context of extreme poverty in the Philippines case, in the discussion of the neglect of poor populations by government authorities in the Vietnam

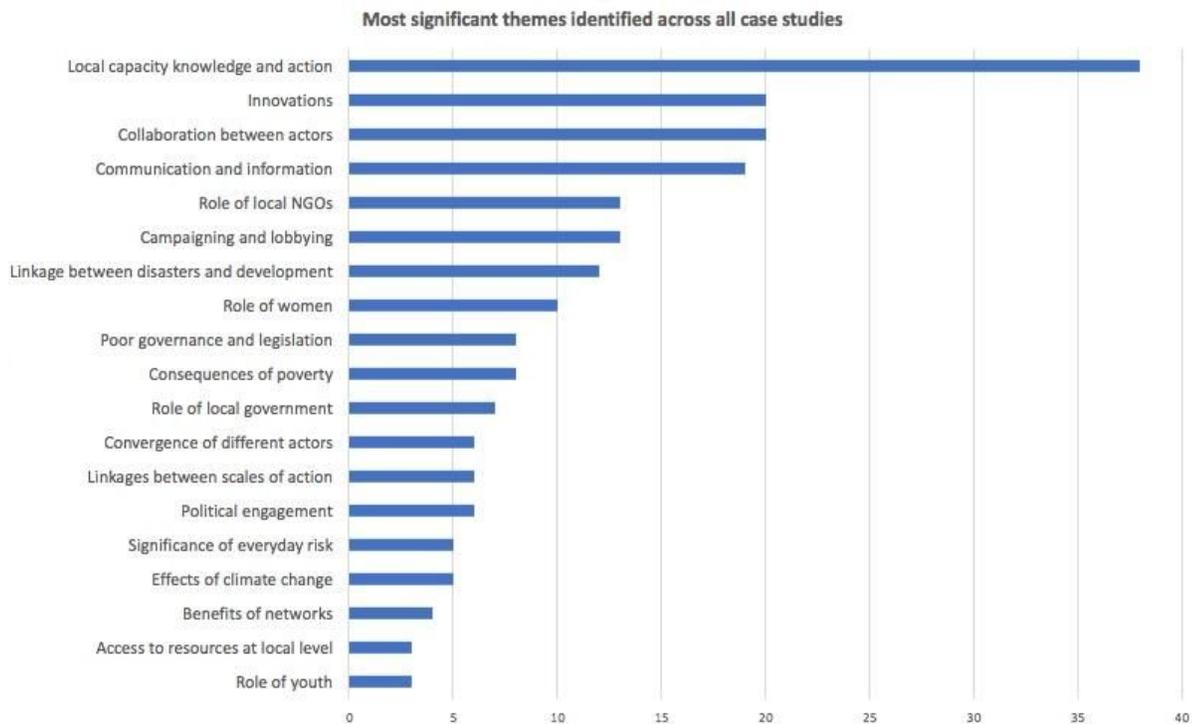


Figure 1. Most significant themes across all case studies

case and in the establishment of citizen forums in East Delhi to give a voice to informal settlers in the Indian case study. The nature of powerless, marginalisation and poverty is expressed in actions discussed by the participating NGOs, of which the majority are concerned with social change rather than technical fixes or project interventions. Even in the Indonesia case, where the intervention is project-oriented, the programme of work attempts to challenge deficiencies in government support for agriculture in the region and to move farmers from passivity to action.

In the list “Summary of themes emerging from case studies”, themes specific to the case studies included cohesiveness and collaboration, local capacity action and knowledge, allied with communications, campaigning and innovations, intending to achieve change not only locally but by influencing government and other powerful actors at local, district and national levels.

For the “participant observers” contributing the case studies, the need for resources did not appear as a headline issue. This is surprising as in other for a, NGOs do highlight resource issues, for example, through demands for localisation of funding made at the World Humanitarian Summit. Their overarching concerns were with local-level social change and influence of other scales of governance and power, aimed at addressing disaster reduction as an activity integrated with development, many of the actions described reflect a depth of relationship and perseverance over time in the communities with which they engage, contrasting with the short-term project cycles typical of many INGO interventions.

An overarching suggestion from the synthesis paper was that the mode of action of NGOs depends on engaging with and strengthening relationships between local stakeholders, either in geographically constrained contexts or through creating cohesive small-scale contexts for action and influence.

Complementary papers

Three complementary studies by Briones (2018), Marchezini (2018) and Pandey (2018) contributed to this special issue, providing an additional perspective on the theme of local voices and action.

1. Zero-order responders (ZORs): Peru and Costa Rica (Briones, 2018)

Those faced with disasters often have to deal with the immediate consequences without outside support from “first responders”. The study demonstrates that far from locally affected populations being victims they are the initial or “zero order responders”. He draws on examples from communities experiencing El Niño Costero in Peru and Hurricanes Irma and Maria in Costa Rica, both in 2017. Communities faced with dramatically changed situations after a disaster responded cohesively and with understanding of the specific contexts they faced. They employed creativity, improvisation and resilience in the solutions they adopted, including inverting power from car batteries to power appliances where power is lost, and using suspended shopping trollies sliding across dead high tension lines to transport goods across impassable rivers. Their expertise as ZORs would improve the currently top-down approaches to DRR if they were recognised as stakeholders in disaster management programmes.

2. The power of localism during the long-term disaster recovery process (Marchezini, 2018)

A study of the experiences of local people – in Luizenses – after the 2010 flooding of the Paraitinga River which struck São Luiz do Paraitinga town, São Paulo State, Brazil, highlighted the important question “whose voices are heard”? It showed that local ZORs, for example, rafters who were not highly respected before the flood, saved lives before the emergency services arrived. Ironically when these services took control, even overriding the municipal authorities, soldiers had to be rescued themselves from the river by the locally re-named “Rafting Angels” after the soldiers’ boats capsized. Nevertheless, the official and media narrative was of powerless and vulnerable locals and competent authorities. Luizenses had no voice even in consultations, where authorities at the front held the microphone, and did not hand it to local people. Their countervailing actions, for example, publishing their own newspaper and reinstating the church remains as a centre of community reflected everyday politics in action. The study concludes that more effective response demands taking localism seriously, empowering local voices, knowledge and action.

3. Community engagement in Nepal (Pandey, 2018)

The recognition of the role of communities in DRR has been slow being assimilated into DRR legislation in Nepal, according to Pandey (2018). He shows that despite a history of community action to deal with small and large disasters in the country and the emphasis placed on community participation in international frameworks, there is still an emphasis on top-down approaches in the country. Disaster events such as the 2008 Koshi flood and the 2015 Gorkha earthquake have led to fundamental revision of the governance of DRR in the country, but this still fails to recognise the value of community capacities. In some cases, disasters have been so devastating that even this capacity is eroded, and Pandey suggests that stronger local government recognition of community-based DRR and support for building local capacity is needed to counter this and recognise and strengthen the ability of people locally to prepare and respond.

These studies all illustrate limitations of interfaces between local and other scales of governance and action. In all three cases, these interfaces appear dysfunctional. Failure to acknowledge the role of local ZORs is discussed in Briones' cases set in Peru and Costa Rica. Marchezini's (2018) study gives striking illustrations of this failure to acknowledge and engage with the local. The emergency teams override not only the local people but local government, failing to acknowledge local capacities, culture or history, and failing to allow the locals to speak in consultations. Pandey (2018) focusses at a national level in Nepal, showing that despite new DRR legislation local capacities continue to be neglected by national government.

Discussion: the risks which are faced and the options for addressing them

To reiterate the research questions at the outset of this discussion:

- *What understanding of the nature of underlying risk drivers and the structures which frame them is brought through this experiential perspective?*
- *What proposals for influencing change to address underlying risk drivers emerge from this experiential investigation?*

Underlying these questions was the observation that change agents are faced with the options of acting in concert with existing institutional structures or challenging them. The idea of "everyday politics" was used as conceptual framing for this observation. The local level case studies and the further contributions offering cases of local level action and constraints provide the basis for exploring these questions.

The nature of underlying risk drivers and the structures which frame them?

In addressing the first research question, we consider what the cases and their discussion add to our understanding of "underlying risk drivers" – those factors beyond local influence. The discussion of the cases shows a range of such external drivers, including climate change, the grinding economic force of poverty, inward migration to cities, poor governance and allocation of resources at local and national level, and consequent passivity and fatalism at local level. What it also shows, importantly, from the perspective of these case studies and discussions surrounding them, is that these underlying risk drivers are far more dominant

themes than those of the intensive mega-disasters which often form the focus of DDR policy and practice. Despite the fact that Limbe lies next to a volcano and that Kathmandu lies on a fault line, the concerns in both cases are with the underlying risk factors, political and economic, which affect peoples' lives and livelihoods.

In several of the discussions, the links between DDR and development have been emphasised, and it has been argued that government often fails to recognise this link, reproducing a focus on large-scale disasters, preparedness and response rather than on addressing underlying risk factors as a means of driving development. The first question asks, further, what understanding is brought of the structures of power which frame these underlying risk drivers. As suggested above, several of the cases suggest that the continuing and pervasive emphasis on large-scale disasters, preparedness and response to them is a characteristic of this structure.

In several cases, for example, in Cameroon, Indonesia and Kathmandu, the limited capacity of government to look beyond emergencies at disaster reduction as a development issue is documented. A particular issue in East Delhi is the resistance of government to serving the needs of those in the informal sector as they do not pay taxes and do not vote. The political structure therefore militates against inclusive development. Similarly, in Vietnam, the political system and priorities militate against inclusive development. In Pakistan, institutional behaviour seems to nakedly protect the interests of the rich and powerful and therefore neglects DDR and development, except where the pressure of campaigning and publicity becomes too great. Set against this, in Kiribati and Philippines, the proximity of all actors in these small-scale contexts appears to strengthen the ability to conduct "everyday politics" leading to greater recognition by the local government of the need to address the development needs of their populations.

Disasters are a development issue

In summary, the cases suggest that addressing underlying risk drivers becomes critical if disasters are regarded as a development issue, as an alternative to a focus restricted to large-scale disasters, addressed through preparedness and response Heijmanns (2009) contrasts these conceptions of disaster risk management at a community level (Figure 1). The cases suggest the failure of institutions to move from disaster response to disasters as a development issue reflects factors including the disconnect between government and local populations, the limited capacity of governments to act, lack of preparedness to strengthen cross-scale connections and understanding and resistance to inclusive development, corruption and a desire to hold onto power. The idea of ZORs (Brione, 2018) and its exemplification in the case of São Luiz do Paraitinga (Marchezini, 2018) demonstrate this disconnect between local and other scales of knowledge and action, and Pandey (2018) demonstrates that in the case of the Nepalese Government, there is a failure to integrate community capacities into DRR legislation. These cases emphasise the challenge of creating effective cross-scale linkages of knowledge and action.

What proposals for influencing change to address underlying risk drivers emerge?

Faced with this analysis, what is seen in the cases and their discussion regarding the second research question – "What proposals for influencing change to address underlying risk drivers emerge"?

First, what is not on the table, at least in these particular cases and their discussion, is an emphasis on service delivery. Whilst some NGO action, for example, in Gunungkidol district, Indonesia, is framed in project terms, it

is concerned with changing behaviour rather than with providing services. Other programmes, in Kiribati, Philippines, Vietnam, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Cameroon, are all concerned with achieving social change and political influence. This point is notable as at the INGO level, a shift towards project cycles and service delivery has been charted by many commentators (see e.g. Baird and Shoemaker, 2007; Banks et al., 2015; Cooke and Kothari, 2001; Duffield, 2007; Lister, 2003). Whilst as noted above, this approach ripples down to local NGOs, often “sub-contracted” by INGOs, it is resisted in these cases, possibly reflecting the local connectedness and involvement in everyday politics of local NGOs.

What methods are these NGOs using to influence structures which configure underlying risk drivers, and are these based on engaging institutions or on mechanisms of subversion? It can be argued from the aggregation of themes discussed during the workshop that a starting point is the local. Local capacity, knowledge and action are widely discussed and form the focus of the cases, so this observation is tautological to an extent. Accepting this local focus, it has been noted above that local action is not focussed on service delivery but on aspects of change. Again, reading off Chart 9, innovations, collaboration between actors, communication and information, the role of NGOs, campaigning and lobbying and linkage between disasters and development are major themes, appearing regularly in the particular cases. As means of achieving structural change, many of the actions fall in the realm of everyday politics, with many of the cases depend on strengthening local collaboration between actors. Innovations are often employed, ranging from technical to social and including gender empowerment. Communications and information, providing new ideas and possibilities are an aspect of local social mobilisation. Local NGOs often have a role in mobilising these local-level collaborations in more formal ways to exercise influence at other scales, through joint action in Kiribati and Philippines, through information and lobbying in India, and through campaigning and demonstrations in Pakistan, for example. In disaster response, the innovative capacity of local people, creating sources of electrical power where the grid has failed and improvising means of shifting good across swollen rivers (Brione, 2018), has been demonstrated.

Underlying local action, growing local collaborations, communications and campaigning is a view that DDR is about much more than preparedness and response to major disasters. It is seen as intimately linked to development and the nature of the shocks and stresses which form the focus of such an approach are those small, “everyday” events which constantly erode lives and livelihoods. Pandey (2018) highlights the failure to achieve this linkage in current DRR legislation in Nepal. The “underlying risk drivers” which maintain and increase these events are often poorly understood by governments, and the option for change appears to be that of increasing local voice through the everyday politics of collaborations, communication and campaigning to influence and change government behaviour, or, in other words, “handing over the microphone” (see Marchezini, 2018).

Returning again to the observation about the Kiribati and Philippines case studies, it appears that creating relatively small-scale and cohesive social structures is a starting point for this process of collaboration, communication and influence. In other contexts such as Indonesia and India, the programmes of work have created such cohesion in particular localities.

On the basis of this set of case studies and the discussion of them by the participants, it appears that there is a deep concern to address underlying risk factors, regarding DDR and development as intimately linked, seeing a starting point for influence and change in local collaborations and regarding these as a basis for influencing other scales of governance.

Legitimate subversion?

How does this approach position NGOs and the communities they work with? In relation to the research question, are they attempting to underlying risk factors? How? And is their activity based on engaging with or subverting structures and institutions? The discussion above argues that NGOs and the collaborations of which they are a part are concerned with change. Through linking DDR and development, they are attempting to address the underlying risk factors, beyond local control, which lead to much of the small-scale everyday risks faced by local populations which impedes development. Their mode of action in attempting to address is described as “everyday politics”, starting with the local and attempting through collaborations, innovations, communication and campaigns to strengthen local voice to influence underlying risk factors. In doing so, their actions may be seen as subtly but legitimately subversive, apparently operating within existing structures in most cases, but in fact attempting, through social change, to create influence to change them. Subversion is implied in Kerkviet’s (2010) categories of modification/evasion and resistance, but legitimacy is also critically important to NGOs as losing their status, often legally defined and therefore their legitimacy, disables them from their boundary role.

The evidence of success in these attempts is varied. In East Delhi, for example, the case records significant milestones in influencing government behaviour. In Pakistan, it is only a tipping point resulting from a major disaster that influences government behaviour. In Cameroon, the government capacity is very limited and attempts to influence behaviour are at early stages. In Vietnam, the government is relatively highly developed but also highly resistant to inclusive development, while local populations are restrained by the political system from challenging this. In Nepal and Indonesia, particular innovations form the basis of social change. In Philippines and Kiribati, small-scale, island bounded contexts, have led to relatively greater collaboration for change. Though the situations are diverse and the outcomes to date varied, it is suggested that in all cases, the approaches adopted are ultimately political rather than technical in nature, attempting to achieve social change and political influence through various degrees of legitimate subversion, based on creating local social constructs potentially capable of exercising an everyday politics and exerting political influence. Small examples of this can be seen in the account of local actions in São Luiz do Paraitinga, where publication of a local paper, reinstatement of the church bell and

other steps were intended to encounter the erosion of the local by the emergency services (Marchezini, 2018). Faced with the pervasive passivity achieved by powerful actors in local populations, the role of local NGOs can be seen as one of changing path dependency (Pelling and Dill, 2010) but at a local rather than institutional level in a cyclical way, through experiences of collaboration, modification/evasion and resistance which we have described as “legitimate subversion” strengthening everyday politics and increasing its voice and influence.

Conclusion

This study opened with discussion of the UNISDR term “underlying risk factors”. It is suggested that UNISDR, governments and other institutions and agencies prefer to regard DDR as a programme focussed primarily on

large-scale disasters, preparedness and response, rather than addressing underlying risk factors (see e.g. GNDR, 2013, demonstrating that according to UNISDR's own monitoring, progress in addressing underlying risk factors had been extremely limited). In contrast, an underlying theme of the case studies and discussions has been that disasters are a development issue; disasters and development are intimately linked; and therefore it is of primary importance to address underlying risk factors impeding development through social change. It is suggested that the practical mechanisms relevant to local-level NGOs for achieving progress in this, illustrated in the case studies, are based in varying degrees on legitimate subversion through creating local collaborations, stimulating action through innovation, communication and information, and strengthening local voice to influence different scales of governance to address underlying risk factors impeding development. Further work The process of critical reflection on action underpinning this special issue has the intention of providing insights to practitioners to employ in their work as "change agents". One contributing organisation, SEEDS India, fed back on the initial version of this discussion paper:

There is often an internal debate on the approach to be taken for our projects. Often we have to make a choice and consider implications. The paper has illustrated this very well through the various case studies. This itself is very useful for us. Legitimate subversion is another interesting concept. We did not realise it until it was articulated so well in the paper. I guess this should form an important part of our future project narratives. (Personal communication, e-mail: 14 April 2018)

This feedback provides encouragement that the process has, at least with this organisation, had such an effect. Further work based on these studies and their discussion might take two routes: "forensic" and "creative".

Forensic

The studies and their analysis and discussion raise a number of proposals for means of "legitimate subversion" based on the more detailed observations emerging from analysis. These, in the nature of qualitative case study work, are rooted in a limited number of cases. A forensic investigation of the validity and relevance of the findings could be based on a carefully designed, structured consultation with a wider group of NGOs. Other stakeholders, for example, local government officers, relevant national government departments and relevant international agencies, could also be consulted to find to what extent they recognise the findings put forward. Such work would serve to modify or even question these findings. If they survived such a falsification process, it would add to their weight in future discourse.

Creative

An action research approach might share and discuss the findings through platforms such as practitioner forums and invite organisations, as SEEDS India have suggested they might, to experiment with applying them in their work, testing them through active experimentation.

Both approaches should be considered. In the spirit of the work done during development of this special issue, the authors gravitate naturally towards the creative approach, but the forensic approach is also important both in refining and adding weight to the findings, and in engaging a wider body of practitioners in the discourse.

Note

1. “Extensive disasters” are defined by UNISDR as resulting from localised, repeated or persistent hazards of low intensity.

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