Shaping policy for development

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Don’t they know IT’S MORE FUN IN THE PHILIPPINES since Typhoon Haiyan?

Local and foreign perception of relief, recovery and resilience since the November 2013 disaster.

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Why topical?

- New sustainable development goals are imminent to succeed the rather narrow UN MDGs of 2000-2015
- UN Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction takes place next month in Sendai – near the epicentre of the undersea earthquake and tsunami which caused the Fukushima nuclear accident [it aims to replace the now expired Hyogo Framework for Action].
- Typhoon Haiyan occurred on 7/8 November 2013 i.e just in time for the last two months of the calendar year for which the UK was aiming to achieve its target of 0.7% ODA:GNI for the first time.

The Argument

- Development…
- Development cooperation…
- Relief assistance…

…ought to be simple and straightforward.

- Unlike a disaster-reporter, I am used to doing research which is based on evidence (and applied theory), in full recognition of the political dimension (especially of aid politics).
- I am also aware of principal-agent dilemmas and of the tendency of aid to encourage rent-seeking behaviour.

Yet even quite simple nostrums of aid, development and relief are nowadays often presented differently and sometimes inflated out of proportion.

Mrs Grace Penaroyo standing in front of her house in Coron Town fourteen months after Typhoon Haiyan had passed, taking off her roof. She still lives there.

Source: Adrian Hewitt, 16 January 2015

Mrs Penaroyo's house showing the neighbouring CARITAS House, strongly built with its roof intact.

Source: Adrian Hewitt, 16 January 2015

Some incontrovertible facts

- Typhoon Haiyan made landfall in the Philippines on the night of 7/8 November 2013
- The Philippine Islands are regularly subject to 19 or 20 typhoons per year; there is a Typhoon Season.
- Additionally, being an archipelago, the Philippines has a long coastline (possibly the sixth longest in the world); mainly Filipinos live by the sea and depend on fish for their livelihood; the Philippines are also in the Asian Ring of Fire, so suffering from irregular earthquakes and volcanoes.
- Much of the Philippines enjoy a tropical climate, although there are distinct differences in climate between the regions.

Causes of noise that can accompany disasters (and disaster reporting)

- Social media
- Public relations and corporate communications
- 24-hour News channels or network/cable TV (even exclusive weather channels)
- ‘Breaking News’
- NGOs tending to become corporate since Geldof/Bono in Ethiopia (“Don’t they know they’re patronising?” nowadays?)
- Official aid agencies adopting confused notions of (development) assistance.
- UN MDGs and UN DRR monoliths.
- Other donor or agency rigidities.

Hyperbole and Litotes

Strongest…
Biggest…
Best-funded…

Why the hyperbole?
Why, in some cases, even the litotes?
Better to stick to the facts?

The joys of:
“Small Earthquake in Chile: Not many Dead” (one-time Times headline)

Additionally:
Lack of understanding of **rent-seeking** behaviour (in developed as well as developing countries)

Research Framework

My research was conducted in two three-month bursts of activities in the period **1 December 2013 until 22 January 2014** in all four of the main archipelago of the Philippines. It is a collection of perception of facts rather than the facts themselves.

The geographical coverage was:

- Luzon
- Visayas
- Mindanao
- Palawan

i.e. I visited all four archipelagos.

(Unlike Typhoon Haiyan [Yolanda] which itself “visited” (i.e. affected directly) only two of them: the Visayas and the northern tip of Palawan).

I also visited the Asian Development Bank which has its HQ on Luzon.

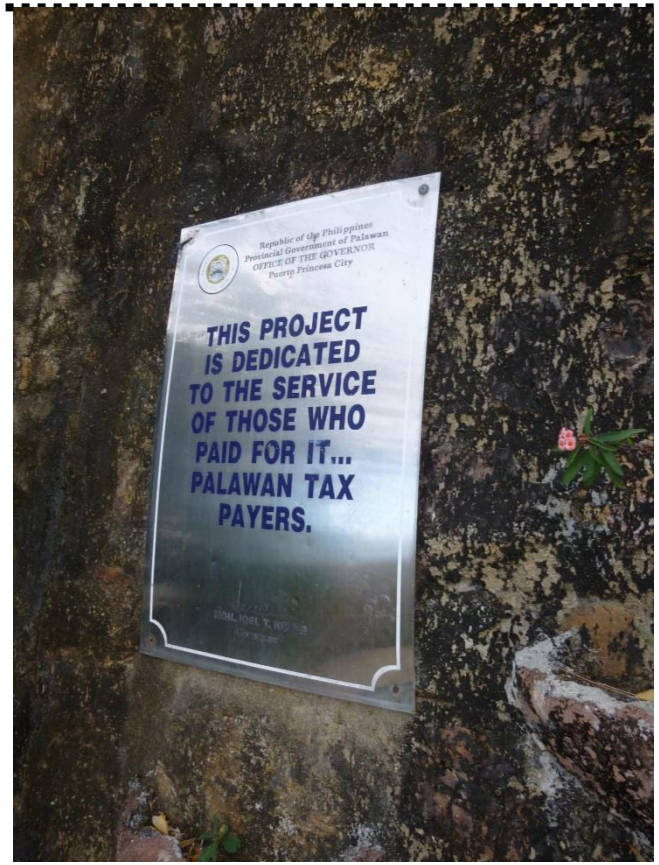
The Findings

- Relative magnitudes
- Hype
- Filipino perceptions
  - of their (central, presidential) Government
  - of their local Governments
  - of foreigners generally and of foreign assisters in particular

- National interest in relief, recovery, resilience and disaster risk reduction

<u>Envoi/Conclusion</u>

- Resilience and self help
- Increasing respect for public goods (after “300 year in a monastery followed by fifty years in Hollywood, followed by a series of crooked presidents).
- The future role of international public goods provision



There is a role for domestic public spending after all….

Source: Adrian Hewitt, December 2014

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