

MISCELLANEOUS REPORT #37

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1986

REPORT

on

UNITED STATES-ITALY JOINT SEMINAR ON
SOCIAL PREPARATION, RESPONSE, AND RECOVERY
FROM MAJOR COMMUNITY DISASTERS

held at the

University of Delaware

October 6-10, 1986

by

E. L. Quarantelli

U. S. Organizer of the Seminar

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I.

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II.

The following was the actual agenda of the seminar:

ITALY-UNITED STATES SEMINAR ON PREPARATION FOR
RESPONSE TO, AND RECOVERY FROM
MAJOR COMMUNITY DISASTERS

held at the
Disaster Research Center (DRC)
University of Delaware
October 6-10, 1986

October 6 (Monday)

- 9:00 a.m. Welcoming remarks (Quarantelli, chair)
(Dean Gouldner, University of Delaware)
(Anderson, National Science Foundation)
- 9:15 a.m. Self introduction of all participants
- 10:00 a.m. Structure and goals of the seminar (Pelanda and
Quarantelli, co-chair)
- 10:30 a.m. History of disaster research in both countries
(Pelanda and Quarantelli, co-chair)
- The history in Italy
(Pelanda)
- The history in the United States
(Quarantelli-Disasters
(Riebsame-Natural Hazards)
Commentator: Kreps
Ceasareo (Quarantelli, translator)
- 12:00 noon Lunch
Speaker: Lewis Killian
Topic: The Early Days of American
Disaster Research
- 2:00 p.m. Structure of disaster research and emergency
planning in both countries (Boileau, chair)
- In Italy
Structure of funding
(Fruda - Alexander, translator)
The Italian academic system
(Cavalli)
Applied disaster research
(De Marchi)
- 4:00 p.m. In the United States (Wenger, chair)
Researcher sponsors
(Anderson, NSF)

Researchers: who and what
(Dynes)
Research users
(Tierney)
Emergency planning in the United States
(Swisher, FEMA)

5:30 p.m. General discussion

6:30 p.m. End of session

October 7 (Tuesday)

8:00 a.m. Panel: What Should We Be Studying?
(Pelanda and Quarantelli)

9:00 a.m. General discussion

9:45 a.m. Presentation of American theoretical research
(Dynes, chair)

Natural Hazard Risk Analysis and Public Policy
Formulations

(Petak)

What Do We Know?

(Drabek)

What Should We Be Doing?

(Kreps)

What Can We Apply?

(Riebsame)

12:00 p.m. General Discussion

1:00 p.m. Lunch

2:00 p.m. Presentation of Italian theoretical research
(Cavalli, chair)

Toward a Culture for the Emergencies
(Cesareo)

Disaster Psychology: The Impact

(Angeli)

Strategic Management of Information for Civil
Protection

(De Marchi)

Sociological Analysis and Mass Emergencies

(Fruda)

Evaluation Studies on Voluntary Organizations'
Help Activity--Some Reasons for Their Shortage

(Boileau)

4:15 p.m. General Discussion

6:30 p.m. End of session

October 8 (Wednesday)

9:00 a.m.

Tour of DRC and description of DRC work (Wenger)

p.m.

Informal small group meetings

October 9 (Thursday)

8:00 a.m.

Presentation of American empirical research
(Drabek, chair)

A Retrospective Review of Reconstruction
Strategies
(Kreimer)

Disasters and Mental Health: A critical look at
knowledge and practice
(Tierney)

The Issuance of Earthquake Predictions:
Information Diffusion and Public Response
(Nigg)

9:30 a.m.

Discussion

10:30 a.m.

Families in Disaster: Theoretical and empirical
aspects
(Bolin)

Problems in the Cross Cultural Measurement of
Disaster Impact and Recovery
(Bates)

Urban Landslide Disasters
(Alexander)

12:30 p.m.

Discussion

1:00 p.m.

Lunch

2:00 p.m.

(Kreps, chair)
Natural Disasters and Social Systems
(Caporale)
Commentators: (De Marchi, Lombardi)

Presentation of Italian empirical research
(Cesareo, chair)
Commentator: Bolin and Petak

Cultural Processes After Disasters: A Research
Project and Some Preliminary Findings
(Cavalli)

Chernobyl: A Case of Strategic Management of
Information?
(Lombardi)

Disaster Consequences on Economic Structure With
Special Reference to the Labor Market
(Tellia)

Information and Nuclear Emergency in a Frontier
Region

(Tessarini)

Towards a Statistical Model for the Preventive
Organization of Emergency Medical Services

(Vittori)

4:00 p.m.

Discussion

6:30 p.m.

End of session

7:30 p.m.

Closing invitational dinner (Blue and Gold Club)

October 10 (Friday)

8:00 a.m.

Breakout of participants into smaller groups to
make recommendations for collaborative research

Preparation Studies

(Alexander, Fruda, co-chairs)

Response Studies

(Nigg, Vittori, co-chairs)

Recovery Studies

(Kreimer, Tellia, co-chairs)

Methodological Issues

(Drabek, De Marchi, co-chairs)

Logistic and Practical Issues

(Bates, Boileau, co-chairs)

10:45 a.m.

Recommendations of smaller groups

Concluding observations

(Pelanda and Quarantelli, chairs)

Formal Conclusion of Seminar

III.

The previous section provided the outline of the agenda for the seminar. In this section we shall very briefly elaborate on each presentation made and/or sessions held.

After welcoming remarks by a University of Delaware dean, an NSF representative indicated the interest of the agency in the seminar. This was followed by a statement from both the Italian and American co-organizers of the seminar on how the sessions were structured each day and what were the general goals of the meeting. It was noted that, essentially, there were three objectives:

(1) to make both sides aware of who was doing social and behavioral science disaster research, how disaster studies were undertaken, and what influenced the scientific work in each country; (2) to inform one another what were the substantive findings, theoretical models and methodological assumptions of the disaster researchers in both countries up to this time; and (3) to start the development of closer ties and collaborative research between social and behavioral science disaster students in Italy and the United States.

These introductory remarks were followed by a session on the history and development of disaster research in both societies. It became clear that not only had disaster studies emerged more recently in Italy than the United States, but that different social and behavioral science disciplines were involved in their origins in both countries. Natural hazard research, as such, seemed less well developed in Italy, but disaster research had institutionalized very rapidly in the last few years. In the United States, natural hazard and disaster research were slowly coming together, with the field of study very well established in American universities.

A luncheon speaker spoke about his own involvement in the early pioneering days of disaster studies in the United States.

An afternoon session on the first day of the meeting covered the structure and organization of disaster research and emergency planning in both countries. Details were given about funding arrangements in Italy, the Italian academic system and how that affects disaster studies, and what was considered applied research. A somewhat parallel exposition was made of research sponsorship in the United States, the American academic scene and its influence on disaster research, and various ways research users attempted to apply the findings of disaster studies to emergency planning in the country.

The next day started out with separate statements by the two co-organizers of the seminar on the conceptualization of "disaster." This led to an extensive discussion. Many different points of view were expressed but they did not divide primarily along national or disciplinary lines.

The rest of the second day involved a presentation first by Americans and later by the Italians of theoretical studies on disasters and disaster phenomena. The presenters from the United States attempted to summarize what had been learned up to the present, where future work ought to be undertaken, and how research results could be differently applied. The

Italian presenters gave a series of papers on the theoretical approaches they were using in looking at a possible cultural framework of emergencies, the psychological impact of disasters, the strategic management of disaster information, a sociological analysis of mass emergencies, and principles which might be used in evaluation studies of voluntary organizations. There were extensive questions and answers on both sets of presentations.

The middle day of the seminar involved a tour of the Disaster Research Center (DRC) facilities, a look and some use of its library resources, a description of current DRC work, and some informal small group meetings among the participants.

The fourth day initially involved a series of presentations of empirical research undertaken by Americans. Summary presentations were made of work on the social implications of earthquake predictions, on the possible relationships between disasters and mental health effects, and on reconstruction strategies in catastrophes. This was followed by summary presentations of work on family responses to disasters, methodological problems in the cross-cultural measurement of disaster impact and recovery, and the growing importance of urban landslide disasters.

An American study of an Italian earthquake disaster was then presented and commented upon by several Italian participants in the seminar. This was followed by summaries of ongoing or projected Italian empirical studies. This included a presentation of preliminary findings on cultural processes affecting the reconstruction processes in disasters, the economic effects of an earthquake, a content analysis of Italian mass media coverage of a disaster with international consequences, the information which seems needed for a nuclear disaster emergency in a frontier area, and a statistical model which could be used in examining emergency medical service organizations in disasters.

Considerable discussion followed both the presentations by the Americans and the Italians.

On the last day of the seminar, all participants were distributed into five smaller groups. Each group was asked to develop recommendations on a particular topic which might serve as a basis for future collaborative studies by Italian and American disaster researchers. At the end, several dozen recommendations were presented by the smaller groups to the full seminar. The meeting concluded with some general observations by the Italian and American co-organizers on how the seminar goals might have been achieved.

IV.

Among the outcomes of the seminar have been, or will be the following:

1. The proceedings of the seminar will be published by the Disaster Research Center (DRC) at the University of Delaware in its Comparative Series. The publication is scheduled for summer 1987. All participants will receive two copies and additional copies will be sent to a selected list of American and Italian disaster researchers not present at the seminar as well as those disaster research organizations on the DRC exchange list around the world.
2. The major papers presented at the seminar and published in the proceedings will be used as a basis for a series of updated and revised papers on the same topics to be in a book to be published in 1988. This follow-up volume is tentatively scheduled to be published in English by Franco Angeli, the leading Italian publisher of social and behavioral science research.
3. A 168-item listing of all Italian disaster research in the social and behavioral sciences was prepared by the Mass Emergency Program of the Institute of International Sociology (I.S.I.G.) in Italy and since the seminar has been distributed to all of the American participants. This list, which carries an English translation of all titles, will be made part of the DRC Publication List and, thus, will become available to the disaster scientific research community.
4. There will be an exchange of staff personnel in the spring of 1987 between DRC and the Mass Emergencies Program at I.S.I.G. Arrangements have already been made to institute another exchange in 1988. The exchanges will be for about a three-month period. I.S.I.G. and other Italian institutions, such as the Catholic University of Milan and the University of Rome, with a disaster research program are open to the possibilities of exchanges with other American organizations besides DRC if arrangements can be made that are mutually beneficial.
5. An agreement has been made between I.S.I.G. and DRC to collaborate soon on a small scale study of the mass media in disasters. The specifics are being developed, but will probably build on the current NSF supported DRC study of the operation of the mass media in disasters. The intent is to initiate the collaborative work, provided funding can be obtained, in late 1987. If successful, the hope is to extend the collaborative work to include other interested American and Italian researchers and institutions in later years.
6. The leadership of the Italian participants has agreed to respond favorably to an invitation that will be made by the co-editor (who was one of the American participants at the seminar) of the International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters to edit a special issue on Italian disaster research. Tentative publication is for 1989.
7. A preliminary meeting will be held in Italy in the middle of 1987 to plan for an international disaster conference. A small working group of American and Italian participants at the recent seminar will develop an

agenda for a conference on the social aspects of disasters. The conference is tentatively scheduled to be held in 1988 in Milan, Italy.

8. Several of the American participants at the seminar who have just concluded, or have current disaster research going on in Italy, will attempt to develop closer ties in the field with relevant Italian participants.

9. The Italian participants have indicated that American participants will very probably be asked to serve as consultants on Italian disaster research projects, as well as Italian disaster planning.

10. If the International Decade of Hazard Research is initiated, it was a general feeling that the seminar provided a major step for Italians and Americans to work together in such a program in the future.

11. The Italians want to explore further the possibility of developing some formal US-Italy committee or group to maintain the level of contacts made by the seminar.

12. The Italian participants have expressed an interest in learning more about the natural hazards approach and studies, particularly as undertaken by geographers, in the United States and are open to American initiatives on this matter.