

Book Review

Disasters without Borders: The International Politics of Natural Disasters
by John Hannigan, U.S.: Wiley, 2012, 256 pp.

Natural disasters have social and economic impact in the affected country but measuring them is difficult. The book titled "*Disasters without Borders: The International politics of natural disasters*" by John Hannigan is divided into nine chapters: (i) the disasters politics nexus; (ii) the global policy field of natural disasters; (iii) the kindness of strangers; (iv) a safer world?; (v) climate of concern; (vi) disasters politics as game playing; (vii) mass media and the politics of disasters; (viii) disasters politics: a discursive approach; (ix) conclusion. This book is a retrospective multi-disciplinary analysis of the impact of natural disasters from a political, institutional, sociological, technological, historical, and economical perspective. The first chapter attempts to provide a simple and applicable definition of "disaster" and the nexus that exists between natural disasters and politics. The second chapter can be summarised in the words of John Hannigan:

"The disaster risk reduction and various multi-actors initiatives and partnerships that it has nurtured are increasingly popular at the World Bank. Therefore, the international politics of disasters takes the shape of a "global policy field" with nine major categories of organizational players who populate four overlapping discursive realms: disaster, risk and safety, international development, humanitarian aid, and environmentalism and climate change."

In fact, the global policy field for natural disasters can be considered an interaction between internal-external factors and the relationship between civil society, government, private sector, and international cooperation to solve in the short or long run the damage of any natural disaster respectively. Hence, any natural disaster can have a potentially large impact on the country but measuring its social and economic impact is very difficult. Natural disasters disrupt social and economic activity in the short run but in the long term, however, the negative economic impact of natural disasters tends to fade.

Given the potentially significant effect of natural disasters on social problems and economic growth, it is important for policymakers and emergency agencies to have an accurate estimation of the impacts. However, this is difficult given the difficulty in estimating and surrounding to quantifying those effects. This book was inspired by natural disasters

inflicting damage on the global economy; most countries are not spared by havoc caused by natural disasters. In the evaluation section of this book, Hannigan provides a toolkit of models and techniques to evaluate the impact of natural disasters as below:

- i. The shaking intensity map which relies on a quantitative technique that permits a more quantitative understanding of the location and extend of losses for the insurance industry.
- ii. The natural disasters vulnerability evaluation (NDVE) model - to evaluate the impact of natural disasters on GNP growth. The model is based on five basic indicators - (i) the natural disaster growth rates (α_i); (ii) the national natural disasters vulnerability rate (Ω_T); (iii) the natural disaster devastation magnitude rate (Π); (iv) the economic degrowth rate (δ); (v) and the NHV Surface. Furthermore, this model is based on an alternative mathematical approach analysis framework from a multidimensional perspective. This model is premised on the fact the NDV will contribute toward a more systematic and accurate measurement of the economic impact of natural disasters.
- iii. Quantitative models are also discussed such as spatial modelling and economic impacts of disasters; natural disasters and growth: going beyond the averages; economic modelling for disaster impact analysis; modelling regional economic resilience to disasters: a computable general equilibrium analysis of water service disruptions. We can observe that most of these models are focused on real physical infrastructure damage that affect consumption and production directly.

Reconstruction efforts post- natural disasters, need new techniques and models based on multi-disciplinary approaches involving policy makers, emergency managers, first respond agencies, aid agencies, and scientists together. The major contribution of this book is its critical analysis and extensive discussion of natural disasters and post-natural disasters reconstruction efforts as well as recovery coordination involving the community. In fact, the author states the long-term recovery model is based on the use of advanced technologies and international cooperation.

In conclusion, the social and economic impacts of natural disasters depend on the country's geographic vulnerability to natural disasters and the devastation caused by any natural disaster, which has an impact on its economic performance. A more useful measurement of impact is conducive

for appropriate policies and reconstruction plans of contingency and prevention, both for dealing with the effects of natural disasters and also for anticipatory policy measures which seek to lessen the impact of natural disasters before they occur. At a broader level, our results confirm that natural disasters can have a significant social and economic impact even in advanced countries such as US, Europe, Japan, and other countries with good infrastructure and high level of preparedness. The inescapable policy implications for developing countries and least developed countries, which tend to suffer the bulk of natural disasters, is that investing in anticipatory measures may yield sizable benefits in the medium and long term even though they can be costly in the long run. Anticipatory measures can reduce the extent of damage, loss of life and disruption to economic activity.

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