



Disaster Risk Governance as Assemblage: The Chilean Framework of the 1985 San Antonio Earthquake

Daniela P. González¹

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Abstract The purpose of this article is to analyze disaster risk governance through assemblage theory, identifying how—during the altered political context of a military regime with a centralized disaster risk management as in the case of Chile in 1985—new actors emerge during the disaster response phase as a de/reterritorialization effect that is influenced by their agencies and relationships, disfiguring the edges of the assemblage. Based on this conceptualization, it is possible to investigate the interactions between the different actors, their power relations, and their reconfigurations in the governance exercise. For this purpose, we reviewed the response phase of the 1985 San Antonio earthquake that affected the central zone of Chile, where strategic functions, institutions, and forms of power are concentrated. To describe and visualize the actors during the response phase in the disaster risk governance framework, a map of actors was developed that identifies the existing relationships and their different weights. The central scale proved to be dominant and occupied a political space that was transfigured by its overrepresentation—enforced by allies such as the banking system and business associations—enhancing a neoliberal agenda. The leaps in scale from the central scale to the local scale cancel agency of the last, destabilizing its capacity to deal with the effects of the earthquake and isolating it from the decision-making processes. Consequently, delays in providing aid demonstrate that authoritarian governments do not provide better management in the disaster response phase.

Keywords Assemblage · Chile · Disaster response phase · Disaster risk governance · San Antonio earthquake

1 Introduction

Disasters are totalizing events, usually defined as events with low probability and high magnitude (Neisser 2014). However, this definition is being reviewed because the frequency of these events is increasing due to climate change, highlighting the tremendous impact these events have on the lives and activities of human beings, with consequences that tend to get rapidly out of control. Human beings and material entities can cause radical changes (Guggenheim 2014) in exposure and vulnerability factors that are critical in determining the effects of catastrophes (Drury and Olson 1998; Adger 2006; Walker and Cooper 2011; Cutter 2012).

In a scenario where nothing is “normal” it is naive to assume that institutions and their organization will produce the same effect as in everyday situations, or to think that the actors involved in the governance exercise will act in the same way as they did before the disaster. From this starting point, it is necessary to investigate the relationships between the different agents that make up governance. In the case of disaster risk governance (DRG), the interests at stake go beyond the actors and their agencies. They are also defined by the distribution of the balance of powers, rights, and responsibilities. It is also essential to always keep in mind the scale, where the site conditions of these phenomena are critical in the development of the event (Blackburn 2014).

Authors such as Jones et al. (2014) have stated that within the literature on disaster risk management (DRM) and disaster risk reduction (DRR), little attention has been paid to governance processes, in addition to the lack of evidence on their effectiveness. Renn (2008) defined risk governance as

✉ Daniela P. González
dpgonzal@uc.cl

¹ Architecture and Urban Studies, Pontifical Catholic University of Chile, 7520245 Santiago, Chile

the complex web of actors, rules, conventions, processes, and mechanisms concerned with how relevant risk information is collected, analyzed, and communicated, and how management decisions are taken. The existing gap in the analysis and assessment of DRG would be explained, among other reasons, by the complexity of the interplay between power and knowledge among stakeholders, identifying different types of gaps: epistemological, institutional, and strategic (Albris et al. 2020).

From the territoriality perspective, power is understood as a topological arrangement, where relational effects are measured by their agency and not by their distance (Allen 2004), where the agency is a fundamental element in any analysis of DRG. Besides the number and diversity of actors, it is also essential to know their capacities, commitments, and deployments. The work of Jovita et al. (2018) in the Philippines and Grove (2014) in Jamaica emphasizes the need to design disaster risk governance schemes that tend towards decentralization to avoid leaps of scale and scalar restructuring.

This article analyzes DRG through the assemblage theory to identify how in an altered and undemocratic political context as in a military regime—by adding a centralized DRM as in the Chilean case (Sandoval and Voss 2016; Sandoval and Sarmiento 2020)—new elements and actors emerge during the disaster response phase. These new elements correspond to the de/reterritorialization of the same assemblage in the deployment of DRG in terms of power relations and its reconfigurations.

This analysis is based on a case study of the response phase of the 1985 San Antonio earthquake when Chile was still under a military dictatorship that encouraged an economic paradigm shift to neoliberalism. The regime appointed all authorities, and democratic processes were not allowed, so the response phase was managed mainly by actors who followed the rules emanating from the dictatorship-appointed leadership. From this vertical and hierarchical structure, it could be assumed that the response phase developed strictly according to the planning and the competencies granted to each level. However, DRG understood as an assemblage allows us to see how this rigid structure was also affected by the entry of new actors, their agencies, relationships, and other elements that disfigured the edges of this assemblage.

2 The Assemblage Approach to Disaster Risk Governance

The proposal to understand DRG as an assemblage has to do with the conceptual turn from government to governance in ways of running power. In the first stage, governance was described as a process of asymmetrical de-statization in

relation to the responsibilities that still were under the competence of the State, being understood as a unidirectional transit towards the concession of power (Jessop 2000). Over time, and hand in hand with the greater organization at the supra-state level exercising a regulatory role, the shift from government towards governance has taken a more defined shape, where it is possible to distinguish the decision-making processes within the institutional geography of power (Allen and Cochrane 2010).

In simple terms, governance embodies the framework in which multiple and different actors behave, operate, interact, and confront each other in the decision-making process about public affairs, including risks and disasters (Forino et al. 2018). According to Tierney (2012), in this decision-making process, the organizational forms tend to be less hierarchical and bureaucratic, promoting more decentralized networks. The aims of governance are not different from the government; instead, it is about a difference in the processes that have an effect on the assignment of responsibilities (Stoker 1998). Given the entry of new actors, the concept of governance tends to go together with the concept of “public-private alliance,” in an allusion to the links that are generated between the public and private sectors in the face of common interests (Harvey 1989; Brenner 1999; Pierre 1999; Swyngedouw et al. 2002).

In the discussion of governance, there is a threat of reducing the discussion only to the actors present and their agencies, leaving aside significant elements such as the types of governance that are exercised, and where the horizontal and vertical types are differentiated. Horizontal governance refers to a particular geographic context, such as a community or a basin, while vertical governance corresponds to an interaction between scales and institutions (national, regional, local) (Renn 2008; Tierney 2012).

In the particular case of DRG, in addition to the types of governance, elements and devices such as regulations and planning must be considered, adding the technical-scientific knowledge in the characterization of hazards or in the quantification of damages, in how they are interpreted in decision making (Farías 2014), and how this knowledge is able to respect prior value systems (Jasanoff 2013). This last point must be highlighted because disasters enable the deployment of experimental policies, where all dimensions can be affected, given that these are scenarios altered by asymmetric and excessive forces, stressing the most fundamental and vital structures (Pelling and Dill 2006; Pelling and Dill 2010; Tironi 2014).

According to Siddiqui and Canuday (2018), the State’s response after a disaster event and the political changes to be implemented depend on the nature of the social contract with its citizens. However, previous inequalities are often used to generate exceptional policies that do not necessarily favor the most vulnerable populations. In the Chilean

case, the policies of exception have been driven by strong neoliberal policies, creating conflict between the role of the State as guarantor of the security of the capitalist project and the guarantees to marginalized groups (Meriläinen 2020). In the case of Istanbul, Angell (2014) described how the creation of risk zones by law, far from being a preventive measure, has become a controversy, where the government uses this mechanism to circumvent obstacles and promote the construction sector under the veil of urban renewal. Ong (2006) distinguished this type of exception as a possibility for a minority that enjoys conditions that are not guaranteed for the rest of the population who is affected by these exceptions that suspend civil rights.

Exceptions take the form of discourses that allow putting into action their distinctive elements, such as the suppression of law by law and the transfers of power and competencies (Agamben 2005). They also facilitate legitimizing agencies and institutions created in the context of states of exception (Fariás and Flores 2017). In many countries DRM is handled by protection agencies with a military character, imprinting their language where natural hazards become enemies to fight against (Gaillard and Mercer 2013). In addition to the exceptions, within DRG, the blurred boundaries between public and private must be considered a possible controversy. The allocation of responsibilities between different institutions does not always consider the specific rivalries and territorialities that lead to overlapping in their actions (Duda et al. 2020), leading to a politicization of the consequences of the disaster in a game of framing and blaming (Wanner 2020).

The conjunction of governance types, the emergence of material and discursive elements, exceptions, and controversies drive the adoption of assemblage theory for a better understanding of DRG, as “they involve entanglement of the natural and cultural, the material and the social, the human and non-human, in ways that not only defy or complicate such binary distinctions but may also constitute them anew” (Angell 2014, p. 668).

There are many definitions of assemblage, but most recognize the seminal work of Deleuze and Guattari (1987), who were influenced by Foucault’s concept of *dispositif*. Assemblage, according to DeLanda (2006), who continues Deleuze’s work, is a wide range of social entities, from individuals to nations, constituted by specific historical processes. He adds that assemblages have two dimensions that define the performance of their components—a material role, and an expressive role. These roles can be mixed in different ways according to their capacities, which results in processes of stabilization (territorialization) or destabilization (deterritorialization) of the assemblage.

Other definitions of assemblages emphasize their heterogeneity as a set of bodies, actions, desires, plans, declarations, and laws that form “provisional contingent

wholes,” apparent units always on the verge of dissolution (Grove 2013, p. 571). To this group of elements, Li (2007) adds discourses; institutions; architectural forms; regulatory decisions; laws; administrative measures; scientific, philosophical, and moral statements; and philanthropic propositions, which are linked in the will to govern from the Foucauldian sense of directing behaviors and intervening in social processes. As a last element, McGowran and Donovan (2021) consider in the particular case of disaster risk governance not only the apparatuses of power, but also the events and phenomena themselves that they seek to manage.

Assemblages oppose the vision of power contained in and administered by a dominant class, but one that lives in plurality and transformation (Anderson and McFarlane 2011). Donovan (2017) designated these changes in the distribution of power within the assemblage as “geo-power.” Greenhough (2012) envisioned it as a resistance to the naturalization of social and spatial orders. It nonetheless leaves open the question of how these forms and elements hold together in the face of the possibility of being assembled in other ways. Hence the potential of assemblage to study the compositional distribution of agency capacities (Fariás 2011), understanding that agencies do not correspond to the will of individual subjects but to “ontologically prior affective relations between components within an assemblage” (Grove 2014, p. 245).

Several authors have already analyzed DRG as an assemblage (Angell 2014; Briassoulis 2017; Donovan 2020; McGowran and Donovan 2021), where the need to create analytical frameworks that conceptualize disasters as more than natural, even more than non-human—that is the need for a territorial component that allows studying the assemblages situationally in their spatial and historical context—is highlighted. This historical and territorial context provides understanding of the assemblage as a collection of institutions, ideas, values, ontologies, scales, and knowledge (Donovan 2017), elucidating how elements that on their surface may seem the same—such as institutions, roles, and regulations—take different directions due to their historical and territorial situation, in what Briassoulis (2017) calls “response in context,” and from there redefine the necessary adjustment of the human response to its environment.

The case study analyzed in this article recognizes these contributions and focuses on the emergence component that enables the assemblage approach to identify how new elements, actors, and agencies are deployed within a DRM framework and reconfigure power relations. In methodological terms, it takes Van Wezemael’s (2008) proposal of the need to “map” the assemblage in its space of potentiality, in a governance setting—it is not enough to trace it or describe it. As Nail (2017) pointed out, all assemblages are political, so it is necessary to know their structure, typology, and

processes of change, and from this understanding to make a better assessment.

3 Case Study: The 1985 San Antonio Earthquake Governance Frame in Chile

Chile is one of the most tectonically active countries on the planet. Its location within what is known as the Pacific Ring of Fire has as a consequence the recurrence of earthquakes and volcanic activity (Quezada et al. 2005). The San Antonio earthquake that occurred at 19:46 hours on Sunday, 3 March 1985, had a magnitude of 8.0 M_w , and its epicenter was located at 33° 14' S and 72° 02' W on the central coast of Chile, about 100 km west of the capital of Santiago. The

earthquake resulted in 146 deaths, 492,000 victims, and more than 57,000 homes were destroyed.

The study area corresponds to the Metropolitan Region of Santiago (Fig. 1), which has an essential concentration of administrative, demographic, and economic power. In 1985 the Metropolitan Region of Santiago had a population of 4.7 million out of a national total of 12 million. In administrative terms, the Metropolitan Region of Santiago was divided into six provinces and 51 communes. Of these 51 communes, 34 correspond to the metropolitan area comprised about 400 km² (Rodríguez 1993).

The highest authority in the Metropolitan Region of Santiago is the governor, a role that used to be appointed by the President but has been an elected role since 2021. At this regional scale, each ministry is represented by a regional ministerial secretary, designated by the President. The

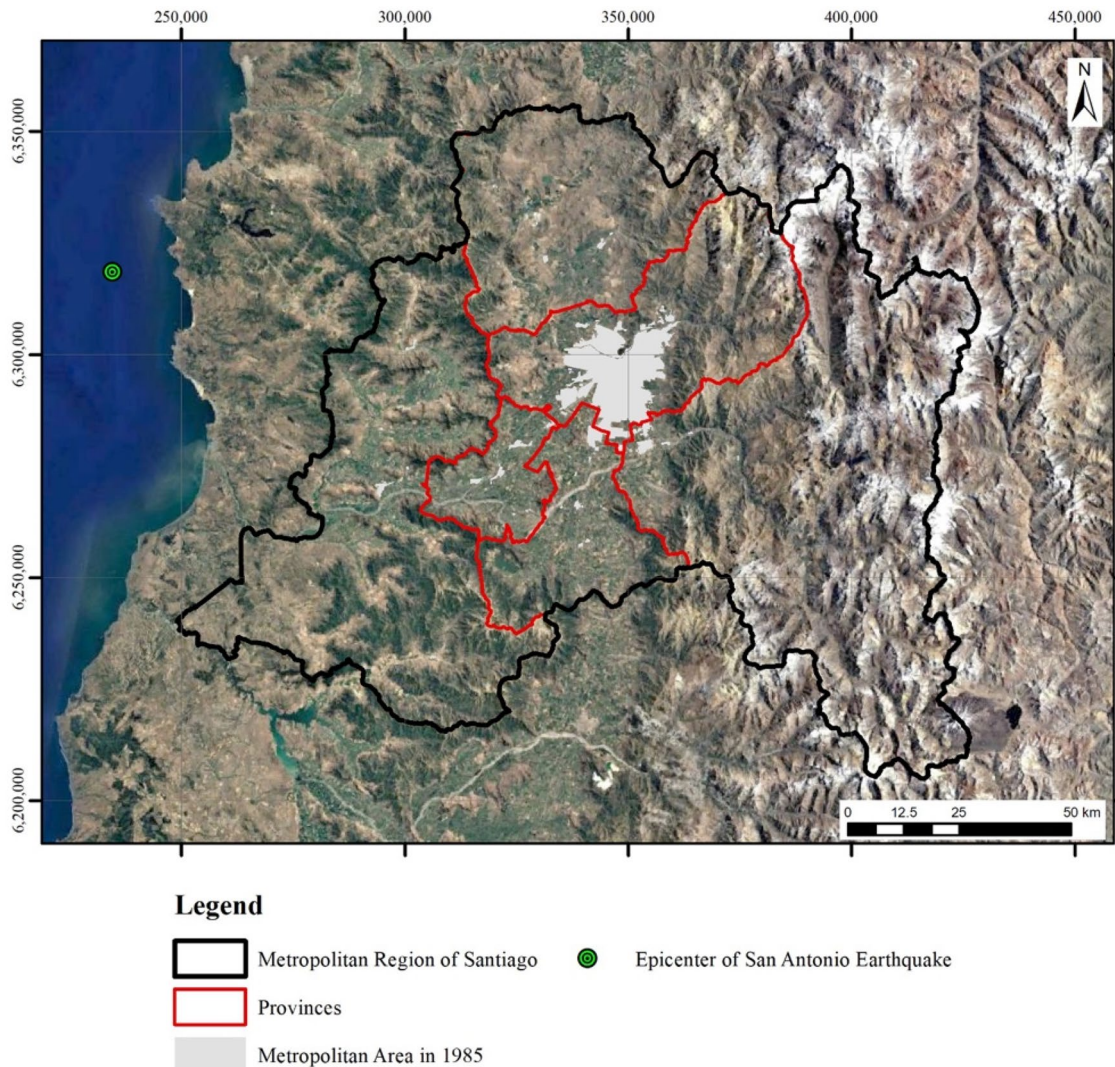


Fig. 1 The study area

leading policies come from the central scale, and regional cabinets have little influence. The authority at the communal scale corresponds to the mayors, who are the heads of the municipalities, the lowest local scale, and who exercise authority in matters related to urban development and planning (Fuentes and Orellana 2013).

In political terms, in 1985, Chile had been under a dictatorship since 1973, but the regime was starting to erode in the face of protests against it, which led to successive declarations of a state of siege. However, the dictatorship was based on a previous political scheme with an intense concentration of power at the central level. This concentration was stressed by the regionalization process of 1974, which was leveraged by the installation of a new economic model of openness to foreign markets, sweeping away the previous model of import substitution and creating a new tertiary sector deployed mainly from Santiago. These economic activities had a socio-environmental impact on the whole country due to the permissive policies allowed to extractive industries, real estate, and forestry, which increased the levels of vulnerability to natural hazards (Sandoval et al. 2021). This increase in vulnerability is a governmental technique typical of neoliberal governments that seek to recreate a sense of dangerous environment while subjects develop an aversion to this risk as a control mechanism (Grove 2014).

Regionalization imposed a vertical power distribution model in political rather than administrative terms. The total liberalization of territorial development exercises took place in 1979, when the rules of the 1960 Intercommunal Regulatory Plan of Santiago were abolished and, with the subdivision of rural lands in 1980, enabled the extension of the metropolitan area of the region. In urban terms, according to Lawner (2011), the failures that caused the earthquake's damage were due to changes that weakened municipal regulation through the elimination of inspection bodies. Instead, real estate developers themselves became the guarantors of quality standards through their private inspectors. These measures echoed the vertical model of territorial and economic organization in the design of the DRM scheme in Chile with a top-down approach (Sandoval and Voss 2016).

As a governance framework for the 1985 San Antonio earthquake, the 1977 National Emergency Plan was in force, establishing at the head of the scheme the President and as a second level the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Defense, in addition to 15 other sectoral ministries. The Ministry of the Interior stands out because it is responsible for the National Emergency Office (ONEMI), created in 1974, and in charge of coordinating actions after a disaster event. In the case of the Ministry of Defense, if a disaster event affects more than one region, a military Disaster Area Chief is appointed. At the regional scale, ONEMI or the Disaster Area Chief coordinates with the respective governors. The local or communal scale does not appear in the

organization chart, so mayors are not recognized actors in the action plan, although the same document mandates the preparation of communal emergency plans by the mayors.

Although the plan includes the private sector and civil society in its actions, its command and coordination structure does not consider them among the actors. The same is true for academia and scientific knowledge, even the document supports scientific knowledge as a guiding principle within the document. Including actors only nominally ratifies the influence of the territorial and historical configuration in Chile's DRG model in its spatial and hierarchical distribution (Sandoval and Voss 2018).

4 Data and Methodology

The data sources are documentary in nature to understand the historical trajectory of the assemblage and the particularity in its composition and emergence, as well as its relationship with other assemblages. The data sources correspond to the review of press releases published during the first 90 days after the earthquake, the time window considered to have been the disaster response phase. The two main nationally distributed print media (El Mercurio and La Tercera) were considered. It should be noted as a methodological limitation that both sources were adherents to the military regime. Since November 1984, the country had been under a state of siege that limited the freedom of the press recognized in the 1980 Constitution, so these newspapers represented the two media groups with national coverage at that time (Navarro 1985). Due to this ideological bias, only press releases related to the earthquake within the study area were selected—a total of 325 press releases—leaving out editorials, opinion columns, and interviews.

A leading actor was identified for each press release, along with its duties and relations with other actors. With this first systematization, we worked with the statistical software R to generate the visualization of the map of actors of the 1985 earthquake and their interactions, using the packages tidyverse and igraph. This way, a data frame was constructed that identifies the direction of the interactions and their weighting determined by the number of times they occurred during the response phase.

The data frame was ordered by establishing categories that would make it possible to identify actors' presence and/or emergence, both spatially and relationally. Ten categories were identified: four related to the territorial scales—international, central, regional, and local; another four concerning their positions of power—private, business associations, banking system, and academia; and two other categories of a more civilian nature—grassroots organizations and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Assemblages are composed of flows of multiple orders of existence acting on

each other, allowing to map these flows (Feely 2020) across topographies, where “topography” refers to material geographies in their different forms (McFarlane and Silver 2017).

It is essential to emphasize that the assemblage captures the changes generated in relationships and spaces and highlights the various agents’ differences, both when they are present and excluded. Assemblage not only represents space but creates a spatiality from the topology, that is, not from hierarchies but proximities (Baker and McGuirk 2017). Their topological nature is essential to studying the different forms and ways to exercise power in a governance context since it allows understanding them from multiple co-existences, that is, a distributed, plural, and transforming power (Anderson and McFarlane 2011).

5 Results and Discussion

This section presents the results of the analysis of press articles during the response phase of the 1985 San Antonio earthquake, showing the agency of each scale and actor identified, and the intensity of the relationships between them.

5.1 Central Scale

Immediately after the earthquake, the President and his cabinet returned to Santiago from Punta Arenas, installing a marked management accent, with orders coming directly from then President Pinochet. In a context of dictatorship, it is not strange that decisions come from the central level in vertical, top-down fashion. The Metropolitan Region of Santiago, in spatial terms, acquired an overrepresentation as a space of power over the affected territory, following the decision of the central level administration to return to the Metropolitan Region to manage the consequences of the earthquake rather than considering the possibility of understanding the earthquake as a disrupted space that required special attention.

In the ministerial cabinet, the agency capacity was reduced to sectoral issues, such as damage to hospitals and schools, road connectivity, and telecommunications failures. References to “government” as a form of organization of a central administrative level were relatively scarce and, in general, determined by previous decisions made by the President in a style of control typical of the military regime. This introduced a dissociation into the machinery of civil and associative discourse and marked the deployment of power based on techniques of force and control.

Three days after the earthquake, the Minister of the Interior announced that the government had decided to create an advisory body called the Emergency General Headquarters. They aimed to deal with the situation arising from the earthquake, having at their disposal the entire National

Emergency Office (ONEMI) structure that had existed within the Ministry of the Interior since 1974 for the same purposes. Some restrictive measures, such as the curfew decree, were possible because the country was in a state of emergency due to internal danger to national security since the year before. Thus, in addition to the appointed governors and mayors, the Metropolitan Region unilaterally added a new level of action in the response phase.

In relational terms, the central scale is the scale with the highest demand from the other actors. At the same time, it relates to actors at the same scale, showing a hierarchy beyond administrative boundaries that allowed for leaps of scale as a form of state control (Blackburn 2014). The absence of different leaderships led to processes of reterritorialization in the surplus of power concentrated at the central level, keeping territorial and social functions fixed (Hardt and Negri 2000).

5.2 Regional Scale

The governor’s position, closer to the central scale than to the more local authorities, shows how little cohesion there was in the metropolitan concept at that time. Despite the controversies, the governor’s statements replicated those of the central government regarding how contained the situation was. This is indicative of the influence of the State, because the authorities at the regional scale were designated directly by the President.

Based on this entitlement, the governor took quite drastic measures such as the demolishing of buildings, irrespective of technical evaluations or the opinion of mayors. In this way, the governor left aside his role as an intermediary at the local scale since he did not help the requirements of the mayors reach the President and his cabinet, for example, the requests for an increase in funds for repair and reconstruction. This fact coincides with what is stated by Meriläinen et al. (2020) who point out that under neoliberal governance, post-disaster reconstruction processes prioritize ensuring capital over people, exchange value over use value. As shown in Fig. 1, the regional scale mainly relates to the central scale despite having demands for action coming from the local and grassroots levels.

5.3 Local Scale

At the local scale, the mayors’ efforts were initially focused on the quantification of damages and the possibility of providing shelter to the affected families, despite the complaints about the slowness in the process of delivery or construction of refuges, where the mayors allocated an important part of their resources before the winter rains began. But it was the mayors to whom the community and even the presidential authority turned the responsibility

for an effective and timely response. Figure 2 reflects how much in demand the mayors were among the rest of the actors, showing the relevance of their agency. Still, they were left isolated from the rest of the administrative levels.

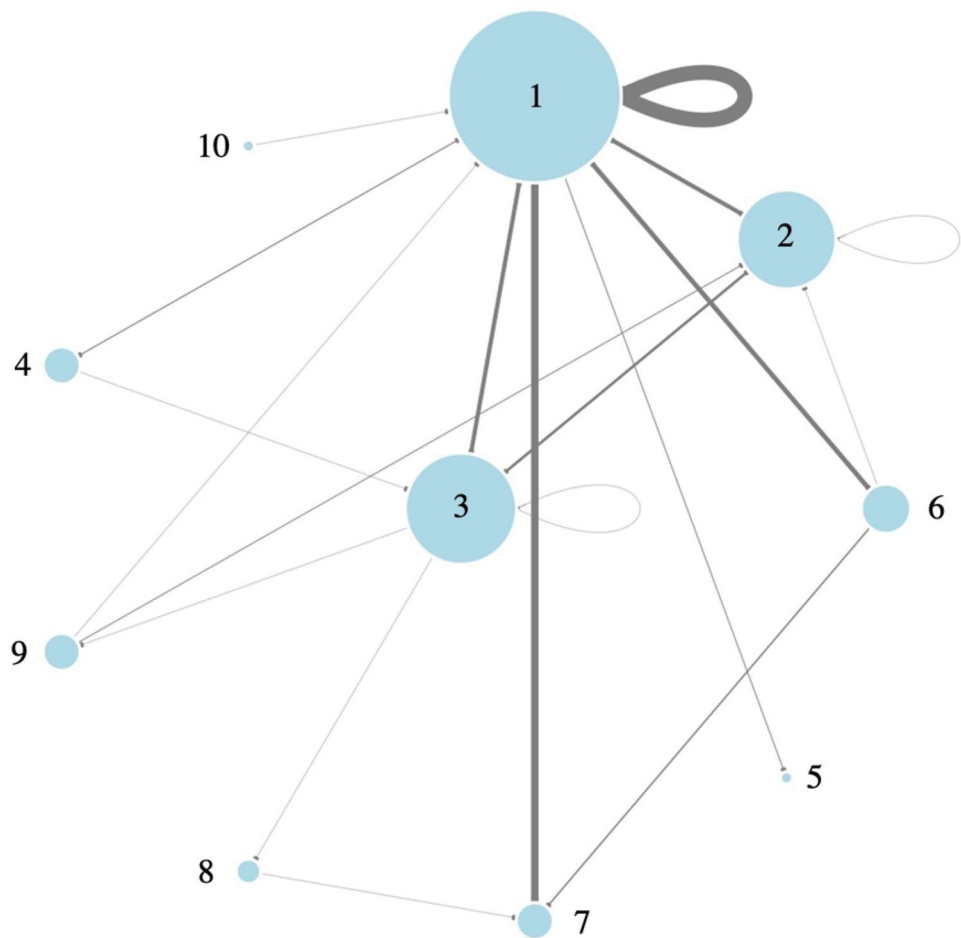
For some mayors, this task was not easy since some of them were part of the process of creating new communes in the Metropolitan Region in 1981. But it was not until July 1984 that the administrative offices (municipalities) were established. Therefore, some communes faced the consequences of an earthquake less than a year after they were constituted. The military hierarchy of the time achieved a deployment in a spatial order beyond administrative boundaries, allowing for leaps of scale as a State control (Blackburn 2014).

5.4 International Scale

At the international scale, the first days were focused on foreign aid, giving way to financing negotiations. The United States had a strong presence through its ambassador, who closely supervised the delivery of assistance from his country. The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) also sent a field mission to verify the damage in the field and presented the results in their interactions with the local level. UNESCO and the Organization of American States were also present before delivering aid for education and health infrastructure.

The discourse of emergency made possible the deployment of techniques to exercise sovereign power—in this case, from international agencies (Adey et al. 2015)—that

Fig. 2 Relationships among actors at different scales in the response phase of the 1985 San Antonio earthquake in Chile. The size of the nodes represents the number of appearances in the press releases, while thickness of the links represents the number of relationships between the actors



- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Central scale | 6. Business associations |
| 2. Regional scale | 7. Banking system |
| 3. Local scale | 8. Academia |
| 4. International scale | 9. Grassroots |
| 5. Private scale | 10. NGOs |

in the military context did not need means for its validation and legitimization with the rest of the actors.

5.5 Private Sector

The role of the private sector developed mainly through controversy. The first of these was the responsibility of real estate developers for the damages to housing, since one of the measures of the military regime was the suppression of public technical supervision of the construction processes. This type of speculative urbanism implies the suspension of basic human and civil rights. The way to do it is through a confusing network of formal and informal, legal and illegal, actions that alter urban forms (McFarlane 2012). In this speculative space there is also a private interest that mobilizes it, but it is a more covert form of interest than the public-private partnership that has been the legitimate way of installing a neoliberal mode of urban management and governance.

The second controversy was more veiled and involved the discussion of raising taxes for obtaining the reconstruction funds. In the end, the authorities opted for indebtedness to international banks through neoliberal tools such as policy adjustment and experimental reforms (Peck et al. 2009) and raised taxes only for luxury items.

The relationship with the central scale left the private sector isolated, with no links to other actors. This, however, is not a problem for these agents since the disaster capitalism approach establishes that the business class can benefit directly from disasters, as well as introduce neoliberal reforms (Sandoval et al. 2020).

5.6 Business Associations

The business associations could present their demands and needs directly to the central level, both to the President and to the Ministers of Economy, Finance, and Agriculture. Several business associations had a similar dynamic of identifying two stages in the relationship with the central level. The first was characterized by an unrestricted support of the government's management and by a call for private cooperation to achieve recovery progress. The Confederation of Production and Commerce (CPC), for example, created a solidarity fund where the different branches' associates contributed money and construction materials. But as time went by, a gap opened up between business associations and the government as it became clear that the government's assistance to the productive sectors had not been complete or was slowing down. Therefore, although in a first stage the business associations positioned themselves as collaborators and donors for the recovery and reconstruction, in a second stage, when the time came to request support from the government, they primarily did so from national funds or by

using the government's negotiation mechanisms, instead of incurring debt with private banks (see Fig. 2). This was part of the early pressure to install neoliberalism in Chile, where the privatization of the public sector started by covering the needs of private stakeholders to develop their plans.

5.7 Banking System

The installation of a neoliberal logic was evident in the issue of financing for the consequences of the earthquake. Credit logic was favored as the principal financing strategy. The IDB and the World Bank were the leading agencies the government resorted to, despite the consequences of the financial crisis of 1981, which included among its causes over-indebtedness in foreign public debt.

The earthquake's aftermath was fertile ground for the generation of an urban entrepreneurialism in a public-private duet that presented economic development as an objective. This is generated from a speculative environment, and responds to political and economic purposes, turning the territories into a platform to achieve them (Harvey 2007). The deregulation encouraged by the private sector is where legal-political frameworks for market solutions are established (Jessop 2002).

5.8 Academia

Given the lack of professionals for technical supervision after the earthquake, the universities used their students to determine which houses could be repaired. This is represented in the link between the local scale and academia (see Fig. 2). Nevertheless, the mayors prioritized demolishing any house or building that showed signs of damage. The manager of the College of Architects pointed out that a "psychosis of the pickaxe" was developing, a desire to destroy everything that was damaged.

Even though the earthquake occurred on the coast, risk studies were not identified as a priority for the location of new housing. This demonstrates what Donovan (2017) points out regarding the topologies of knowledge in the context of disasters, where the location of knowledge is related to power structures and geopolitical representations. In the case of the 1985 San Antonio earthquake evidence-based knowledge was utterly ignored, as the decision-making processes were developed in closed vertical spaces—both spatially and relationally.

5.9 Grassroots

Regarding the grassroots or social organizations, their agency power did not reach the media nor generated the journalistic echo that other sectors or scales achieved, such as that of the business associations. Residents faced with

demolition decisions by the municipalities were left without a transitory response, only with the option to freeze their housing loans while the reconstruction of the houses was being carried out. There is agreement that no help arrived from the government or the municipalities, which forced residents to seek individual solutions. Additionally, in the cases where relocation was chosen over reconstruction, it is possible to observe a disintegration of the social fabric as families were relocated without thinking about the design of the housing units inside the communes and the city.

In parallel, the government was skillful in establishing the idea of self-reliance and determination, a kind of anticipated resilience concept. From the first days, Pinochet pointed out that the main help is the one that comes from oneself, a discourse that ministers, the governor, and several mayors echoed. Despite these statements, the grassroots organizations directed their actions towards the central and regional scales, given the little help they received from the municipalities at the local scale, demonstrating that Chile's centralized approach to disaster risk governance leaves few opportunities for grassroots organizations to be part of the decision-making processes (Sandoval et al. 2021).

5.10 Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs)

Similar to what happened to civil society, the work of NGOs was not described in the press, except for those institutions recognized by the government, such as the Red Cross or the CEMA Chile Foundation (Chilean Mothers' Centers, directed by Pinochet's wife), which were dedicated to the collection of aid such as clothes and food. This explains why this governance scheme is only related to the central level and there are no links with the local or grassroots levels, which would be the expected scenario.

The bottom-up response has been widely studied and promoted within the DRM framework but insists on the need for articulated coordination with the central level, so that the top-down approach has a consistent application within the territories (Aldrich 2019). The absence of NGOs in the press does not mean that they did not participate in the response phase, but like the media, the organizations had to deal with pressures from the military regime.

6 Conclusion

Disaster risk governance for the 1985 San Antonio earthquake in Chile shows the necessity to analyze the event under the assemblage theory, understanding it as a historically and spatially situated practice, which defines to a large extent how developed the response phase was, and also identifies the gaps in disaster management.

From the historic peculiarities of the event, this assemblage is situated in the exceptional context of a fully installed dictatorship that tried to legitimize its sovereignty through constitutional and legal processes. As any other regime born from a takeover by force, it shows its authentic self through the systematic execution of decisions outside the institutional framework and by being considerably vertical.

The axes within the assemblage cover the whole territory of the Metropolitan Region of Santiago with its different scales and respective actors. However, the different levels are not represented in an equal manner. The central scale occupied mainly by Pinochet and moderately by his cabinet reveals a strong centralism, even personalism, in decision making, despite the fact that the institutional design gives these competencies to the Ministry of the Interior. The military hierarchy of the time achieved a deployment in a space transformed through the earthquake in physical terms and fills a political space transfigured by an overrepresentation of central level agents and their associates, such as the banking system and business associations.

This assemblage was the product of a process of deterritorialization: the coup d'état of 1973 that swept Pinochet into power. To legitimize itself it had to resort to coercion to establish authority. Within this new assemblage, both deterritorialization and reterritorialization processes took place. In the first case, the leaps in scale from the central level annulled the agency of the local scale, destabilizing its capacity to deal with the effects of the earthquake and isolating it from the decision-making processes. The absence of other leaderships led to processes of reterritorialization where the surplus of power ended up concentrated at the central level, keeping territorial and social functions fixed.

This power surplus took the form of an exception through the Emergency General Headquarters. The creation of this body did not respond to any instruction or suggestion emanating from the regulations and legislation in force, and its structure recreated the forms of governance typical of a military regime. The Emergency General Headquarters represented a reterritorialization exercise as a material expression of the assemblage. The expressive role of the assemblage took shape in the pressure exerted by the private sector and business associations to use the State's capacity to negotiate with international banking, despite the installation of a neoliberal economic policy promoted by the same military regime.

But this control and centralization of the disaster response phase did not significantly impact the solutions provided to the victims. Although the military regime avoided bureaucratic entanglement, it did not have a relationship with the rest of the actors from whom a complete knowledge of the victims' needs came from, which led to controversies over the slowness of the response to the most urgent needs, such as the construction of shelters. But despite their scarce

representation in the official press, residents and their leaders agree that aid on the ground never arrived, not even in places identified with more significant damages, which mobilized said residents and leaders to deploy their agencies and techniques. Vertical governance structures only reinforce a centralism that does not trigger better management of the disaster response phase.

In methodological terms, adopting the assemblage approach allows for the use of “simpler” techniques that address the complexity they shape and sustain. Among the options it is possible to find historical description with new interpretative resources that respect historical and site conditions. However, in the context of dictatorship, access to documentary sources presents biases that should be considered in the source analysis. With these considerations it is possible to arrive at context responses that synthesize the assemblage, identifying gaps, new elements, and actors in the response phase within DRG.

In particular, the response phase has been little studied in disaster studies. The review of this case study reveals the need to delve deeper into this phase since the following reconstruction phase depends on whether the disaster consequences can be contained or amplified.

The contribution of assemblage thinking to disaster risk governance studies is reflected in the Chilean case as it encompasses the complexity of a disruptive event in its various dimensions and scales. The strong centralism of the political regime was not enough to prevent the entry of new actors and agencies, nor was it rigid enough to implement exception policies. But it was sufficiently coercive to override other agencies that had to find their own aid mechanisms, providing evidence that authoritarian governments do not necessarily display better management during the disaster response phase.

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