

Disaster and Development Research and Practice: A Necessary Eclecticism?

MAUREEN FORDHAM

Those concerned with disaster and development represent a diversity of interests including the academic/theoretical, the policy-related, the practitioner-oriented, and the political. This results in the generation of different theories and literatures, varied budgets, disparate organizational structures, and diverse constituencies and worldviews. Perhaps, not surprisingly, there can be conflicting expectations, and even degrees of hostility and incomprehension, among those who deal in some way with disaster and/or development.

Exhortations to appropriate action can suggest that the melding of disaster and development is a matter of simple common sense but this deceptive simplicity masks both conceptual and practical complexity. Who could deny the appropriateness of ensuring that disaster risk reduction and response should take due note of long-term development initiatives and concerns? Furthermore, who could deny that development policy makers and practitioners should avoid increasing people's disaster vulnerability through inappropriate programs? While the bringing together of disaster and development is called for by a growing number of researchers, donors, and activists, the categories persist in many cases as stubbornly separate areas of practice and enquiry.

This chapter can only touch upon some of the many possible elements of this complex field. It explores some of the meanings of disaster and development in both research and practice; explores why they have followed divergent paths and why there are increasing calls for union; proposes some possible research areas; and finally suggests some common ground may lie in the application of theories of social capital.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY “DISASTER” AND “DEVELOPMENT”?

Viewed simplistically, development is a positive term (but see the discussion below): it is forward-focused on improving economic and social conditions and tends towards long-term

processes. It can be separated from the term disaster, which has negative connotations and typically tends toward a short-term, backward, focus on the response to, or the management of, extant, somewhat localized, catastrophic events. These simplistic conceptualizations are expanded below to show how theories and practices of development and disaster have their own histories and cultures and present a challenge to those who would wish them more closely allied. Further, the two terms are slippery and defy any but the most generally agreed definition by those who call themselves disaster researchers (Quarantelli, 1998).

DEVELOPMENT

Development, in its commonly understood sense of an increasing standard of living through, initially, economic processes, programs, and projects (Hodder, 2000, p. 3), was envisioned after World War II when U.S. President Truman advocated (in 1949) a “fair deal”—not just for the United States but for the whole world—to be achieved through the application of capital, science, and technology. However, this vision appears increasingly tarnished in the face of widespread *under* development and impoverishment (Escobar, 1995), which partly reflects the nonsustainability of primarily economic development trajectories of the neoliberal form. In the 1950s and 1960s, dominant forms of development based on modernization theory held traditional forms of social organization (e.g., the community-based structures and relations currently regarded so highly) to be regressive and a barrier to capitalist progress trajectories (Moore, 1997 in Woolcock & Narayan, 2000, p. 4).

A more people-centered, social vision developed subsequently and is inherent in the longer-term, future-oriented, and now classic, definition of sustainability from the United Nations’ Brundtland Commission Report, “Our Common Future: Development that Meets the Needs of the Present Without Compromising the Ability of Future Generations to Meet Their Own Needs” (WCED, 1987, p. 43).

While this was primarily stimulated by concerns for intergenerational equity arising from the exploitation of natural resources, its viewpoint has been internalized by a much wider range of interests concerned with taking a longer term approach to the interrelated spheres of environment, economy, and society.

Development studies (or international development studies as it is also known) is, like disaster studies, a multi- or interdisciplinary field of studies rather than a single discipline but can generally be assumed to have a normative focus, at the heart of which is poverty reduction in developing countries. As commonly understood in the present context, development is deemed to be the provision of aid from the developed to the developing countries of the world to enable them to reach levels of economic, social, and political development similar to that of the donors. In this light, development is assumed to be a “good thing” but post-development theorists have undermined this romantic and uniform view with a representation of development as vulgar modernization, controlled by elites, and leading to the creation of underdevelopment (see, e.g., Corbridge, 1990, 1986; Escobar, 1995).

Development studies and development practice share with disaster studies and disaster management a similarly complex and varied history and diversity of identities. Wijkman and Timberlake (1984) assert that there is even less agreement on the definitions of development than there is on the meanings of disaster (p. 123) about which there is considerable discord. However, the focus of this chapter is on the interface between disaster research and development rather than on development per se.

DISASTER

The 1980s was a significant decade for advancing our thinking on disaster and development (see Cuny, 1983) but Quarantelli (1998, p. 260) notes the dissimilarity in subject matter and literature between disaster researchers and development researchers arising most probably from an early North–South divide. This split is apparent in the exclusion from the purview of disaster sociology, of famines, droughts, and epidemics (Quarantelli, 1998)—not exclusive to, but more common in, the global south—which effectively excludes much that concerns researchers and workers in and on the developing world. For example, Sanderson (2000, p. 96) notes that disaster management strategy in an African context is almost synonymous with food security and thus immediately puts it outside the commonly allowable sociological definition. Attempts to define disasters have a theoretical basis grounded in substantial theoretical and empirical research on organizational and collective behavior which has tended to rule out inclusion of conflict and slow-onset events (see the Disaster Research Center Web site). Therefore, the appropriate subject range for disaster researchers has also been affected. While these subject areas are not strictly proscribed, the vast majority of work within the disaster sociology area eschews them (Dynes, 2004; Quarantelli, 1998), because chronic and acute forms of collective stress result in sociologically distinct processes (see Merton in Barton, 1969, p. xxv). Arguably it is also because they are not so amenable to management by professional disaster management organizations (a more frequent focus of disaster sociological inquiry) but reflect more saliently the underlying political power structures, the study of which has been the focus for a different set of researchers/actors (see the vulnerability approach below).

Disaster sociology is of course but one subset of the disasters field. Others include those who work under the banner of hazards research and sit on one side of a traditional environment–society divide, although it has become more generally accepted that focusing on the (physical) hazard alone will not reduce disaster risk or subsequent impacts. The once dominant hazards paradigm (with its primary focus on the “natural” and the geophysical, and its characterization of disaster events as exceptional (extreme) and separate from the everyday), met a significant critique in Hewitt’s 1983b edited collection, which adopted an avowedly political economy approach and took its examples and case studies, not only from the Third World but also from the perspective of the victims. This position was more closely allied to development theory than disaster research and inevitably paved the way for different recommendations, solutions, and methods of enquiry. These tended away from the technical fixes of the hazards paradigm, or the advancement of expert systems and command and control structures of organizational sociology (Hewitt, 1998), and toward participatory, community-based approaches (Maskrey, 1989), and the alternative perspective of, what has been called, the vulnerability approach (Blaikie, Cannon, Davis, & Davis, 1994; Cannon, 2000; Comfort et al., 1999; Hewitt, 1997; Varley, 1994b; Wisner, Blaikie, Cannon, & Davis, 2004). The vulnerability perspective is anchored in political economy and analyses that identify the root causes of disaster vulnerability (Wisner et al., 2004) and the social geography of harm (Hewitt, 1997). It identifies the social, economic and political structures underpinning societies which create inequalities and vulnerabilities, and—through “development gone wrong”—disasters. The disaster definition used is expansive and blurs the exceptional and the everyday.

An example of this would be Lavell’s (2002, 2003) analysis of the flood problem in the Lower Lempa River Valley in El Salvador which highlighted the everyday risks and hazards faced by the local population—the vast majority of whom live below the poverty line. Lavell’s

paper presents a project that included land-use planning and health and risk management among other wide ranging responses to the flood risk and thus integrated development with disaster risk reduction. He also refers to the transformative potential, even necessity, of the disaster-development nexus when he argues that isolating disaster mitigation initiatives from the transformation of social and economic conditions simply perpetuates inadequate conditions of everyday life (Lavell, 2003, p. 3). Another important conclusion of the work was that *social organization* was the key to empowerment and sustainability (Lavell, 2002, p. 13) and this is discussed further below under *social capital*.

The preceding discussion has referred briefly to just three competing/complementary approaches to disaster studies: natural hazards, disaster sociology, and vulnerability; but there are numerous others, each with their own subject matter and literature. They cross over many disciplinary fields such as sociology, geography, anthropology, and politics; in fact Alexander (1997) has claimed some 30 disciplines have an interest in the disasters field. While the variety of disasters research is presented elsewhere in this volume, two others are mentioned here because of their more frequent overlaps with disaster sociology and vulnerability approaches. These are, respectively, the risk and humanitarian fields. They are mentioned here for further examination by those interested in disaster and development research and practice because each has developed considerable bodies of case material, theories, and practices (for some recent examples of risk literature see Beck, 1992; Boin, Lagadec, Michel-Kerjan, & Overdijk, 2003; Comfort, 1999; Horlick-Jones, 2001; Pidgeon, Kasperson, & Slovic, 2003; and for the humanitarian approach see Clay, 2005; Macrae, 2000; Macrae & Zwi, 1994; Turner and Pidgeon, 1997; Yamin & Huq, 2005; the Humanitarian Practice Network Web site). For a more detailed exposition than can be presented here, the interested reader is referred to Dynes (2002) for a discussion of the two separate streams of disaster and development literature.

DISASTER AND DEVELOPMENT

Wijkman and Timberlake point to the cause of most Third World disasters in unsolved development problems (1984, p. 122). Anthony Oliver-Smith (1994, 1999c) provides a long historical view of an unsolved development problem in Peru that led inevitably to disaster. This is development as colonization where the coming of the Spanish in the 1530s was itself a disaster. Peru was always a hazardous place but traditional adaptations had tended to minimize these effects. The Spanish conquerors located towns in hazardous areas previously avoided and ordered the migration and concentration of people into fewer, larger settlements that would be easier to control but also vulnerable to disaster. Spanish building techniques and settlement plans concentrated people into a grid pattern of narrow streets where previously settlements had been spaced out; they built houses taller with second stories and heavy tiled roofs, making them more dangerous in a collapse. The Spaniards extracted surpluses, leaving nothing for storage and to provide for the survival of people following disaster. All this could be seen as advancement and development for Peru but the result, hundreds of years later, was that more than 65,000 people died in the earthquake that struck in 1970. Disasters do not suddenly occur: they are constructed over time—sometimes many centuries—and are closely related to societal development.

There is now a growing body of both First and Third World examples showing positive and negative outcomes of disaster and development, and the relationship between the two. This can be seen schematically in Table 19.1.

The following are some generic examples for each cell of this disaster–development matrix:

TABLE 19.1. Disaster and Development Linkages

development	
negative	(a) Development increases vulnerability to disaster.
	(c) Disasters impede development.
positive	(b) Development reduces vulnerability to disaster.
	(d) Disasters provide development opportunities.
disasters	

Adapted from UNDP/DHA, 1994, p. 10.

1. *Development increases vulnerability to disaster.* Tourism development in scenic yet hazardous areas (e.g., coasts, floodplains, mountains, etc.) can place many more people at risk (e.g., from hurricanes and tsunamis, from flash floods, from avalanches, and mud and landslides). Specific development projects can increase risk (e.g., digging tube wells in Bangladesh tapped into arsenic contaminated water; ineffective building codes were the cause of many earthquake deaths in Turkey in 1999). Campbell (1990) discusses how a Pacific Island community became more vulnerable to disasters through development processes that modified social, economic, and resource management systems and undermined their traditional mechanisms for coping with disasters. This approach would be of interest in analyzing the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami which demonstrated the manufacture of vulnerability through global tourism development.
2. *Development reduces vulnerability to disaster.* Housing projects that incorporate safe design and follow building codes can reduce damage in the next storm or earthquake (see ITDG, 2005, for earthquake-resistant housing design in Alto Mayo region of Peru). Tree planting and terracing can reduce landslide risk while simultaneously strengthening livelihoods and improving agricultural output.
3. *Disasters impede development.* The AIDS/HIV pandemic is having major, long term impacts on development in many African countries. Major disasters frequently destroy school buildings and children’s education. It may be many months before children can return to education. Sometimes they never do because they are needed to rebuild household livelihoods and cannot be spared from the effort.
4. *Disasters provide development opportunities.* Post-disaster livelihood development programs (in place of simple relief) increase the ability of households and communities to rebuild not only what was lost in disaster but also their everyday coping capacities and household incomes. Women’s empowerment can be stimulated by post-disaster programs that incorporate gender equality requirements (see also SEWA’s microfinance initiatives for women [Patel & Nanavaty, 2005]).

Another conceptualization is presented in DFID (2005) where the possibilities for either negative or positive outcomes is characterized as either a vicious spiral of disaster risk and development failure or a virtuous spiral of risk reduction (pp. 24–25). Mary Beth Anderson (1991) identifies three reasons why disasters should be integrated in development planning:

1. Disasters and poverty are closely linked.
2. Development itself can create or exacerbate disasters.
3. Failure to factor in disasters can mean development resources are wasted.

Anderson provides a sound economic argument for the linking of disaster—and more importantly, disaster risk reduction—with development: in its minimization of damage it “promotes a stable environment, incentives for investment and enterprise, and the sense that people can control their own economic destiny” (Anderson, 1991, p. 27). These she regards as fundamental to sustainable long-term development.

This reasoning is apparent in more recent work by Benson and Twigg (2004a, 2004b), who also point out that the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and poverty reduction initiatives are threatened by a recent escalation in the occurrence of major disasters. Hurricane Mitch in 1998 provided an unwanted example of the impact on development gains that major disasters can bring. The President of Honduras, Carlos Flores, remarked that Mitch destroyed in 72 hours what it had taken more than 50 years to create (Tearfund, 2004). However, Benson and Twigg point out that despite the rhetoric linking disasters and development, many of these same organizations are hesitant about making risk reduction—rather than disaster response—their focus.

When disasters occur they force their own dynamic in which the *speed* of delivery is dominant over the *form* of delivery. This, as it relates to gender needs, has been described as the “tyranny of the urgent” (BRIDGE, 1996). The response is framed in the short-term context of the disaster with all its attendant pressures to be seen to be doing something quickly in an attempt to return to normalcy/normalcy. It can mean that long-term development principles (particularly related to working with local people in a truly participatory and egalitarian manner) may be overturned (Anderson & Woodrow, 1998).

It is common for considerable resources and attention to be focused on the response stage, less frequently on the recovery stage (Berke, Kartez, & Wenger, 1993), and least represented of all are the activities that come before the disaster: prevention, mitigation, preparedness, and risk reduction. These are also the areas for which donor funding is scarcer. It is hard to demonstrate the benefit of work that results in the *absence* of something (Annan, 1999), but preparedness that makes communities resilient to disasters or that prevents disasters occurring is—or should be—at the heart of sustainable development. In its recent (2002) global review of disaster risk—*Living with Risk*—the UNISDR has argued that disaster reduction, social and economic development, and sympathetic environmental management are inseparable conceptually and must be in practice if future development is to be truly sustainable. However, while it is hard to argue with the rhetoric, the reality comprises disparate agencies, budgets, cultures, and practices that represent seemingly insurmountable barriers to integration.

An example that identifies some of the disaster-development linkages and schisms is Walker’s (1990) discussion of contingency planning for future famine crises in Ethiopia. He refers, for example, to the importance of monitoring changes in people’s total asset bundle rather than the more limited monitoring of local food availability and sale of peasant assets. This necessitates agencies with long-term commitments to an area and these are usually long-term, program focused development agencies/nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) rather than short-term, single project focused disaster/relief agencies (p. 114). He concludes that the way ahead lies in vulnerability reduction through appropriate development (p. 116). This conclusion is echoed by Kelly and Chowdhury (2005, p. 3), who examined disaster, poverty, and environment linkages in Bangladesh and found that poverty contributes to disaster impact with the poor being more affected and taking longer to recover than the wealthier. However, they also found that non-disaster shocks can outweigh disaster impacts on poorer people over the long term (related to this see the Web sites of La Red and DesInventar). Thus, a focus on disaster (relief or response) here would not necessarily protect poor Bangladeshis from livelihood impacts (see below) unless it incorporated development-oriented capacity building.

THE PRACTICES OF DISASTER PLANNING/MANAGEMENT, AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMING

Those who would work in disaster and/or development must contend not just with varying disciplinary and political perspectives but also with the tension between academic/scholarly endeavor and practitioner-led interests. Robert Chambers has described the two differing cultures of practitioner and academic development professionals as focused respectively on action and understanding (Chambers, 1997, pp. 33–35).

This is something that faces all disciplinary areas that attempt the crossover and the dichotomy can also be identified within the natural hazards community. White and Haas (1975) recognized the need to bring together research and practice and disseminate it to researchers and practitioners alike and it is made concrete in the Annual Workshop run by the Natural Hazards Research and Information Applications Center in Boulder, Colorado (Myers, 1993). A Special Issue of the *International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters* is a good starting point for exploring these issues with a set of papers concerning bridging the gap between disaster research and practice (IJMED, 1993, Vol. 11, No. 1). Despite these, and other, initiatives, there are still tensions between these two cultures. Guarnizo argued in 1993 that researchers' understanding of disaster-development linkages was ahead of institutional practice, although here she was referring specifically to NGO responses in the Third World. However, appreciation of the linkages has not just been seen in theoretical work but also in the focus of donors and major agencies. For example, significant recent documents include UNDP's (2004) "Reducing Disaster Risk: A Challenge for Development" and DFID's (2005) "Disaster Risk Reduction: A Development Concern." The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) highlighted disaster risk reduction; the UNISDR (despite its genesis in the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction [IDNDR] which was criticized for its overly physical and technical approach), has a development, most particularly a *sustainable* development, focus very much to the fore of its recent work (see "Living With Risk," 2002); the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has highlighted a "vulnerability gap" within and between countries and regions (2002); the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), perhaps the quintessential humanitarian relief agency, has progressed to include a more recent focus on the development context. Its 2002 World Disasters Report (IFRC, 2002) has as its theme "reducing risk" in which it asks: "Does development expose more people to disasters?"

However, changes in policy direction at the international level do not seamlessly manifest themselves in national level activities. A Philippine National Red Cross (PNRC), integrated, community disaster planning program on the island of Leyte attempted to reduce the passive receipt of aid and facilitate a more active role for local communities as disaster and development actors but a truly sustainable livelihoods approach was blocked by the PNRC's own project design and implementation systems and also donor conditionality (Allen, 2003). As Sanderson (2000) notes, disasters are rarely included in urban development strategies and vice versa. Completely different ministries are involved with little knowledge of each other's activities. Indicative of this yawning gap is his example of India's Ministry of Urban Affairs' 1999 Draft National Slum Policy which has no reference to the vulnerability to natural disaster of slum dwellers. Yet the Ministry's own documents record that 1% of India's total housing stock is destroyed by natural disasters every year (Sanderson, 2000, pp. 95–96). These constitute evidence of the complexity of the disaster-development environment.

Alongside this growing recognition of disaster development linkages, considerable separation still remains. Many humanitarian organizations have identified themselves as either

development- or disaster-focused. Indeed, professionals in one are sometimes hostile to those in the other, regarding the others' operations as disruptive to their own and sometimes finding the other's professional culture alien and even offensive. While some personnel remain dominantly in one or the other, most are now realizing that there is more that connects disaster and development than divides them. Disasters "turn back the development clock" (Sanderson, 2000, p. 95). Furthermore, it is increasingly common for academic courses related to disaster or development (which many newer members of staff in humanitarian organizations may have studied) to draw out the connections as a result of the growing recognition of the way disasters are a manifestation of failed development (Lewis, 1999).

THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

While "development" traditionally was seen as something to be carried out largely in developing countries, "sustainable development," coming out of the World Conference on Environment and Development 1987, has more recently become firmly embedded in the developed world's consciousness. In the present context, a significant research milestone, albeit with a U.S. focus, was the publication of Dennis Mileti's edited work, *Disasters by Design*. This reassessment of natural hazards placed the increasing losses from U.S. disasters at the door of short-sighted or ill-conceived development. Sustainable development is popularly seen as even more of a "good thing" than ordinary development. However, McEntire (1998a, 1999) and Aguirre (2002b) raise some concerns with the concept as it is applied to disasters, in particular the primacy given to the environment and its relative silence on disaster risk reduction.

Can *development* be sustainable? Cuny remarked in 1983 on the link between vulnerability and people's desire for modernity in which the least able to cope with disaster are those who have begun to change their socioeconomic status and left behind their less sophisticated but self-reliant societies (p. 4); how much more so in the context of processes of globalization which have advanced in the intervening years (Fordham, 2003; Wisner, 1999)? Cuny's observation concerning self-reliant societies, while still having analytical strength, appears strangely archaic in the context of globalization and regionalization which, through international/transnational institutions and market forces, are charged with overtaking the role of the nation state or society—"the standard unit of development" (Pieterse, 2001, p. 1). Yet, the undermining of the autonomy of the nation state has simultaneously reawakened interest at the level of smaller communal units. Community-based approaches have become the new norm in both disaster and development and the community is recognized as the locus of disaster response and disaster resilience (Dynes, 2005). Community-based approaches attract support from across the political spectrum, appealing (paradoxically) to both a radical activist sensibility as well as a neoliberal rejection of modernist grand development projects (Rapley, 2004, p. 353).

THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE LIVELIHOODS APPROACH AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

A useful progression in sustainable development thinking has been the livelihoods approach (see Ashley & Carney, 1999; Chambers & Conway, 1992; Sanderson, 2000). According to DFID (<http://www.livelihoods.org>), sustainable livelihoods are about putting people at the center of development which could be read as a rebalancing of development, less in favor of

macroeconomics and more in favor of the social. Sanderson argues that “sustainable livelihoods methodologies provide a valuable opportunity for combining disaster reduction and development interventions in one unifying approach.” (2000, p. 96). This approach views people in a vulnerability context as prone to various shocks and stresses, but also recognizes a range of poverty-reducing (and, by implication, disaster resilience creating) assets—in the form of different “capitals” of which social capital is one (see DFID’s Livelihoods Connect Web site). Although this approach has grown out of work on rural natural resources and food security (African drought-induced famine in particular) its utility is much wider and it is a valuable tool for linking poverty with disasters (Sanderson, 2000, p. 97); indeed, Woolcock and Narayan argue that social capital is the capital of the poor (2000, p. 240).

In the disasters context, while not referring to social capital as such, Berke et al. (1993) highlight the importance of horizontal integration between community/citizen groups and vertical integration between them and external governmental and other agencies in recovery after disaster. The language of social capital would call these horizontal and vertical networks “bonding” and “bridging” social capital respectively (see Woolcock & Narayan [2000, pp. 7–8] for more on this and, for its origins, Georg Simmel’s work on insiders and outsiders).

Nakagawa and Shaw (2004) have used social capital to examine post-disaster communities in Kobe, Japan and Gujarat, India. They conclude that the communities’ social capital and leadership were the most effective elements in enhancing collective action and disaster recovery. This analysis exemplifies that conceptual shift noted by Portes and Landolt whereby social capital is regarded as an attribute of the community (following Putnam), not as an attribute of the individual, as originally formulated by Bourdieu, Coleman and others (cited in Portes and Landolt, 1998, pp. 534–535). It is, however, the conceptualization that is most common in the more recent disaster and development literature discussed here.

While community-based approaches have perhaps now become the dominant paradigm in both disaster and development, communities can represent both inclusion and exclusion and thus cannot be regarded as an undiluted social good. Social capital must be recognized as also having a “downside” (e.g., group membership that enables privileged access to resources also bars others from the same assets; see Portes & Landolt, 1998, pp. 532–533). Further, social capital concepts are prone to overly simplistic readings that are reminiscent of the early inclusion of gender in development, characterized by the WID (Women In Development) approach which simply added “women” into the development mix and ignored the gendered social relations that were later conceptualized in the GAD (Gender And Development) approach. Social capital theory is thus open to abuse through its purely technical application to disaster and/or development field-study. Similarly, in policy making or programming it is just one of many tools or community attributes and “contrary to the expectations of some policymakers, social capital is not a substitute for the provision of credit, material infrastructure, and education” (Portes & Landolt, 1998, p. 547) nor is it a replacement for poor governance (see Woolcock & Narayan, 2000, referring to Tandler & Uphoff on pp. 234 and 238, respectively).

WHAT SHOULD RESEARCHERS IN DISASTER AND DEVELOPMENT STUDY AND HOW?

There is much to be learned from the interchange of ideas between the various disaster and development research and practitioner communities. For example, both disaster and development are highly *gendered domains* (see Mueller, 1991, p. 1 cited in Escobar, 1995, p. 180 regarding the development apparatus as male-dominated and world-dominating) but development work,

workers, and policymakers employed a gender lens far sooner and to greater effect than their equivalents in disaster (see Enarson & Morrow, 1998a; Morrow & Philips, 1999). Disaster practice and disaster scholarship has had to learn from development and this has meant the import of ideas from the global south into northern theory and practice. This has been responsible for some of the most fruitful advances in disaster and sustainable development thinking. There is much that still needs to be done in examining disasters and development through a gender lens and the gap in application of this approach to the developed, particularly European, milieu is significant.

As already outlined above, the *livelihoods approach* and *social capital* in particular are fruitful conceptual frameworks for the analysis of disaster and development in both developed and developing countries. The role of “livelihood relief”—which aims to support people’s economic development and not just provide static, potentially dependency-engendering, relief aid—is a newly emerging disaster response which could be explored in a developed world context also. So far it appears largely confined to India (see the All India Disaster Mitigation Institute Web site) but has wider currency and can be seen to have its beginnings in Cuny’s work in 1983. As yet, while practical application may be growing, there is little research and literature on the subject (Twigg, 2004).

Much more remains to be explored through social capital and its relationship to other capitals. Methodologically, a shared resource of research tools is available at the World Bank Social Capital Web site (<http://www.worldbank.org/socialcapital>). It is important to explore its “downside” in terms of exclusionary practices and negative, as well as the more widely trumpeted, positive benefits of “the community.” A review of the “community studies” literature would be beneficial, particularly as it met a significant critique because of its overly sympathetic portraits of localities (Bell & Newby, 1971, p. 55).

Much attention has been focused on large-scale disasters or catastrophes but less on *lower level impacts*, the conventional preserve of development. The cumulative damage of these chronic events that are never included in disaster statistics can be significant, and ultimately have a similarly negative development impact, especially in poor or marginalized communities (Hewitt, 1983b; Lavell, 1999). Although this challenges some of the core definitions of the disaster field, the extent to which unsolved problems of development were significant factors in disasters and lesser events is worthy of further exploration in a range of settings.

It is not just the subject of research (the “what”) but also the method (the “how”) that must be considered. Methodological approaches will be determined by the way the reality of disaster and development is understood. There has been a fundamental conflict between positivist and critical approaches: for the former, reality is observable and social facts can be explained and predicted. For the latter, reality is ideological and explanation must lead to social and political change. However, the breadth of the disaster and development terrain and the range of people with an interest in it are such that no single position can claim overall dominance, yet all have much to learn from the interchange of ideas.

CONCLUSION

More and more agencies are realizing the linkages and are crossing the disaster-development divide. They are being encouraged to do so by organizations such as the United Nations in many of its constitutive divisions, offices, programs, and funds (and the UNISDR in particular). Thus, many organizations formerly seen to be disaster agencies are now incorporating development work into their programs and activities. Similarly, development agencies are becoming

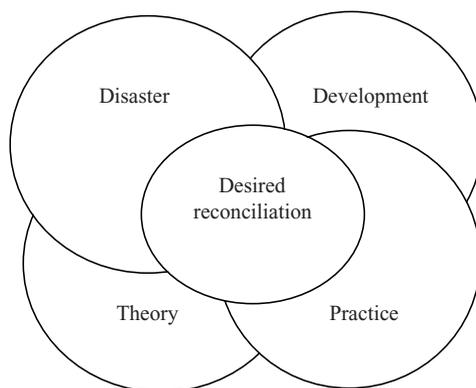


FIGURE 19.1. Desired reconciliation of disaster and development.

increasingly involved in disasters. The Millennium Development Goals (not notable for their attention to disasters) are not likely to be met by many countries and the country reports often refer to disasters as the major contributing cause (see MDGs Web site). There is thus a desired reconciliation of these different elements (see Fig. 19.1).

However, while it may be legitimate to argue that policy and so-called real world practice should bring together disaster and development, in research and scholarship the issue is not so clear-cut. There are fundamental differences between different research paradigms to which there is no simple technical solution such as more empirical evidence or a more elegant theoretical model to convince those of another disposition. The information deficit model (Irwin, 1995) is not sufficient to bridge this divide. It represents different—sometimes conflicting, sometimes complementary—worldviews and ideological positions. There is a politics inside disaster studies as well as outside in the subjects of the research. Within the academic sphere it represents, at its extreme, a clash between descriptive/explanatory and normative approaches; between the intentionally separated, and the inescapably linked, realms of fact and value. It is characterized respectively by the objective scientist as disinterested observer and the radical activist operating from a critical, action-oriented, perspective for whom, in Marxist terms, the purpose is not just to understand the world but to change it. At its less extreme it represents differing disciplinary traditions and professional expectations that place limits on the extent to which researchers can step outside conventional boundaries.

Pieterse has said: “Development is too complex to allow partial approaches to have their way” (2001, p. xii). The law of requisite variety would suggest that the complexity of the disaster-development nexus demands at least a degree of multidisciplinary and preferably interdisciplinary, and points to a necessary eclecticism in the field. However, each paradigm potentially brings its own particular contribution to knowledge and is therefore legitimate in its own right. While research and scholarship demand broad familiarity with the field(s), individual research outputs may not make all aspects explicit. These exclusions of what others regard as critical may stimulate further epistemological confrontation but arguably that is symptomatic of a dynamic research field. It is hard to see how a widespread move to the middle ground (with an inevitable withering of the more radical extremes) would necessarily improve either research output or social change.

Social capital theory is one possible unifying framework for the disparate interests of disaster and development, theory and practice. Woolcock and Narayan (2000) note how the

literature has embraced all the social science disciplines and offers researchers, policymakers, and practitioners opportunities for cooperation and dialogue regarded as crucial for both conceptual and operational advancement (pp. 228 and 242). Co-evolution with fruitful interchange using such a framework is one way to maintain the richness and diversity of the disaster and development fields while offering scope for cooperation.