



The circulation of risk governance. Crafting disaster management in South Africa.

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**Abstract:**

The paper aims at tracing the mechanisms of the development of the disaster management model in South African institutions, to explain its emergence at a particular time and its development through a “reactive chain” following its initial introduction. By doing so, the objective is to connect a national pattern of state building through defence and democratisation (part 1) with a process of internationalisation of disaster management. This connection happened throughout a series of encounters between the local and the global, between experts and policy-makers (part 2). The paper will finally argue that disaster management “inbreeding” is the mechanism through which the circulation of disaster risk governance is realised (part 3).

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## 1. Introduction

The world of disasters is going global<sup>1</sup>. Not only do they produce international consequences, but the way they are governed is increasingly shaped by common frameworks and governing tools. All big disaster, such as tsunami, earthquake, hurricane, attract a “flood” of international organisations, disaster management experts, NGOs who find in such crisis an opportunity for intervention<sup>2</sup>, deploying humanitarian assistance, implementing disaster and vulnerability reduction strategies, setting up early warning systems... But these events, popularized by the media, are just the tip of the iceberg; behind these interventions lies a whole world of “disaster management” and “disaster risk reduction<sup>3</sup>” policies, devices and knowledge, standardised and globalized by international organisations and epistemic communities<sup>4</sup>. This set of norms, concepts and tools has been heavily diffused since 2000, leading to a wave of policy isomorphism, and its components are now being used by institutions such as the European Community Civil Protection Mechanism, the French Civil Security, the NATO or may be found under the American concept of *all hazards management*<sup>5</sup>. However, the global policies designed and promoted by international organisations, such as the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR), target primarily countries from the South, as revealed by any of their publications, whose cover generally picture a vulnerable African or Asian in need of assistance. At first glance, disaster management thus seems a perfect case to illustrate the mechanisms of policy diffusion with this impressive international diffusion of a model across a wide number of countries and organisations. This diffusion is also characteristic of “global prescriptions<sup>6</sup>” to countries in the South, which, behind a developmental argument, is reminiscent of a neo-liberal credo to bypass states.

The literature on policy diffusion<sup>7</sup> and policy transfer<sup>8</sup> has recently scrutinized actors of transfer, modality of diffusion, causes and effects of transfer as a growing source of policy-making and state transformation. However, when considering the adoption of a global policy like disaster management by countries in the South, a series of pitfalls can be identified. Although great attention has been paid to the dynamics of appropriation and hybridization<sup>9</sup>, policy transfer remains paradoxically static insofar as it does not consider how a model of policy may evolve through time and circulation, as the adoption of a model in a country at a precise time may impact the

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<sup>1</sup> David Alexander, “Globalization of disaster: trends, problems and dilemmas,” *Journal of International Affairs* 59, no. 2 (2006): 1-22.

<sup>2</sup> David Ambrosetti and Yves Buchet de Neuilly, “Les organisations internationales au cœur des crises. Configurations empiriques et jeux d'acteurs,” *Cultures & Conflits* 75, no. 3 (2010): 7-14.

<sup>3</sup> As the choice of the exact term, “disaster management”, “disaster risk management” or “disaster risk reduction”, is subject to controversies in the field, I will use here the most common term in South Africa, “disaster management”. This is indeed an interesting example of how a global model is translated at the local level.

<sup>4</sup> Peter M. Haas, “Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination,” *International Organization* 46, no. 01 (1992): 1-35.

<sup>5</sup> Sandrine Revet, *Les organisations internationales et la gestion des risques et des catastrophes "naturelles"* (Paris: CERI, coll. Les études du CERI, num. 157, 2009).

<sup>6</sup> Yves Dezalay and Bryant Garth, *Global prescriptions: the production, exportation, and importation of a new legal orthodoxy* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002).

<sup>7</sup> Frank Dobbin, Beth Simmons, and Geoffrey Garrett, “The Global Diffusion of Public Policies: Social Construction, Coercion, Competition, or Learning?,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 33, no. 1 (2007): 449-472.

<sup>8</sup> David Dolowitz and David Marsh, “Who Learns What from Whom: a Review of the Policy Transfer Literature,” *Political Studies* 44, no. 2 (1996): 343-357.

<sup>9</sup> Eleanor Westney, *Imitation and Innovation: The Transfer of Western Organizational Patterns to Meiji Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987); Jean-François Bayart, *La greffe de l'État* (Paris: Karthala, 1996).

“global diffusion” in  $t+1$ . Secondly, it does not manage to fully grasp the multi-dimensionality of the process: in a policy, travel ideas, norms, specific management tools, but also experts into a wide number of organisations, states, events and situations. For example, in the case of disaster management, the field is structured by humanitarian and development experts, disaster scientists, military organisations; even the United Nation (UN) institution most specialised on disasters, the ISDR works as a system of partnerships with no less than 15 academic institutions, 29 non-governmental, 46 UN and 35 international organisations, and 60 networks. More substantially, the literature is quite focused on advanced economies, global “transfer agents”<sup>10</sup>, international organisations, which emphasizes the dynamics of the diffusion over local interpretation and interdependence between multiple levels. A revealing example is the volume by Evans on *Policy transfer in global perspective*<sup>11</sup>, which considers transfers between developed countries, from developed to developing but not the reverse, apart from a few references. Global models of diffusion are often “Western” designed. Yet, diffusion does not occur in an empty space, and necessitates conditions to happen<sup>12</sup>. Considering also the often-flawed process of implementation and appropriation, many have questioned the relevance of such mechanisms and the limits of policy transfer studies on the African continent<sup>13</sup>.

This paper will attempt to address some of these issues by exploring the dynamics and micro-politics of knowledge and policy circulation, which led to the development of “disaster management” in South Africa since 1994. “Disaster management” is understood here as the global model, institutionalised during the 1990s throughout international organisations, composed of a standardised body of policy knowledge and tools, aiming at managing the risks of disasters and reducing their impacts. In the wake of its democratisation, South Africa was led to adopt “disaster management” while reconfiguring the objects and modes of intervention of the South African state. Nowadays, South African disaster management policies are up-to-date with international standards and norms; civil servants and field officers make use of the latest international policy framework, the Hyogo Framework (2005)<sup>14</sup>. However, when asked about the origins of disaster management, the main actors in the field, academics and policy-makers, would claim that “they did it entirely by themselves.” And it is true indeed, that in this sector, no international coercion nor “big funding,” nor development projects, could be observed. Indeed, theories of voluntary compliance and legitimacy<sup>15</sup> may help to understand these developments but they do not account for the precise mechanisms and overlook the dynamics of knowledge production and circulation, which are at stake in the development of disaster management in South Africa.

Rather, in order to understand this puzzle, this paper will look at the connections between the worlds of local

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<sup>10</sup> Diane Stone, “Transfer agents and global networks in the transnationalization of policy,” *Journal of European Public Policy* 11, no. 3 (June 2004): 545-566.

<sup>11</sup> Mark Evans, ed., *Policy transfer in global perspective* (Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2004).

<sup>12</sup> David Strang and John W. Meyer, “Institutional conditions for diffusion,” *Theory and Society* 22, no. 4 (1993): 487-511.

<sup>13</sup> Dominique Darbon, ed., *La politique des modèles en Afrique : simulation, dépolitisation et appropriation* (Paris: Karthala, 2009).

<sup>14</sup> The Hyogo Framework for action was adopted in 2005 after the World Conference for Disaster Reduction and defines priorities and implementation guidelines for disaster reduction.

<sup>15</sup> Meyer, John W., and Elizabeth Boyle. 2002. “Modern Law as a Secularized and Global Model: Implications for the Sociology of Law.” Pp. 65-95 in *Global prescriptions: the production, exportation, and importation of a new legal orthodoxy*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

experts in the South, loci of translation<sup>16</sup>, and state policies, between internationalised brokers and local role-players. Following a tendency to focus on the “bricolage”<sup>17</sup> between the local and the global, I will however push the argument further by approaching mechanisms of circulation from “within”: understanding the dynamics of appropriation and institutionalisation inside a country may in turn help to understand the global mechanisms of diffusion, as the transformation of a specific policy field happens at different levels, local and “global” at the same time. My perspective here is to “de-localize” the analytical lens and examine the connections from below, from the vantage point of the local. In doing so, “lessons-drawing” from other disciplines more familiar with the study of post-colonial situations prove to be enlightening. First, historians of colonialism have long stressed the connectedness of social fields<sup>18</sup> – in opposition to global history – linking societies through complex and multiples relations while acknowledging patterns of domination. The point of this historical perspective is to put forward an analysis focused on connections that enables to bring the agency of societies and to embed policy transfer in a long history of external interventions, of which development policies from the 1960s are but one example. This focus on connections led to argue in favour of a de-centred history<sup>19</sup> in order to overcome the tendency to only consider Western domination, an argument which suggests shifting the focus from the diffusion of global policies to patterns of connection and embedding this global circulation within the historicity of states from the South. Secondly, following the shift in the anthropology of development from the study of institutions to the role of brokers and intermediaries<sup>20</sup> it matters to fully consider micro processes, actors and networks, following the circulation of the model so as to capture the multi-directionality of the process, the interlacing of the varieties of institutions, actors and process at stake.

The paper aims at tracing the mechanisms of the development of the disaster management model in South African institutions, to explain its emergence at a particular time and its development through a “reactive chain”<sup>21</sup> following its initial introduction. By doing so, the objective is to connect a national pattern of state building through defence and democratisation (part 1) with a process of internationalisation of disaster management. This connection happened throughout a series of encounters between the local and the global, between experts and policy-makers (part 2). The paper will finally argue that disaster management “inbreeding” is the mechanism through which the circulation of disaster risk governance is realised (part 3).

## 1. A national history of state building: defence, security and

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<sup>16</sup> Frederick Cooper and Randall Packard, eds., *International Development and the Social Sciences: Essays on the History and Politics of Knowledge* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

<sup>17</sup> Marion Fourcade and Joachim J. Savelsberg, “Global Processes, National Institutions, Local Bricolage: Shaping Law in an Era of Globalization,” *Law & Social Inquiry* 31, no. 3 (2006): 513-519.

<sup>18</sup> Frederick Cooper, “What is the Concept of Globalization Good for? An African Historian's Perspective,” *African Affairs* 100, no. 399 (2001): 189-213; Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Explorations in Connected History: From the Tagus to the Ganges* (Oxford University Press, USA, 2005).

<sup>19</sup> Christopher Bayly, *The birth of the modern world, 1780-1914: global connections and comparisons* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2004); Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: postcolonial thought and historical difference* (Princeton University Press, 2000).

<sup>20</sup> David Lewis and David Mosse, *Development brokers and translators: the ethnography of aid and agencies* (Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press, 2006). Indeed, the role of intermediaries has been long underlined in the social sciences. The interest of the argument here is rather to locate intermediaries within the politics of globalization in a post-colonial setting

<sup>21</sup> James Mahoney, “Path dependence in historical sociology,” *Theory and Society* 29, no. 4 (2000): 507-548.

## democratisation

The collectivisation of the defence of citizens against external attacks or disasters is intrinsically linked to state building<sup>22</sup>. Understanding how a state comes to care for “disaster” entails looking into the development of this state protection from major events. The purpose of this part, focused on South Africa, is to embed the internationalisation of disaster risk management within an historical national pattern. This story however goes beyond the case of South Africa as many countries have also undergone such transitions from assistance to risk government<sup>23</sup>. In South Africa, “disaster management” finds its roots in “civil defence”<sup>24</sup>, a state function that was developed to protect white citizens during apartheid times and that would have to be reformed with the democratisation of the country at the beginning of the 1990s.

### ***The emergence of disaster assistance in South African institutions***

The organisation of the protection of civilians by the state in case of emergency is a fairly recent development in the history of South Africa. Although the origins of a state-organised “Civilian Protection Service” dates back from World War Two and the preparation for warfare and possible aerial bombings, the function remained rather moribund for more than two decades despite various unsuccessful attempts to organise a Civil Defence division within the Department of Justice and the creation of specific disaster relief funds. The idea that the state had to provide assistance to its citizens and organise response to disasters was institutionalised much later, when in the 1970s, facing an intensifying internal conflict<sup>25</sup>, the apartheid government realised that a « new legislation for civil protection in a time of disaster or internal riots had been found essential »<sup>26</sup>. In 1977, one year after the Soweto uprising, a new Civil Defence Act established the function within the realm of local government with the goal of:

« [taking] measures other than measures taken under the Public Safety Act, 1954, the Defence Act, 1957, or the Police Act, for the purpose of providing the Republic and its inhabitants with regard to a state of emergency with the greatest possible measure of protection and assistance; and combating in the most effective manner civilian disruption during a state of emergency.”<sup>27</sup>

The development of civil defence was characterised by two main features. Firstly, despite the transfer of the function at the local level and its definition as a non combative force, civil defence was militarized as a component

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<sup>22</sup> Abram de Swaan, *In care of the state: health care, education, and welfare in Europe and the USA in the modern era* (Cambridge, U.K.: Polity Press, 1988).

<sup>23</sup> For example: Canada, Nicaragua. Cf. David Alexander, “From civil defence to civil protection – and back again,” *Disaster Prevention and Management* 11, no. 3 (2002): 209 - 213.

<sup>24</sup> Internationally, the activity understood under the term civil defence would rather correspond to civil security or civil protection as the defence from “enemy action” was monopolised by security forces in their fight against anti-apartheid movement, and civil defence was on the contrary non combative. Indeed the ambiguity of the nature of defence in South Africa is intimately linked with the politics of Apartheid and the fact that the “enemy” for the state was within its own population (political opponents or more generally, Blacks, who were not considered as full citizens).

<sup>25</sup> From the 1976 protest, South Africa saw an upsurge in popular and violent protests, culminating in 1985 with a declaration of a state of emergency.

<sup>26</sup> P.W. Botha, the then Defence Minister; quoted in: De Villiers Smit, Andre. *South African Civil Defence Organisations and Administration with particular reference to the Cape Peninsula*. Master thesis in Public Administration, University of Cape Town, 1981.

<sup>27</sup> National Archives of South Africa, TES 1994 1/199 and 201 – the quote is from the 1966 Civil Defence Act that was re-used in the 1977 Act.

of the “national security management system”<sup>28</sup>, many of its members came from the security sector and it was under the control of the military apparatus. In the same vein, the first course in civil defence created in 1986, was located in an Institute of Criminology (at the University of South Africa)<sup>29</sup>, yet another indication of the focus on security issues. The second related characteristic, its politicization, was paradoxically both the rationale and the main limitation to the development of civil defence. Civil defence was designed for the protection of citizens, but under apartheid, only Whites were considered to be full citizens of the state. Thus, civil defence used to be associated with civil unrest and the protection of Whites from “enemy attacks” from political opponents, which consequently excluded the major part of the population – although civil defence organisations also existed in Coloured and in some Black areas, it was either very limited<sup>30</sup> or under high security control. In the 1980s, civil defence was concerned with fighting political “terrorism” from the African National Congress (ANC). Because of these limitations, civil defence remained a small and weak government organisation. It consisted of coordinating structures with at best, a few officers, a “command and control” room; most of its capacity actually coming from volunteers (or self-organised commandos in rural areas). This very limited capacity was part of a “take care of yourself” policy where citizens bore the responsibility to protect themselves, and assistance to victims of disasters relied mostly on humanitarian organisations such as the Red Cross, or the army whenever the capacities of local government were exceeded. This limitation of assistance in times of disaster relates to the “backlash”<sup>31</sup> of the welfare state in the 1930s that led to insist on the role of churches and humanitarian organisations in the provision of social assistance. The development of disaster assistance was thus deeply embedded in a national history of state building in a specific colonial context.

Although the rationale for developing civil defence was profoundly motivated by the historical context and the logic of the apartheid state, it was never developed independently from the rest of the world. The very first “civil protection services” were based on the British model of civil protection. Each institutional development was preceded or followed by international connections, which were used as a way to ensure that the South African state would keep its modern standards, or at least pretend to. The South African government paid great attention to follow up developments of civil protection in the Western world, through the International Association for Civil Protection or diplomatic relations. For example, in 1963, the Department of Foreign Affairs, with a view to preparing a new Act, undertook a study of the progress of civil protection, getting copies of legislation from New Zealand, Canada, United Kingdom, Switzerland and the United States<sup>32</sup>. Connections with the international world of rescue and civil security were also made by professionals themselves, as in the 1980s when, an officer from the City of Cape Town travelled to the United Kingdom, the United States and Israel with the purpose of studying legislation and emergency planning at the moment when, precisely, civil defence was starting to develop at the

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<sup>28</sup> Annette Seegers, “South Africa's National Security Management System, 1972-90,” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 29, no. 2 (1991): 253-273.

<sup>29</sup> Van der Westhuizen, Jacob, ed. *Management course in Civil Defence*. 2 vols. Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1986.

<sup>30</sup> In Soweto, there was one civil defence officer by the end of the 1980s – for an inaccurate estimation of 2 million inhabitants.

<sup>31</sup> Jeremy Seekings, “The Carnegie Commission and the Backlash against Welfare State-Building in South Africa, 1931–1937,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 34, no. 3 (2008): 515.

<sup>32</sup> National Archives of South Africa, BTS 9/24 vol. 1 and AJ 1963.

local level<sup>33</sup>.

Looking elsewhere for ideas would thus not be specific to the forthcoming change and the introduction of an international “disaster management” model, as legislative imitation was already a source of policy-making and implementation. However, as the political context changed with democratisation, two major differences would change the relationship with the international arena: firstly, the political objectives of the new democracy would have to meet international norms and secondly, the end of a despised regime would attract a great deal of expertise to participate in the transformation of the country.

### ***Democratisation and the transformation of protection***

After the release of Nelson Mandela in 1990, formal negotiations for a democratic transition were opened in 1991 and led to a negotiated transition, culminating in the first democratic elections in 1994. What did democratisation entail for civil defence? How much did the political changes impact on the transformation of the sector? Although democratisation sets a particular context for institutional change, the debate is too vast to be detailed here and will be left aside. What is of interest here is how much of the “extrication” path<sup>34</sup> from previous institutions is due to external factors? What made this situation specific for a transition within a specific sector was notably the opening of the political game following the re-distribution of power that enabled a variety of actors to participate in the transformation process, in particular experts from outside.

Another particularity of the South African transition is the negotiated settlement that made the institutional change progressive and the result of compromises. As part of the old administration remained, it also had to participate in the transformation in progress, which pushed for an unlikely change from within. The first element is the demilitarization, which was initiated from within the sector: the name was changed to Civil Protection in 1990 in order to depart from the association with the Defence Force, although it was rather unsuccessful as the new name was still too similar to another structure in the National Intelligence Bureau<sup>35</sup>. However the lengthy debates within the profession from the mid-1980s<sup>36</sup> suggests that the demilitarization was as much as an issue for the autonomy of the profession, which pursued its own logic.

But these marginal changes would not prove sufficient for civil defence. Mostly, democratisation meant a complete transformation of its goals: as a democratic government would be responsible for all the citizens on South African territory, the frame of protection had to be extended to all the population so as to include the Black population. But extending the scope of action also meant changing the object of interventions: because of the social inequalities built by colonialism and apartheid, Black communities were facing more risks of disasters than most Whites and were more vulnerable to the consequences of disasters. An enlightening example of this necessary shift is the lack of awareness of the reality of disasters in South until the 1980s. A survival brochure from 1965<sup>37</sup> designed to

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<sup>33</sup> Private archives, disaster manager, City of Cape Town.

<sup>34</sup> David Stark and László Bruszt, *Postsocialist pathways: transforming politics and property in East Central Europe* (Cambridge University Press, 1998).

<sup>35</sup> And there is much to believe indeed that the intelligence services were present in civil defence organisations.

<sup>36</sup> National Archives of South Africa, A343 196 I2/8 ; A3433 193 I.1/27 (vol1)

<sup>37</sup> National Archives of South Africa, TES 1993 1/199 and 201.



educate White citizens to civil defence stated that: “Natural disasters, such as earthquakes, tornadoes and floods, fortunately do not frequently occur in our country”; which was a deeply flawed representation of the South African territory as floods and other disasters occurred frequently in South Africa, but mostly in poor, black areas. But, as an “old guy” who entered the profession in the 1980s put it when asked about disasters in the townships: “It was their problem, they were on their own. We didn’t deal with all those squatters”<sup>38</sup>. Democratisation thus meant recognising the need to protect “vulnerable” communities, and changing the object of interventions from bombings to fire and floods in the townships, a change that would connect quite well with the international paradigm shift towards prevention and the focus on vulnerabilities. This (late) recognition really provided another important rationale for policy change: a former government expert, after having worked all his life at the Department of water to research floods in rural areas in relation with agriculture and dams, realised in 1992, when for the first time of his life, he put a foot in Alexandra, a township near Johannesburg, the wrenching effects of urban floods on informal settlements, which led him to convert his expertise to the cause of disaster management, actively participate in policy reform and become a member of the scientific committee of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction.

Consequently, democratisation was just one enabling factor amongst others as suggested by one of the actors at the heart of the changes, which took place in civil defence from 1990:

“Regarding your question, I am of the opinion that there was a number of influences for the changes that took place, and yes, I am sure that the apartheid connotation had some influence, the awareness of sustained exposure of previous disadvantaged communities to a number of hazards also had an influence, but I think South Africa’s active participation in the IDNDR [*International Decade for the Reduction of Natural Disaster*], which commenced in 1990, and the awareness of the positive aspects of a risk reduction approach advocated during this period (within and from outside the country), had the bigger influence on the approach to Disaster Management in South Africa. I think the positive “spin-off” for sustainable development was so apparent for all concerned that it just made “common sense” to take this approach.” *Former Chief civil defence officer, and later onwards, head of the Disaster Management Centre – personal email, May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2010.*

This quote precisely illustrates the point of this “non-connected” part of the story of the circulation of disaster management: although the following encounter with the international world of disaster management will be of much importance in the development of disaster management in South Africa, this adoption would work precisely because it intersected with internal transformations – the professionalization, the democratisation. The following part will aim at explaining how risk and disaster prevention came to make “common sense” for a civil defence officer and through which channels; international influences played an important role.

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<sup>38</sup> Interview, disaster manager, October 2009

## **2. Disaster management encounters: transnationalisation, expertise and policy reform**

Just one month after the first democratic elections in South Africa in April 1994, the first World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction was held in Yokohama, Japan. Three South Africans delegates were present: two government representatives (from the Weather Bureau and the Department of Agriculture) and one representative of “civil society”, a leading scientist on natural disasters, who stated that:

“The participation in the conference was valuable to South Africa in that the objectives of IDNDR [*International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction*] fit in well with the policy of Reconstruction and Development [*ANC policy planning for 1994 - 1996*]. The major objective of IDNDR is to reduce vulnerability to natural phenomena and developing warning systems. The least developed portion of any population tend to be the most vulnerable”<sup>39</sup>

This event, an opportune coincidence, sets the stage for the following development of disaster management: a temporal connection of two historical dynamics, the South African democratisation and the internationalisation of disaster management, an almost improbable affinity in policy objectives between a then socialist party and a global doxa, a position of power for experts, able to write governmental reports. As argued, focusing on the connections rather than the diffusion allows the observation of the concurrent development of a global disaster management policy and its internal adoption in South Africa. After a detour by the internationalisation of disaster management, I will show how these connections happen and produce their effects mostly at the local level by shedding the light on the critical junctures during the transition so as to explain how disaster management was brought in and developed in South Africa.

### ***A world of disasters: the transnationalisation of disaster management in the 1990s***

Disaster management as a body of knowledge finds its origins, in the 1970s, in a heterogeneous field of studies that focused its attention on disasters, their management, their causes and the prevention of their risk. These developments occurred across various academic disciplines, such as geography<sup>40</sup> and engineering sciences, and also within humanitarian expertise<sup>41</sup>. They were later structured in a field of disaster studies. Disaster management was institutionalised during the 1990s with the United Nations International Decade for the Reduction of Natural Disasters (IDNDR), which put disasters on the global agenda and advocated for policy change across the globe. The creation in 1999 of a UN body specialized in disasters, the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR), was the starting point of a new fad of disaster management across international organisations through competitive imitation and the circulation of experts<sup>42</sup>. Today, most international organisations have adopted disaster

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<sup>39</sup> “Report on participation at the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction by a South African delegation”, SADRA archives, University of South Africa (private documents).

<sup>40</sup> See for example: Ben Wisner, Phil O’Keefe, and Ken Westgate, “Global systems and local disasters: the untapped power of peoples’ science,” *Disasters* 1, no. 1 (1977): 47-57.

<sup>41</sup> Frederick C. Cuny, *Disasters and Development* (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 1983).

<sup>42</sup> Revet, *Les organisations internationales et la gestion des risques et des catastrophes "naturelles"*.

management programmes, as did the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the World Bank or the Davos Economic Forum, etc. The spread of disaster risk management relies on “global knowledge networks”<sup>43</sup> and epistemic communities, linking “local” and “global” environment. Exemplifying these interactions between states, international organisations and experts, is one of the “Bibles” of the field, a highly cited book<sup>44</sup>, written by prominent academics, also contributors of international UN policy documents, which serves as a handbook to train professionals and funds, with its royalties, disaster reduction networks in the South (including one in Southern Africa).

Disaster management was not only institutionalised globally but also heavily standardised and can be characterised by the following features<sup>45</sup>. It promotes a shift from short-sight reaction to long-term prevention, in correlation with a new focus on risks analysis, prevention and reduction. Following from this, the vulnerabilities of societies was acknowledged, and consequently the fact that disasters are preventable by developing societies so as to reduce their vulnerabilities. This disaster risk reduction perspective gives a developmental tone to disaster management, which induces a fundamental tension with emergency interventions. The extension of the scope of disasters to risks led to a “multi-hazard” approach, which gave birth to a continuum of risks, vulnerabilities and disasters. Consequently disaster management potentially applies to any kind threats, encompassing “disasters caused by hazards of natural origin and related environmental and technological hazards and risks”<sup>46</sup>, to which social disasters, epidemics, conflicts are another extension of the model<sup>47</sup>. These developments are intimately linked with transformations of security notions and state interventions, connecting with the focus on human security rather than state security as well as a global security approach also advocating for a multi-threat perspective<sup>48</sup>. Finally, this intellectual apparatus relies heavily on science, and research informs disaster management techniques and tools, rendering the disaster knowledge authoritative to the states because of its alleged universal and neutral technicality, supported by social science practitioners and the “independent” expertise provided by the international organisations<sup>49</sup>.

This development of a risk approach to disasters seems at first sight far away from the defence perspective of the South African organisations dealing with disasters. Therefore, how did these transformations in disaster management models eventually connected with the South African context?

### **1992-94, the disaster connexion**

The “disaster connection” designates the moment when the South African context of civil defence connected with

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<sup>43</sup> Diane Stone and Simon Maxwell, eds., *Global knowledge networks and international development* (London: Routledge, 2005).

<sup>44</sup> Piers Blaikie et al., *At Risk: Natural Hazards, People's Vulnerability and Disasters* (London: Routledge, 1994).

<sup>45</sup> Of course, these features entail more tensions and contradictions than the simplified version presented here, and present divergence between countries, organisations and networks in the disaster management field.

<sup>46</sup> Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 ; <http://www.unisdr.org/eng/hfa/hfa.htm#q2>

<sup>47</sup> Mark Pelling and Benjamin Wisner, *Disaster risk reduction: Cases from Urban Africa* (London: Earthscan, 2009).

<sup>48</sup> Sandrine Revet, “Vivre dans un monde plus sûr”. Catastrophes “naturelles” et sécurité “globale,” *Cultures & Conflicts* 75, no. 3 (2010).

<sup>49</sup> Michael Barnett and Martha Finnemore, *Rules For The World: International Organizations In Global Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004).

the parallel process of internationalisation of disaster management. But this moment itself is made of multiple connections: the juncture was made during a disaster situation (a drought) that, as a crisis is a specific situation which allows connections between different sectors, organisations, worlds that would necessarily happened otherwise<sup>50</sup>. The transition can be analysed as a “critical juncture”<sup>51</sup>, a moment that set the institutional trajectory and defined conditions and possibilities of “extrication”<sup>52</sup> from the civil defence tradition. It was therefore during these particular events that the adoption of the disaster management model was secured through a connection between experts and political elites, which in turn led to re-shaping political institutions.

#### *A natural disaster, a crisis and the circulation of experts*

In 1992, Southern Africa faced an intense drought, creating a humanitarian emergency situation, which brought to the region international organisations<sup>53</sup>. Although the magnitude of this natural disaster was exceptional, leading to an important food crisis<sup>54</sup>, it was rather the as much exceptional political context that enabled the disaster connection. Indeed, the transition in South Africa was beginning to open up the political space and made it possible to reunite within a “national drought forum” a variety of stakeholders who, because of political divisions, could not have been brought together before: government, farmers, local NGOs, communities, experts, political activists and international humanitarian organisations. This contingent event enabled a diffusion of expertise on disaster, as ideas could circulate between spheres that before were separated. On the one hand, it brought the attention of scientists and experts on the situation of disaster. Amongst these were notably, one South African drought specialist, a geographer with a specific interest in vulnerabilities, a flood expert, professor in a civil engineering department and a humanitarian expert from the Red Cross. All of them would later be involved both in the policy process and in international networks of disaster management. On the other hand, it attracted political actors, who were then preparing the transition. It was notably at this occasion that a high profile ANC activist, Ms JL, a member of the negotiation team at the Commission for Democratic South Africa and a future Member of Parliament, would familiarise herself with disaster management issues and models. This 1992 drought was the actual encounter during which the international disaster management model connected with the democratic project as in 1994, acknowledging the role of human societies in producing vulnerabilities, was a highly political critique and recognition of the role of the apartheid state in producing the state of poverty of most Black communities. Besides personal connections, the developmental project of disaster risk reduction fitted thus well the political perspectives of the ANC.

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<sup>50</sup> Michel Dobry, *Sociologie des crises politiques, La dynamique des mobilisations multisectorielles.*, 1er ed. (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2009).

<sup>51</sup> Ruth Berins Collier and David Collier, *Shaping the Political Arena: Critical Junctures, the Labor Movement, and Regime Dynamics in Latin America* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991); Michel Dobry, “Les voies incertaines de la transitologie : choix stratégiques, séquences historiques, bifurcations et processus de path dependence,” *Revue française de science politique* 50, no. 4 (2000): 585-614.

<sup>52</sup> David Stark and László Bruszt, *Postsocialist pathways: transforming politics and property in East Central Europe* (Cambridge University Press, 1998).

<sup>53</sup> Ailsa Holloway, “Drought emergency, yes...drought disaster, no: Southern Africa 1991-93,” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 14, no. 1 (2000): 254-276.

<sup>54</sup> Coleen Vogel and J. H. Drummond, “Dimensions of drought: South African case studies,” *GeoJournal* 30, no. 1 (1993): 93-98.

If the drought was a contingency event, time mattered<sup>55</sup> here as it locked in the ability to change within specific actors and organisations before the actual transition. So, that when a big flood devastated the Cape Flats in June 1994 and provided a motivation for legislative change<sup>56</sup>, the Department of Constitutional Development launched the legislative reform, stakeholders were already involved and policy documents ready. Even if a political change was in the making, the drought probably opened up more political actors to international influences than what would have happened otherwise. It created a space for ensuring a strong connection between actors who would then translate disaster management into the South African institutions so as to reform civil defence. In this sense, it provided a new institutional path.

#### *Advocating for disaster management in a time of transition*

After having become acquainted to disaster management during her participation to the National Drought Forum, Ms JL, the high-profile ANC member decided to set up a Southern Africa Disaster Relief Agency (SADRA) with the goal of “linking organisations, lobbying, mobilising resources”<sup>57</sup> so as to implement disaster management in the future South African political space. In the critical juncture of transition, the purpose of such an organisation was to link various stakeholders in civil defence, committed to political change, in order to prepare the forthcoming political change and secure positions, models, policy before the advent of the new democratic regime. Also, the terms of the democratic negotiations, of which she was part, entailed compromising with the former administration. Thus, SADRA was also about connecting different actors in civil defence as varied as military experts and community activists from Soweto in order to mobilise and convince of the legitimacy of the political change brought by the ANC. SADRA pursued these political objectives primarily through the organisation of workshops: meetings consisted in presentations and discussions of disaster management with various stakeholders, community activists, NGOs, government officials, experts and professionals. Many of the people involved in the National Drought Forum were also present, including experts and scientists, whose role was to explain what disaster management was about and its interest for the democratic South Africa yet to come. These workshops worked as a sort of shadow government structure to prepare policy documents for the transition and to organise the representation of South Africa at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction.

“It was in the 1990’s and the legitimacy of the apartheid government was obviously not accepted, but there was no democratic government yet, so there was a space that I think SADRA was able to fill by becoming the convening structure for the disaster management decade. The idea of SADRA was to enable people to start looking at how the function of disaster management should be brought here and to firstly, engage with each other around solutions and then secondly, the idea was to develop those solutions and pursue them. But of course, once there was an indication that a democratic government was willing to assume its responsibilities in this regard, the need for an organization outside government to facilitate the process fell.” *Interview with Ms. JL. ANC activist, founder of SADRA, December 2009.*

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<sup>55</sup> Paul Pierson, “Not Just What, but When: Timing and Sequence in Political Processes,” *Studies in American Political Development* 14, no. 01 (2000): 72-92.

<sup>56</sup> Republic of South Africa, *Green Paper on Disaster Management*, 1998.

<sup>57</sup> Sources: SADRA archives, private record, University of South Africa.

In those meetings and organisations, the connection with the international arena happened through various channels. Firstly, the use of external knowledge allowed to partly depoliticize the institutional change and give legitimacy to the newcomers<sup>58</sup>. For example, during interviews, senior managers coming from the former civil defence would regularly pretend that the change towards disaster management had happened in order to keep up with international development, erasing most of the opposition then showed and the difficulties of transition; which underlines the power of the international script. Secondly, not only were present in SADRA's meeting the above experts, local intermediaries, but also, a prominent disaster international expert: Kenneth Westgate, a former humanitarian, leader in the field of disaster studies<sup>59</sup>, and then, director of the Cranfield Disaster Management Centre in the United Kingdom, who regularly came down to South Africa during those years. His great expertise and international legitimacy played an important role in convincing people of the interest of disaster management.

These political objectives were pursued through the development of disaster management knowledge as a tool for change, reinforcing and securing the connections with the international world of disaster reduction and management. One of SADRA's main activity was indeed to set up a training programme in disaster management in partnership with a technical university, Technikon SA. This training programme was a politicized bureaucratic driver of transformation through the rationalisation of the training of civil servants, which was part of the ANC policy of reorienting the state towards development<sup>60</sup>. The Technikon programme was set as a neutral "front" for advocating political change:

"I think we were the front for what actually they [SADRA] wanted to do, to implement disaster management. This is what we did, negotiate with government, professionals. We were very involved in drafting the guidelines for committees, for policies. Slowly we got other people involved, that's why we had all these conferences to get people's buy-in and explain." *Interview with a former disaster management lecturer at Technikon SA (UNISA), November 2009.*

However, if the motivations for creating this programme were firstly and mostly drawn from the South African political context of transition, a consequence was that it reinforced the connections with international sources of disaster management. Indeed, Kenneth Westgate, the international informant of SADRA, in his capacity of director of the Cranfield Disaster Management Centre, played a great role in shaping the Technikon programme, as this UK based Disaster Management Centre was<sup>61</sup> the implementing partner for the UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) Disaster Management Training Programme (DMTP)<sup>61</sup>. This programme, produced in 1992 as the first UN disaster management handbook, was integrally adopted at the Technikon SA programme. Moreover, several persons identified as possible experts and lecturers were sent for a six

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<sup>58</sup> John W. Meyer and Elizabeth Boyle, "Modern Law as a Secularized and Global Model: Implications for the Sociology of Law," in *Global prescriptions: the production, exportation, and importation of a new legal orthodoxy* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 65-95.

<sup>59</sup> He was notably a co-author of an important paper in disaster studies, a founding manifesto, published in the first issue of the *Disaster* journal: Wisner B., O'Keefe P., Westgate K., "Global systems and local disasters : the untapped power of peoples' science" *Disasters*, 1(1), 1977, pp. 47-57.

<sup>60</sup> Louis A. Picard, *The state of the state: institutional transformation, capacity and political change in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2005), pp. 200-216.

<sup>61</sup> The UNDP – DMTP was based on the guidelines developed by the UN Disaster Relief Organisation (the first UN agency specialised on disasters, see Revet, 2010 *op.cit.*), in partnership with the University of Wisconsin and disasters experts such as Fred Cuny, a radical disaster specialist, author of a famous *Disasters and Development* (1983).

months training course at Cranfield through a funding from the British government.

The transition was thus an important part of the critical juncture which led to disaster management, but it actually mostly created the conditions to stabilise and to develop disaster management from within rather than it imported a model which was already present thanks to the preceding encounters. Circulation of disaster risk management was realised through these connections and their interaction with the politics of the transition. But once connections were made, disaster management in South Africa would rather led its own development.

### ***The institutionalisation of disaster management in political institutions***

The final encounter is the one, which led to the stabilisation of disaster management within the South African institutions through a lengthy process of legislative reform. A series of consultations and reports led step by step to a Green Paper in 1997, a White Paper in 1999 and a Disaster Management Act in 2003. The final act reveals a translation of the language of the shift to risk reduction, even if it was with some limitations and differences due to some internal political and administrative resistance. For example, the term disaster management was preferred to the international version, disaster risk reduction as the “old guys” were still focused on emergency interventions rather than prevention :

<p><b>Disaster Management – South Africa</b>                  A continuous and integrated multi-sectoral, multi-disciplinary process of planning and implementation of measures aimed at (a) <i>preventing or reducing the risk of disasters</i>; (b) <i>mitigating</i> the severity or consequences of disasters; (c) <i>emergency preparedness</i>; (d) a rapid and effective <i>response</i> to disasters; and (e) post-disaster <i>recovery</i> and <i>rehabilitation</i>.</p>	<p><b>Disaster reduction - (ISDR, <i>Living with risk</i>, 2003)</b>                  The systematic development and application of policies, strategies and practices to minimise vulnerabilities and <i>disaster risks</i> throughout a society, to avoid (<i>prevention</i>) or to limit (<i>mitigation</i> and <i>preparedness</i>) adverse impact of hazards, within the broad context of sustainable development.  <b>Emergency management</b> : The organisation, management of resources and responsibilities for dealing with all aspects of emergencies, in particularly <i>preparedness</i>, <i>response</i> and <i>rehabilitation</i>.</p>
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The resemblance between the two texts underlines the infusion of the international vocabulary within local institutions, a globalism that played a role in many other part of the South Africa institutional transformation and most notably the Constitution<sup>62</sup>. However, if the legitimization of the legislation through global expertise was an important factor, it does not account for the particular mechanisms of translation and the manner in which stakeholders were convinced of the relevance of the model. Here again, local experts played an important role as “transfer agents”<sup>63</sup>. Apart from representatives from government departments, the drafting team of these texts was controlled by the same political activist who had set up SADRA, and the experts who then took a leading role in writing the Act. The most active of these was the humanitarian expert from the Red Cross, Ms AH., a disaster adviser during the 1992 drought. Originally from New Zealand, she received a PhD in public health in the United States and then worked for many international organisations across the planet; in particular, she participated in the World Health Organisation's contribution for the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction's first report in 1989. As a global actor with an authoritative knowledge in the field, she participated to the main UN reports in

<sup>62</sup> Heinz Klug, *Constituting democracy: law, globalism and South Africa's Political Reconstruction* (Cambridge University Press, 2000).

<sup>63</sup> Diane Stone, “Transfer agents and global networks in the transnationalization of policy,” *Journal of European Public Policy* 11, no. 3 (June 2004): 545-566.

disaster reduction<sup>64</sup>. She settled in South Africa, where she founded a Disaster Management Programme in a leading South African university, bringing along important expertise, standardised practices and at the same time, developing disaster knowledge specific to South Africa.

Nevertheless, the relationship with the “global” was not a one-dimensional importation of models and tools, as hoped Yunus Carrim, Chairperson of the Provincial and Local Government Portfolio committee, when promoting the Disaster Management Bill in Parliament:

“There can surely be very few countries in the world that have such good definitions of both disaster and disaster management. I hope this will serve as a guide, not just to other countries in the developing world, but to those in the advanced and industrialised world too.” *Republic of South Africa, Debates of the National Assembly of 2002, vol.54 – 7564.*

The declaration may seem over optimistic, however it was far from being unrealistic, and does reveal the complexity of connections with “globalization”. Because of the insertion of local experts within global networks of expertise, not only did the South African Disaster Management Act pre-date the Hyogo Framework for Action, but it was also set as an international best practice for being a “path-breaking example of national legislation that promotes disaster risk reduction”<sup>65</sup>. The same experts who had taken a great role in crafting South Africa's law, developed a methodology to “mainstream” disaster management into local legislation drawing from the South African case guidelines for legislative reform.

This part has shown the role of networks and experts and how these connections that happened through various encounters led to the development of disaster management in South Africa. The adoption of a global model is realised within an historical pattern of transition and is channelled mainly through the role of local experts. However, the preceding case of the translation of the disaster management doxa into the South African context suggested that disaster management was not only adapted but followed its own track so as to be re-diffused internationally. This was only possible thanks to its local inbreeding.

### **3. Disaster Management inbreeding: South Africa at the crossroads**

In showing the connected and parallel developments following the “disaster management encounters”, the concept of “inbreeding” enables us to seize the intersection of policies, international and local and the connected development of local and global. By focusing on the institutionalisation from within, the purpose is to show how the global circulation of disaster management relies on a development from within. The international expansion of the model is realised when it leads to imbue the local context with a disaster knowledge, which then follows its own logic, and is eventually re-circulated elsewhere. Development of disaster management at the local and global

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<sup>64</sup> United Nations Development Programme, *A Global Report: Reducing Disaster Risk, A Challenge for Development*. (New York, 2004); International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, *Living with Risk. A global review of disaster reduction initiatives* (Genève: United Nations, 2002).

<sup>65</sup> Mark Pelling and Ailsa Holloway, *Legislation for mainstreaming disaster risk reduction* (Teddington: Tearfund, 2006).



levels is thus inter-connected. In this process, two related mechanisms are at stake: a collective learning within the state and the stabilisation and development of expertise in an academic environment. This institutionalisation of disaster management both implies and leads to its re-circulation from South Africa to the rest of the world.

## Crafting a risk government

While changing, political institutions, organisations and practitioners of civil protection within government were progressively reformed. Although this process was not without difficulties and is deeply embedded in the institutional trajectory of the South African state, the focus will rather be here on which elements of disaster management were translated within organisations at the local level, and through which drivers they were appropriated by civil servants.

The first mechanisms of diffusion of disaster management within the state are similar to those mentioned above: a series of connections and collective learning. As the profession was then quite small, actors were very much interconnected and leading actors in the profession and in local government were closely involved in the legislative process. Having been acquainted with disaster management they would afterwards replicate the knowledge transfer in their local institutions. The City of Cape Town Disaster Management Centre organised thus training workshops as early as 1994, based on the UNDP Disaster Management Training modules<sup>66</sup>. The professional association, the Disaster Management Association of South Africa, also played an active role of transforming the profession through workshops, an annual conference and training activities based on disaster management in an international perspective – as an acknowledgement of this, Kenneth Westgate became the first international honorary member of the association.

A second mechanism of inbreeding is the actual organisational transformation. The translation of the Act at the local level entails creating a function (disaster management centre) and re-orienting emergency planning towards disaster management. Although this translation is still very much in progress in many provinces and local municipalities<sup>67</sup> due to resources and skill constraints<sup>68</sup>, a process of formal diffusion is taking place. In the Western Cape, the development of the provincial disaster management centre led to structure the organisation according to the “disaster continuum”, the model that lies behind the global disaster management doxa. In this perspective, disasters are conceptualised as a continuum between disaster events and disaster risks; consequently disaster management is designed as a cycle of interventions from prevention (reduction of vulnerabilities) to preparedness (emergency planning), response (the actual relief) and recovery (long term rehabilitation). Following this conceptualisation, the current Provincial Disaster Management Centre was organised around these four activities: prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. The table below illustrates on the left, the international standard “disaster management cycle” as presented by AH<sup>69</sup>, the expert involved both in the legislative process and very active in the Western Cape, and on the right, the model presented in the provincial legislative documents. Both models are obviously strictly identical:

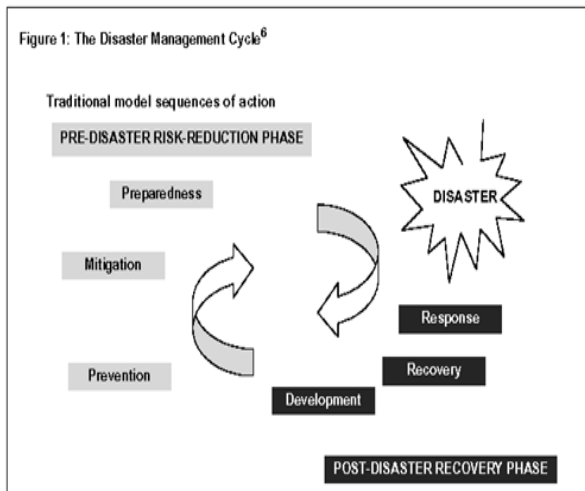
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<sup>66</sup> City of Cape Town, Disaster Management Centre, private library.

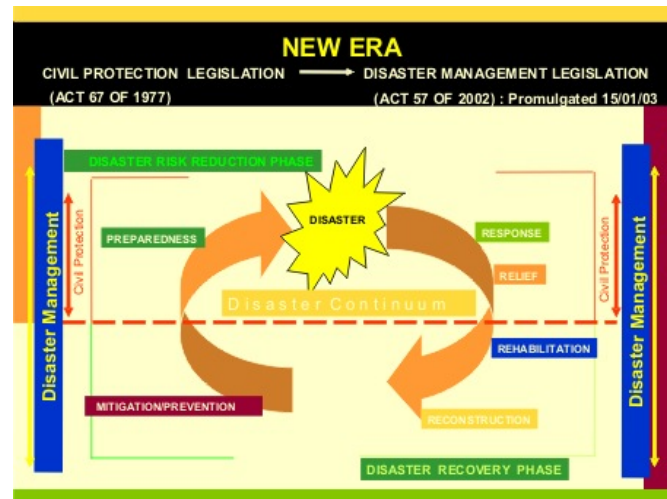
<sup>67</sup> In South Africa, there are three levels of government: national, provincial and local.

<sup>68</sup> National Disaster Management Centre, *Inaugural Annual Report, 2006/2007*.

<sup>69</sup> Ailsa Holloway, “Disaster risk reduction in Southern Africa: hot rhetoric, cold reality,” *African Security Review* 12, no. 1 (2003).



Source: Holloway, 2003



Source : Western Cape Provincial Disaster Management Framework, 2007

As language is often stickier than actual change we may wonder if risk governance made a difference or not. Did structuring organisations according to the disaster management blueprint generate an extrication from civil defence? If so the international penetration of knowledge impacted the national history to change its pathway, if not then, the circulation remains in its global spheres. In this sense, collective training and diffusion of ideas within institutions would support an interpretation in terms of transformation, though it might lead to over emphasize change. Indeed another part of the story, often heard about the South African post-apartheid state, is that there was transformation but no significant paradigm shift from the previous logics of apartheid, as in the case of welfare provision<sup>70</sup>. However, in this case because of the connectedness, the reality might be more ambiguous. For a single example, partly because of the limited resources, prevention still very much resembles the old policy of “take care of yourself” even if the target populations are different. Most of the times, prevention does not actually means reducing risks and vulnerabilities, but rather teaching individuals how to reduce those risks themselves through training and awareness campaign at schools and in the communities. Yet, this focus is at the same time embedded in an historical tradition of limited welfare state assistance, and very much in line with the underlying focus on individuals of the international doxa of disaster management<sup>71</sup>. In any case, the limitations of state capacities provide paradoxically another mechanism for the formal diffusion of disaster management as the many under-resourced provinces and local government tend to copy the models and organisations developed by wealthier provinces such as the Western Cape. This inbreeding of disaster management within the state is also supported by the role of academic institutions and experts in disaster management.

### ***Disaster knowledge as a science for governing***

The inbreeding of disaster management within South Africa was possible because once introduced, it was not only

<sup>70</sup> Jeremy Seekings and Nicoli Nattrass, *Class, race, and inequality in South Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

<sup>71</sup> Sandrine Revet, “De la vulnérabilité aux vulnérables. Approche critique d'une notion performative.,” in *Risques et environnement : recherches interdisciplinaires sur la vulnérabilité des sociétés* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2008), 89 - 99.

fixed into the legislation but also developed through mechanisms of self-reinforcement and “locks-in”<sup>72</sup>. The stabilisation of disaster management as an auto-sustained field locally participated in turn in the global developments, in particular through the diffusion of knowledge within the academic field.

The lock-in happened mainly through the multiplication of training and research programme in disaster management, which enabled the production of applicable knowledge for government, possibilities to train civil servants and the creation of scientific local knowledge on disasters. The creation of the first programme at the Technikon in 1994 generated institutional possibilities for young lecturers and professionals, who were attracted to this new field and were later led to develop their own programme and capacities. The growth of the educational field and the context of institutional change attracted competitors, whether it is consultants<sup>73</sup> or new academics. In 2009, there were three master programmes, two distance learning university based training programmes for professionals plus an important number of training consultants. In turn, the people qualified and trained in disaster management participated in the development and stabilisation of disaster management. The National Disaster Management Centre has a clear strategy of funding master students so as to attract new potential and diffuse disaster management to other government departments so as to reinforce its weak position within the state.

In relation with disaster management training, the second inbreeding mechanisms at stake here is the “localisation” of knowledge. The master programmes are located within academic centres that have a “cafeteria approach” to disaster management thanks to their ability to create relevant disaster knowledge “rather than being stuck with a fixed menu”<sup>74</sup>. Indeed, in the development of their professional capacities, academics have a strong interest in creating new knowledge and not just replicating the model they were asked to teach. The lecturer in charge of the first training programme at the Technikon became frustrated by the end of the 1990s with the content of its course (which was still the UNDP DMTP) and its irrelevance in the South African context. This pushed him to relocate himself at an other university in order to create its own “African Centre for Disaster Studies” where he would later be able to develop research and consultancy, a master and a PhD programme, as well as an African journal of disaster studies. Similarly, Ms AH. set up a master programme, which would enable her to develop research through her students' work while she would consult for government, and thus assert her position as a well-known international disaster reduction expert.

These programmes are not only developing local knowledge on disasters and risks, they are important intermediaries in the diffusion of this knowledge, diffusion that in turn institutionalise disaster management. Firstly, as their internal funding is very limited and their position within universities fragile, they need to raise fund, which they mainly do through consulting and training for government. The lack of funding stems from research policy in South Africa and from this marginal position, which relates to the fact that the inter-disciplinary character of their subject do not make them very likely to produce fundamental research (which brings more funding). Thus they

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<sup>72</sup> Paul Pierson, “Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics,” *American Political Science Review* 94, no. 2 (2000): 251-267; Mahoney, “Path dependence in historical sociology.”

<sup>73</sup> These consultants are generally skilled professionals who took an active role in the legislative process, and afterwards moved out from government to the private sector to sell their expertise – this movement partly being a direct or indirect result of transformation policies aiming to “colour” the state (black economic empowerment). This is another mechanism of inbreeding as the development of consultancy re-inforce disaster management within the state.

<sup>74</sup> Cooper and Packard, *International Development and the Social Sciences*, p.28.

have to raise their funds by themselves, which reduces their ability to publish in mainstream academics journal as they have to spend most of their time consulting or training for government. This vicious academic circle however reinforces the interconnection between academics and government experts in disaster management, which is another mechanism of inbreeding. On its side, the state has a deep interest in using these cheap consultants with relevant knowledge and techniques, and has even currently a project of replicating these disaster studies centre in small universities so as to provide local consultants in under developed provinces of South Africa. Besides, the obligation to create disaster management centres and to proceed to risk and vulnerability assessment resulting from the adoption of the Disaster Management Act, government bodies are in need of an expertise that is lacking. The interdependence between academics and government professionals in the disaster management field thus create the conditions for inbreeding disaster management while connecting with international tendencies.

A good example of the inbreeding of a disaster management component through these multiple connections between the global and the local, and between government and experts is “Community Risk Assessment” (CRA), a tool to assess risks and vulnerabilities within communities. CRAs, as part of the disaster management model, were developed from the 1990s within academic works and international organisations; it was already present in the initial UNDP Disaster Management Training Programme. CRAs consist of a set of guidelines, handbooks and case studies for countries in the South. The methodology was initially brought to South Africa during an international workshop organised by the Disaster Mitigation Programme (University of Cape Town) in 2002. The workshop gathered consultants, government disaster managers, students and international participants including prominent experts in the field of disaster studies (Ben Wisner<sup>75</sup>) and a member of the Latin American Network for the Social Study of Disaster Prevention (La Red). Following this event, case studies were realised in South African communities in Cape Town that would serve afterwards as a tool for Risk and Vulnerability Assessment, mandatory in the Disaster management legislation. The methodology was adapted to the South African “informal settlements” in a publication<sup>76</sup> funded by disaster management centres from the Western Cape and the national government. This inbreeding of CRAs finally leads to a re-circulation as the case studies are transferable and rely on a methodology easily replicable. The South African case studies were thus part of an international handbook of CRA promoted by one of the leading disaster reduction advocates, a consortium funded by the World Bank<sup>77</sup>.

Inbreeding produces an institutionalisation of knowledge intimately linked to the transformation of the state, which is reminiscent of the role of social knowledge at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>78</sup>. But this process is intrinsically linked here to the international scenes of disaster policies. Looking at the inbreeding allows focus on the inter-connections rather than on the diffusion, as the CRA and the “guidelinisation” of the Act examples reveals. A further step is the reverse dynamic of the re-circulation of the model that enables a parallel development of disaster management.

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<sup>75</sup> Blaikie et al., *At Risk*.

<sup>76</sup> Disaster Mitigation for Sustainable Livelihoods Programme, *Weathering the storm: participatory risk assessment for informal settlements* (Cape Town: Disaster Mitigation for Sustainable Livelihoods Programme, University of Cape Town, 2008).

<sup>77</sup> <http://www.proventionconsortium.org/?pageid=43>

<sup>78</sup> Dietrich Rueschemeyer and Theda Skocpol, *States, Social Knowledge, and the Origins of Modern Social Policies* (Princeton University Press, 1995).

### ***The ties that bind: imported, bred and exported again.***

We have seen so far that the mechanisms of “diffusion” are mainly operated by national actors, and that the explanation for the resemblance between the South African and the global model of disaster management lies not so much in a case of adoption as in a case of inbreeding. The global politics are internalised, and once introduced, the model generates institutional possibilities as suggested by the development of a disaster field in the academic environment.

In this perspective, although there was first a diffusion, through inbreeding, the rest of the story may be best understood as parallel and connected development between different levels. Reflecting these parallels is the development around 2005 of implementation strategies for disaster risk reduction. One of the first PhD dissertations on disaster management<sup>79</sup> defended in South Africa in 2005, by the director of the Africa Centre for Disaster Studies precisely aims at developing a framework for implementing disaster risk reduction. This was also the objective of the international Hyogo Framework for action, adopted the same year at the Second World Conference on Disaster Reduction (to which the author of the PhD participated). The similarity is not only explained by the institutional inbreeding of disaster management, but also because the actors are inter-related: this scientist had contributed to the major ISDR publication (*Living with risk*) and was regularly interacting with one of the senior advisers of the ISDR. In their interaction, they fed one another with disaster ideas so that it starts to become difficult to know who influences whom. More generally, South Africa financially contributed to this report and the Cape Town based disaster management programme (Dimp) was the regional contributor of the volume for the African continent. These interconnections are furthermore complicated by the insertion within networks of expertise from the South who are active contributors to the global world of disaster management and amongst which operates other circulations : Dimp is inserted firstly in an African disaster reduction network, whose partners are Indian, Asian and Latin American disaster management networks.

## **Conclusion**

Light has been shed here on the interrelated development of the nationalisation and collectivisation of the protection of civilians in times of disaster, and of the structuring of a global sphere of disaster management. There is much to gain from this perspective of micro dynamics and politics from below, and these processes in the South still need to be explored to deepen our understanding of globalization. This mode of interaction with international best practices is more general: not only does it reveal some similarities with other policy sector in South Africa<sup>80</sup>, but the relevance of the mechanisms underlined above also goes beyond the South African case. The institutionalisation of disaster (risk) management at the global level has led to legislative isomorphism<sup>81</sup> across the globe: since the beginning of 2000, a wave of legislative reforms occurred, which at least in the case of the African continent can be linked to indirect actions of international organisations. Countries such as Tanzania,

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<sup>79</sup> Dewald Van Niekerk, “A comprehensive framework for multisphere disaster risk reduction in South Africa” (PhD Dissertation in Public Management, Potchefstroom: Northwest University, South Africa, 2005).

<sup>80</sup> Richard Tomlinson, “International Best Practice, Enabling Frameworks and the Policy Process: A South African Case Study,” *International Journal of Urban & Regional Research* 26, no. 2 (2002): 377-388.

<sup>81</sup> Paul J. DiMaggio and Walter W. Powell, “The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields,” *American Sociological Review* 48, no. 2 (1983): 147-160.

Mozambique, Namibia, Senegal, etc. have recently adopted similar legislation of disaster management. This process is furthermore supported in a similar way by networks of expertise within the South: South African academics are active in diffusing disaster management over the continent through networks of disaster research and study programmes, by setting up partnerships or replicating their programmes in African universities in Brazzaville, Maputo, Dar-es-Salaam, Accra, Kampala, Algiers...

Two specificities of the disaster management case are worth noting. Firstly the dynamics of inbreeding which stresses the agency and the role of experts from the South as intermediaries of globalization. Another interesting element, which may explain the possibilities of inbreeding which contrast with the usual “good governance” prescriptions in Africa<sup>82</sup>, is the rather invisible dimension of the circulation of disaster management techniques and tools. Indeed, this apparent weakness of a model with no mechanism of coercion or enforcement may actually be one of its strength as it appears as “a-political”, penniless and armless organisation to states, which generally do not oppose such “good” ideas as the prevention of disasters<sup>83</sup>. It is thus adopted without much, if any, contestation by states and NGOs whereas the political philosophy and the premises of the model could be discussed and their effects on societies are not neutral as the technical is always political, as recalled by the long history of the role of science in state building in Africa<sup>84</sup>. Again, this mode of interaction at the global level is insufficiently explored and yet they produce notable effects on contemporary states and modes of governance.

To conclude with a critical perspective we may wonder if the circulation of disaster risk governance is a case or not of “risk colonisation”<sup>85</sup>. Risks theorists have shown how risk governance is institutionalised within contemporary regulatory frameworks through spiralling logics that recall the connections and inbreeding developed here, even if the mechanisms presented here are different. Questioning this institutionalisation in terms of colonisation may sound like a bad joke in a post-colonial context, but it puts forward a series of questions and issues that a focus on circulation may conceal. Firstly, it would be important to question the effects of this process of framing disaster situations in terms of risks and vulnerabilities. Secondly, reflecting on power and domination within global politics, although our case precisely demonstrates that the internationalization of governance cannot be understood only through a pattern of western domination, the risk colonisation of disasters leads to question if this autonomous dynamic is not a depoliticizing internalisation of patterns of domination. Indeed the development of African scientific networks in disaster management may be remarkable for being based on an Africanised expertise rather than de-contextualised international dogmas. But these African connections are being funded by USAID and other international foundations; while on their side, these academics, given their limited resources within their country, have a deep interest in expanding their capacities in those networks, which produce a surprising connection between liberal academics and international, if not imperialist, agencies. However, this is yet another argument in

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<sup>82</sup> Rita Abrahamsen, *Disciplining democracy: development discourse and good governance in Africa* (Zed Books, 2000).

<sup>83</sup> This strategy is quite similar to the one developed to the one developed by the International Labour Organisation in the diffusion of insurance policies (Thomas Cayet, Paul-André Rosental, and Marie Thébaud-Sorger, “How International Organisations Compete: Occupational Safety and Health at the ILO, a Diplomacy of Expertise,” *Journal of Modern European History* 7, no. 2 (2009): 174-196.

<sup>84</sup> Christophe Bonneuil, “Development as Experiment: Science and State Building in Late Colonial and Postcolonial Africa, 1930-1970,” *Osiris* 15, no. 2 (2000): 258-281.

<sup>85</sup> Henry Rothstein, M. Huber, and G. Gaskell, “A theory of risk colonization: The spiralling regulatory logics of societal and institutional risk,” *Economy and Society* 35, no. 1 (2006): 91–112.

favour of the perspective developed in this paper highlighting the need for further inquiry into the subtle interrelations between networks of experts in the South, and foundations and international organisations as a vehicle for global connections rather than only on global policies and global agents.

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