

IMPROVING THEORY AND RESEARCH ON HAZARD MITIGATION: POLITICAL ECONOMY AND ORGANIZATIONAL PERSPECTIVES*

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INTRODUCTION

Hazard mitigation is typically defined as "policies and actions taken before an event which are intended to minimize the extent of damage and injury when an event does occur" (Drabek, Mushkatel, and Kilijanek 1983, p. 12). Of the four key disaster phases or management tasks (mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery), mitigation has been studied the least (Drabek 1986a) and is probably the least well understood.

This paper opens with a discussion of the progress that has been made to date in research and theory on mitigation. It goes on to suggest approaches that, by addressing neglected aspects of mitigation-related issues, may improve our understanding of the topic. Woven through the paper are calls for several shifts in emphasis with respect to studies on mitigation: (1) from a social system, consensus model to a conflict model on society and community; (2) from an event-based, discontinuous concept of disaster and mitigation to a view that stresses the continuity between ongoing social life and the disruption occasioned by natural and technological agents; (3) from the study of the social consequences of

*This paper was undertaken with partial support from the National Science Foundation, Grants ECE-8600292 and CES-8804301. I wish to thank Gary Kreps, Elliott Mittler, and William Regensburger for their comments and suggestions on previous drafts. Thanks also to Lee Clarke, who, through his writings and our long conversations on the social dimension of risk, has influenced my thinking in the area, and E.L. Quarantelli for suggesting directions in which to take this analysis. The ideas expressed are mine alone; they do not necessarily reflect the views of the NSF or the scholars named here.