PANACEA OR PROBLEM
Comparing Governance Structures For Disaster Recovery

ABSTRACT

Parallel governance structures, entities vested with special authority and powers that allow them to bypass the established norms and procedures of governance, have increasingly become the normative model for governments to coordinate and execute recovery from catastrophic disasters in international contexts. Yet, the academic literature on these structures is extremely limited. Based primarily on a review of secondary sources, this paper compares parallel governance structures established after the 2001 Gujarat Earthquake in India (Gujarat State Disaster Management Authority), the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami in Japan (National Reconstruction Agency), and the 2015 Gorkha Earthquake in Nepal (National Reconstruction Authority). The paper argues that, although parallel governance structures are often framed as a panacea in post-disaster contexts, they fail to ensure an efficient and speedy recovery; and they undermine local governments. The paper concludes with policy recommendations and future directions for research on post-disaster governance.

KEYWORDS
disaster recovery, disaster governance, disaster response, recovery organizations
1. INTRODUCTION

This paper compares state-based parallel structures of governance set up to address post-disaster recovery across multiple countries. Parallel structures of governance have increasingly become the normative model for governments to respond to and recover from catastrophic disasters. These structures can be defined as entities vested with special authority and powers that allow them to bypass the established norms and procedures of governance and work across and outside of conventional governmental boundaries to co-ordinate and execute disaster reconstruction and recovery. Although the reasons for the establishing of parallel structures vary, some of the common arguments are that the current system of governance is slow, inefficient, and inadequate to address the rapidly shifting and dynamic conditions of post-disaster recovery (e.g., Takeda 2006); and that disaster recovery is an emergency situation that warrants emergency measures including a special entity set up to solely focus on recovery issues and mitigate crises without the distractions of day-to-day governance. Another view is that a powerful structure established outside the current system of governance can check corruption and offer greater accountability during post-disaster reconstruction. This paper questions whether parallel governance structures that are created after a disaster and that lie outside the domain of established modes of governance in a government are truly efficient and better. It argues that such structures often do not live up to their premise and fall short, particularly with regard to efficiency and speed, and they undermine local governments.

Although there are various perceptions of governance, broadly, “governance comprises the complex mechanisms, processes and institutions, through which citizens and groups articulate
their interests, mediate their differences and exercise their legal rights and obligations…governance encompasses the state, but it transcends the state by including the private sector and civil society organizations” (UNDP 1997, 12-13). Functions that were previously carried out by public entities are now dispersed among a diverse set of actors including government institutions, the private sector and the civil society (Tierney 2012). Yet, the topic of governance has received little attention in the hazards and disaster scholarship. The focus of disaster scholarship has tended to be on “government activities, such as legislation, regulation, and governmental planning as opposed to governance” (Tierney 2012, 342). Moreover, studies on disaster governance have focused on emergency management systems that involve mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery processes (e.g., Petak 1985; McLoughlin 1985; Pal et al. 2017). Other studies have looked at the concept of disaster risk governance and risk reduction policies (e.g. Ahrens & Rudolph 2006; Garschagen 2016; Jones et al. 2013; Pelling 2011), examined public expectations of government response to disaster (e.g., Chamlee-Wright & Storr 2010), and on the importance of civil society during pre-disaster preparedness (Marcelin et al. 2016; Ng 2016), post-disaster response (e.g., Marcelin et al. 2016) and recovery (e.g., Aldrich 2011; Nakagawa & Shaw 2004; Ng 2016; Patterson et al. 2010). While studies that examine post-disaster recovery governance has steadily grown over the last few decades (e.g., Blanco 2015; Cho 2014; Fan 2015; Kapucu 2009; Sandoval & Voss 2016; Sapat & Esnard 2011), more insights are needed (Cho 2014; Tierney 2012). For instance, Tierney (2012) argues a need for research that critically explores the assumptions that underpin discourses regarding disaster governance through comparative approaches.
Governance arrangements and stakeholder participants vary across disaster phases (i.e., preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation) (Tierney 2012). This paper focuses on governance during the recovery phase of disasters that includes short- and long-term recovery programs and interventions to reduce future disaster losses. It also focuses primarily on the State, defined to include political and public sector institutions (UNDP 1997), to examine parallel governance structures employed by governments to carry out post-disaster recovery activities and programs. We refer to governance structures utilized by governments as state-based governance.

The paper examines three state-based parallel governance structures set up after disasters: the Gujarat State Disaster Management Authority (GSDMA) established after the 2001 Gujarat earthquake in India; the National Reconstruction Agency (the Agency) established after the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami in Japan; and the National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) established after the 2015 Gorkha earthquake in Nepal. Issues unique to post-disaster governance are complex and broad in scope, but are largely missing from scholarly discussions on disaster governance. The significance of this paper is three fold. First, we examine post-disaster recovery governance, an under studied aspect of disaster governance that has tended to largely focus on risk and management. Second, we conduct a cross comparison of three post-disaster governance cases. Comparative approaches are scarce in the disaster governance scholarship but are important in providing a critical lens to examine underlying assumptions. Third, the paper focuses on governance structures utilized by governments and the assumptions that underlie such structures, an area that has received little attention in the literature.
The paper provides a review of the literature on governing disaster recovery in the next section. We then detail our research methods and present the key areas we have identified to evaluate post-disaster state-based governance structures in India, Japan and Nepal. While all three cases lie outside of Euro-American contexts, the authors expect the findings of this paper to provide lessons that would be of particular interest to public and civil society entities engaged in disaster recovery efforts globally. We conclude the paper with a comparative discussion of key challenges, policy implications and future research directions.

2. GOVERNING DISASTER RECOVERY

The global increase in the frequency of disasters has produced an increasingly complex landscape of disaster governance due to involvement of a wide range of institutions and actors after disaster events. This includes international institutions such as the United Nations and the World Bank, civil society institutions, and non-governmental organizations from local to global scales (Tierney 2012). According to Tierney (2012, 342-343), “the movement from government to governance is a reflection of large-scale social changes that include the rise of practices such as contracting and outsourcing; the emergence of new forms of collaboration including public-private partnerships and joint ventures; and the replacement of hierarchical bureaucratic systems of control with more decentralized network forms of organization.”

Yet, the approach to disaster governance, carried out through a collection of loosely related regulatory instruments, policies and processes, has remained fragmented and patchy (Fisher 2007). It has resulted in duplication of efforts, delays in the delivery of crucial goods and services during disaster recovery, and poor coordination of activities among pre- and post-
disaster phases (Fisher 2007; IFRC 2007; Jones et al. 2014). Disaster recovery governance studies have broadly looked at the impact of governance system and institutions on affected communities, specifically these communities’ exclusion from decision-making due to lack of empowerment and participation in post-disaster governance (e.g., Fan 2015; Ng 2016; Van Voorst 2016). Studies have also focused on informal channels of power within existing governance systems (e.g., Van Voorst 2016), on sustainable recovery efforts (e.g., Guarnacci 2012), on the links between social construction and policy responses in transnational governance (e.g., Sapat & Esnard 2011) and on the probability and amount of post-disaster humanitarian assistance (e.g., Atkinson 2014). Others have critiqued governance approaches that legitimize spatial and legal reorganizations following disasters for capitalist imperatives on the pretext of greater public good and economic growth (e.g., Azcárate et al. 2014; Pyles et al. 2017; Vasudevan et al. 2008).

Though government does not equal governance, state-based action is a fundamental element in disaster governance (Suzuki & Kaneko 2013; Tierney 2012). Studies that examine the state in post-disaster governance have focused on the decentralization of disaster governance from national to local governments (e.g., Cho 2014; Ng 2016; Van Voorst 2016), on the intersections between centralized and decentralized regimes of disaster governance (e.g., Bae, Joo, & Won 2016; Roberts 2008; Takeda 2006), and on inter-governmental collaboration (e.g., McGuire & Silvia 2010). Others have looked at the spatial, sectoral and institutional balkanization of governance mechanisms (e.g., Parathasarathy 2016), at disaster governance systems that impact the production and prevention of vulnerability (e.g., Sandoval & Voss 2016) and at inter-governmental shifts in responsibility and authority (e.g., de Lourdes Melo Zurita et al. 2015).
Still others have examined various governance arrangements employed by the state to respond to and recover from disasters such as adaptive (e.g., Aoki 2016; Kapucu & Sadiq 2016), collaborative (e.g., Aoki 2015; Kapucu & Sadiqu 2016), cross-sectoral (e.g., Kapucu 2009), and hybrid network governance (e.g., Hermansson 2016; Wittmann et al. 2015). Nevertheless, changing forms of government and state-based governance systems are an under-explored aspect of post-disaster recovery governance (de Lourdes Melo Zurita et al. 2015).

State-based disaster governance, shared by local, sub-national and national/federal governments (Blanco 2015), is strongly influenced by intergovernmental relations (Kapucu 2009; Tierney 2012). Governments at all levels play a crucial role “in the planning, formulation, legitimization, and implementation of policies, laws, project, programs, and initiatives related to disaster governance” (Blanco 2015, 746). However, even within countries that have systems of shared governance, the differences in power and authority among local, state (prefecture, province), and national jurisdictional levels are reflected in disaster governance (Marks & Lebel 2016; Tierney 2012).

There is some argument in favor of decentralized governance (UNISDR 2015), the devolution of fiscal, administrative, and political power and resources from central to local governments, during post-disaster recovery as a way to include local communities in rebuilding efforts on their own terms (Mansuri & Rao 2004; Taylor 2007). Yet, while responsibilities are often devolved to local governments, other aspects of disaster planning including urban planning controls and land use planning may remain prescriptive and top-down (de Lourdes Melo Zurita, et al. 2015). Local governments can also lack sufficient authority, material and financial resources, or trained staff.
to deal with large-scale urban disasters (Chau, et al. 2014; Miller & Douglass 2015) and may not understand how to manage the complex network of post-disaster intervention, i.e., the complexity of post-disaster governance (Lassa 2015). Moreover, participatory governance mechanisms can be pushed aside by local power relations and patronage networks during complex disasters when conflict and contestation over urban space are not unusual (Miller & Douglass 2015).

While decentralization creates space for local participation, during large-scale disasters, centralized government agencies frequently assert command over local governments instead of working with them as partners (Kapucu 2012; Moynihan 2009). Moreover, central authorities can use crises to enhance their legitimacy and strengthen their grip over territories and populations in ways that have little to do with the urgency of a disaster situation (Hilhorst 2013). Studies also express some concern about governance without or beyond the state, particularly in situations when state authorities might be ‘crowded out’ or ‘replaced’ by non-state actors when they are not powerful enough to assert their own authority effectively or overwhelmed by the scale of a disaster event (Jones et al. 2014; Ng 2016). States might also choose to delegate disaster governance tasks or decision-making power to others (i.e., international authorities or non-state actors) through delegation, privatization, outsourcing, or contracting-out of particular activities (e.g., de Lourdes Melo Zurita, et al. 2015; Mukherji 2016) such as housing reconstruction.

In conclusion, there are several gaps in the literature. First, studies on disaster governance have tended to focus on the concepts of disaster risk reduction or disaster management systems.
disaster recovery governance remains an under studied aspect of disaster governance. Second, although state based action is a crucial element of post-disaster recovery governance, there is a lack of understanding of governance structures employed by governments for disaster recovery. Third, the shifts, formal and informal, in responsibility and authority that occur within the state during post-disaster recovery remain an under explored aspect of disaster governance. This includes changing forms of government and state-based governance systems during post-disaster recovery. Fourth, there is a lack of studies that compare post-disaster recovery governance structures. Conducting comparative studies is important in terms of illustrating similarities and differences across the contexts in which post-disaster recovery governance structures were implemented. This study addresses the gaps identified through a cross-case comparison of state-based post-disaster recovery governance among multiple disasters across different geographic locations and time periods.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

This paper examines three state-based parallel governance structures in a post-disaster setting: the Gujarat State Disaster Management Authority (GSDMA) established after the 2001 Gujarat Earthquake in India (Mukherji 2016); the National Reconstruction Agency (the Agency) established after the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami (Mukherji et al. 2014); and the National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) established after the 2015 Gorkha Earthquake in Nepal (Mostafavi et al. 2018).

2001 Gujarat Earthquake, India

More than 20,000 people died in the 2001 Gujarat earthquake that affected 6.3 million people
and caused damage worth USD 2.6 billion (www.emdat.be, accessed October 2017). As a federal republic, India is politically and administratively decentralized, with huge variation in the scope and extent of devolution to local governments (Chaudhuri 2006). Within two weeks of the 2001 Gujarat earthquake, the Government of Gujarat (GoG) formed the GSDMA as an extra-ordinary mechanism (EOM) with the authority to make policy decisions, plan for and implement the rehabilitation and reconstruction of housing and infrastructure in the state (Thiruppugazh 2014).

2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami, Japan

Almost 20,000 people were reported missing or dead after the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami. The disaster affected more than 360,000 people and the damage was estimated at USD 210 billion (www.emdat.be, accessed October 2017). In Japan, the prime minister’s office and the cabinet direct and control the executive branch of government at the national level, with 47 prefectures that govern below the national government and municipalities below that of the prefectures (Samuels 2013). The national legislature (the Diet of Japan) passed the law to create the Agency in March 2011. The Agency became operational in February 2012 (Government of Japan-Reconstruction Agency [GoJ-RA] n.d.).

2015 Gorkha Earthquake, Nepal

The earthquake claimed 8,969 lives and affected 5,642,150 lives; and its damages were estimated to be USD 5.174 billion (www.emdat.be, accessed October 2017). Nepal has a highly centralized government that has been transitioning, since the promulgation of its constitution in September 2015, to become a federal democratic government (World Bank 2017a). Its local governments are divided into districts with District Development Committees (DDCs), that are further sub-
divided into municipalities and Village Development Committees (VDCs). VDCs are composed of wards, the lowest level of service delivery in the country (World Bank 2017b). The Government of Nepal (GoN) passed the Reconstruction Act to formally establish the NRA in December 2015; it became operational in January 2016 (Himalayan Times 2017).

The three countries were selected for this cross comparison due to multiple reasons. First, all three countries created new governance structures to focus on post-disaster reconstruction, creating a common context for comparing state-based post-disaster recovery governance. Second, the three countries offer the opportunity to cut across multiple sites albeit within the larger Asian geographical context and time periods allowing for a critical lens of cross-comparison of governance structures for post-disaster recovery. Third, the cases provide examples of governance structures utilized by governments that exist on a continuum of a range of parallel governance systems that are different in the ways they have been set up, managed and terminated.

The paper is based mainly on secondary data. Secondary sources utilized include policy documents (e.g., Japan’s National Reconstruction Agency’s Reconstruction Policy), government reports (e.g., Nepal Government National Planning Commission’s Post Disaster Needs Assessment), reconstruction plans published on national and local government websites (e.g., Sendai City’s Reconstruction Plan, Japan), news accounts (e.g., Asahi Shinbum, Himalayan Times), and international and non-governmental organization publications (e.g., updates available on U.N. Cluster websites). Moreover, the authors are deeply familiar with all three projects having conducted in-depth field research at each of the sites. On-site research included interviews with government officials directly involved in state-based post-disaster recovery
governance. This knowledge based on rich primary source data also informs the paper.

We identify three common elements that characterize state-based parallel structures of governance. One, they are established immediately following a disaster event to plan, coordinate and execute disaster recovery and reconstruction. Two, they are vested with special powers that allow them to bypass the established norms and procedures of state-based governance. Three, they draw from governmental resources (i.e., administrative and technical staff, facilities). Although they have multiple elements in common, these structures are not equally parallel. They are often different in the ways they have been set up, managed and terminated. Such structures are framed as a way to improve the efficiency and speed of post-disaster governance by harnessing the uncertainties and complexities of disaster recovery processes. In this paper, we argue that these structures however, are unable to ensure an efficient and speedy recovery and often undermine local governments.

4. GOVERNING THROUGH PARALLEL STRUCTURES

By examining the three cases described in the previous section, we identified five key areas that can be utilized to assess state-based post-disaster recovery governance: creation and establishment that looks at the formation of the new entity for post-disaster recovery governance within each country; organizational structure that outlines governmental actors and units within the newly established entity for recovery governance and the hierarchy of decision making structure; roles and responsibilities that highlights the jurisdictional and management responsibilities of the newly formed entity including those of governmental actors and units within the governance structure; timeline to project completion that provides information on
sunset clause for the new disaster recovery governance entity; local level involvement examines the extent of local municipal involvement in decision-making during the post-disaster recovery process.

4.1. Gujarat State Disaster Management Authority (GSDMA), 2001 Gujarat Earthquake, India

Creation and Establishment: The GSDMA, formed as an extra-ordinary mechanism (EOM) just two weeks after the earthquake, was registered as a ‘Society’ under the 1860 Societies Registration Act. Registered societies in India are non-profit non-government organizations, a designation that gave the GSDMA “autonomy and flexibility in implementing a highly complex reconstruction program” while “equipped with the powers required for implementation” (GSDMA 2002, 30). It was “created as a single window to deal with reconstruction activity, with rules of business different from government” (Thiruppugazh 2014, 29). It was subsequently converted from an EOM to a permanent statutory body (i.e., with power to enact legislation) and the highest state level authority for disaster management through the 2003 Gujarat State Disaster Management Act (GSDM Act) (Thiruppugazh 2014).

GSDMA was envisioned as a nodal coordinating agency (Mishra 2012). The Governing Body of the GSDMA with the Chief Minister of Gujarat as Chairman ensured the involvement of the highest political executive in the state (Mishra 2012; Thiruppugazh 2014). The need for “an efficient and responsive institutional mechanism” (GSDMA 2002, 30) to deal with the “enormous challenge of implementing an emergency reconstruction program”(GSDMA 2002, 30) was the justification for constituting the GSDMA. The agency was accorded the powers of
the cabinet “to facilitate quick decision-making and faster implementation of the program avoiding bureaucratic hurdles and delays…decisions taken by the GSDMA were implemented as if they were the decisions of the cabinet” (Thiruppugazh 2014, 29).

Organizational Structure: The GSDMA Governing Body comprised nine members that included cabinet ministers and senior government officials (GSDMA 2002). The senior management team of the GSDMA included a Chief Executive Officer (CEO), two Additional (Assistant) CEOs, a Joint CEO, a Chief Engineer, a Controller of Accounts and two Directors, drawn mostly from top-ranking bureaucrats and other departments in the state government on deputation. Management, technical and accounting consultants were engaged on contract basis to support the GSDMA in its regular functioning (see figure 1). A Central Implementation Review Group (CIRG) chaired by the Chief Secretary was formed to monitor implementation (Mishra 2012; Thiruppugazh 2014).

At the district (regional) level, an executive committee chaired by the Kutch District Collector coordinated and implemented the reconstruction program (GSDMA 2002). The GSDMA also established local Area Development Authorities (ADAs) in each of the four impacted urban areas (i.e., Bhuj, Bachhau, Anjar, Rapar) and appointed handpicked Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) to head each authority. The justification for the creation of the ADAs was that “the local municipalities were not in a position to undertake the massive task of planning of urban areas and their new infrastructure” (Mishra 2012, 123). The CEOs were drawn from the Gujarat Administrative Services (GAS) and at the rank of Additional Collector (Asian Development Bank-ADB, 2008; GSDMA 2002; Mishra 2012). The Kutch District Collector was appointed the
Chairman of the Bhuj ADA and the District Development Officer (DDO) as the Chairman of the Bachhau, Anjar and Rapar ADAs (Mishra 2012).

Roles and Responsibilities: The GSDMA was envisioned as a single window mechanism for coordinating with all relevant departments, external agencies and lending institutions, and by nesting all three key functions (i.e., policy-making, implementation and procurement) within itself (Thiruppugazh 2014). The CEO supported by the Additional CEOs exercised all executive

**Figure 1**: GSDMA Organizational Structure, India (Source: Adapted from Mishra 2012, 120)
powers within GSDMA for the overall management and implementation of the program. The Governing Body formulated policies and guidelines. The implementation of works and procurement of goods and services were the responsibility of line departments (i.e., departments performing core functions) referred to as Implementing Agencies (IAs) (e.g., Urban Development, Roads & Buildings, Water Resources) with overall coordinating and monitoring through the GSDMA. Each IA formed a project implementation cell to monitor and mange the program. Engineering departments and divisions provided field support as and when needed, whereas specialized tasks were outsourced (GSDMA 2002; Mishra 2012).

Gujarat Urban Development Company (GUDC), the state level IA for urban infrastructure (ADB 2008; GSDMA 2002), was responsible for planning, procurement, design, supervision and implementation of urban housing and infrastructure (GSDMA 2002; Kishore 2006). It was tasked with land acquisition where necessary for the purpose of infrastructure construction and upgrading. The ADAs were the city/town level IAs tasked with planning, preparing, implementing and enforcing development regulations and for upgrading/creating urban infrastructure (GSDMA 2002; Mishra 2012).

**Timeline to Completion:** Unlike other disasters in India (e.g., the 1993 Maharashtra Earthquake), the EOM in Gujarat was not temporary. The GSDMA was envisioned as a permanent entity through the 2003 GSDM Act with the mandate for long-term disaster management and risk reduction in Gujarat state, including preparedness, response and mitigation. It has continued to function through budgetary and political support (Thiruppugazh 2014).
Local Level Involvement: Thiruppugazh (2014) argues that GSDMA was effective in quick decision-making by going outside government norms, by integrating bureaucratic and political actors under its umbrella. Yet, municipalities (i.e., local elected body) were ignored throughout the urban restructuring process and bypassed in all reconstruction related decision-making. In Bachhau town, for instance, the Bachhau Area Development Authority (BhADA) or Bachhau Authority, appointed by the GSDMA, coordinated and implemented the recovery program and controlled the disbursement of public assistance for housing recovery. The Bachhau Authority CEO retained autonomy to make almost all recovery related decisions in Bachhau. There was no local municipal representation during land development and housing reconstruction decisions. The municipality and the Taluka Panchayat (Five Member Council) in the town were dissolved about a month before the earthquake and elections had been scheduled. The town was under administrative rule when the disaster struck. Those who represented local residents were mainly business leaders; there was no elected Councilor from the town’s wards (Mukherji 2016).

4.2. National Reconstruction Agency (Agency), 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami, Japan (3.11)

Creation and Establishment: Within a month of the 3.11 disaster in the northeast Tohoku region of Japan, the Government of Japan (GoJ) formed the Reconstruction Design Council (henceforth referred to as the Council), an advisory panel of experts, with the mandate to develop reconstruction guidelines for the disaster impacted region. Prime Minister Naoto Kan, whose Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) had come to power in 2009 on a political platform that included ending bureaucratic control of public administration, sidestepped career bureaucrats in emergency task forces and the Council established after 3.11. The Council met 12 times and
submitted its recommendations to Prime Minister Kan on June 25, 2011 and was effectively dissolved soon after (Samuels 2013; Reconstruction Design Council 2011).

Once in power, the DPJ realized that it needed bureaucratic support in decision-making and that coordination among various national ministries was difficult to achieve solely through political appointees to key positions (Shinoda 2012; Zakowski 2015). This realization was especially acute after 3.11 and perhaps one of the reasons that led to the creation of the National Reconstruction Agency (Fukkōchō, henceforth referred as the Agency). In March 2011, the Diet of Japan, the national legislature, introduced the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake Disaster Relief and Revitalization Law to create the Agency to oversee recovery in Tohoku. Due to political events (i.e., resignation of Prime Minister Kan) it took the Diet almost nine months after the disaster to pass the bill to establish the Agency (GoJ 2011; Samuels 2013). Political infighting caused further delays and the Agency became operational in February 2012, almost one year after the disaster (GoJ-RA n.d.).

**Organizational Structure:** Established within the Cabinet, the Agency is called the ‘control tower’ to coordinate and “centrally administer reconstruction activities and cooperation with local governments” (GoJ-RA n.d.; Reconstruction Promotion Committee 2012). Headed by the Prime Minister, it is staffed by 500 public officials and overseen by a Minister for Reconstruction (see figure 2). Public officials comprise bureaucrats drawn from various national level ministries such as the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT), Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, Ministry of Environment, and the Ministry of Finance. The Agency maintains its headquarters in
Tokyo with one regional bureau each in Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima prefectures in the Tohoku region (GoJ-RA n.d.).

Roles and Responsibilities: The main role of the Agency is to “accelerate structural reconstruction and revitalization in the affected areas, by supporting implementation of government policies and managing coordination of reconstruction strategy and initiatives among various branches of government at the national level and with local municipalities” (GoJ-RA n.d.). It is also to “secure the efficient and smooth implementation” of reconstruction measures (GoJ 2011, 11). The Agency was envisioned as a nodal entity to oversee recovery, slice through bureaucratic procedures at various ministries that local governments encounter, and be “a ‘one-stop shop’ for land use projects and central assistance” (Samuels 2013, 8).

Reconstruction guidelines were formulated based on the Council’s recommendations that were
passed on to the Agency for implementation. These reconstruction guidelines from the national government through the Reconstruction Promotion Committee (henceforth known as the Committee), an advisory body to the Agency, formed the core of the recovery program.

**Timeline to Completion**: The Agency is expected to exist for no more than ten years. It is currently completing its seventh year. The timeframe for the reconstruction program was also set to be ten years. The first five years (2011-2015) were designated as ‘Concentrated or Intensive Reconstruction’ period and the next five years (2016-2020) were designated as ‘Reconstruction and Revitalization’ period (GoJ-RA n.d.). It remains unclear whether the Agency will transition some of its functions elsewhere at the end of its term.

The condensed timeline of five years for ‘Concentrated Reconstruction’ period required municipalities to prepare their reconstruction plans within the first year after the disaster. Coupled with immediate and short-term response functions such as removal of debris and weakened governments capacities at the local level (Reconstruction Promotion Committee 2012), municipalities faced difficulties creating the plans within such a short time frame.

**Local Level Involvement**: There was widespread skepticism that 3.11 would galvanize greater decentralization through substantive local decision-making that would be based on local needs; not simply decision-making based on choices created by the national government. The national government in Japan delegates much of the prefecture work. Coupled with ‘administrative guidance’, the term for a variety of “notifications, guidelines, memoranda, model legislation, and orders issued by central government agencies” (Samuels, 2013, 152) for local implementation,
both mechanisms serve to exert control over local government. After the 3.11 disaster, the
Reconstruction Promotion Committee created a menu of reconstruction options from which
municipalities chose ones that best fit their local context. Options included relocation to higher
ground, land raising parts of tsunami inundated area, combination of relocation and land raising,
and on site reconstruction with tsunami defense structures (Ubara 2015). Local municipal
governments were required to adhere to this centralized framework of menu options, with little
leeway to deviate from it. Once the reconstruction plans were finalized and approved by the
Agency, municipalities were responsible for implementation with funding from the Agency.

4.3. National Reconstruction Authority (NRA), 2015 Gorkha Earthquake, Nepal

Creation and Establishment: The establishment of NRA took about nine months. The
Government of Nepal (GoN) announced that it was establishing the NRA in June 2015, two
months after the earthquake, to coordinate reconstruction throughout the country (Kumar 2016),
and named a CEO in August 2015 (Sharma 2015). Until then, the Prime Minister led the
reconstruction efforts at the national level, mainly through the Ministry of Federal Affairs and
Local Development and the Ministry of Urban Development (Daly et al. 2017).

Although the GoN took steps to establish the agency within two months after the earthquake, the
government’s priorities shifted towards adopting Nepal’s constitution, which was followed by
ethnic conflicts, a border blockade from neighboring India and shortage of fuel and building
materials needed for reconstruction. In addition, misplaced political priorities and fights within
the government over who should lead the NRA resulted in lack of formal legal status for the
NRA until the passage of the December 2015 Reconstruction Act. In the meantime, NRA’s CEO
headed an organization that did not formally exist (Daly et al. 2017). Established through the 2015 Reconstruction Act and the appointment of a new CEO, the NRA headquarters officially started work in Kathmandu Valley in January 2016 (Himalayan Times 2017).

**Organizational Structure:** According to the GoN (2016), there are three units that have decision-making capabilities within the NRA: the National Reconstruction Advisory Council, a Steering Committee and the Executive Committee. All senior positions in the Advisory Council, Steering Committee, and the Executive Committee are held by Nepalese. The only NRA Committee that has representation from non-Nepalese is the Development Assistance Coordination and Facilitation Committee that coordinates with international aid agencies. Chaired by the Prime Minister, the National Reconstruction Advisory Council members include former Prime Ministers; heads of political parties with representation in the Parliament; members of the Parliament (e.g., those representing earthquake affected districts); NRA officials (e.g., the CEO, Secretary); and representatives from ministries and various other government agencies (e.g., the National Planning Commission, Army, Police, the Central Bank) (see figure 3). The Council also comprises five members (including two women) from universities, NGOs, and the private sector.

NRA’s central body is its Steering Committee, also chaired by the Prime Minister. Its members include former Prime Ministers; members of the parliament (e.g., the leader of Parliament’s Main Opposition Party); NRA officials (e.g., the CEO, Secretary); representatives from the ministries and various government agencies (e.g., the National Planning Commission); and three members with technical expertise nominated by the government (GoN 2016). The Steering Committee met ten times between January 2016 and August 2017 (GoN-NRA 2017). The
Executive Committee is chaired by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and includes the NRA Secretary; Secretary at the Office of the Prime Minister; Council of Ministers as designated by the Chief Secretary; and four technical experts (GoN 2016).

Figure 3: National Reconstruction Authority Organizational Structure, Nepal (Source: Adapted from Government of Nepal-NRA 2016, 27)

For implementation purposes, the NRA relies on lower levels of government. It has six sub-regional offices in the earthquake hit region to ensure coordination between central authorities and local bodies (Rastriya Samachar Samiti 2016). As noted in the Reconstruction Act (GoN 2016), at the district level, NRA’s reconstruction activities are coordinated, carried out and
monitored by District Coordination Committees. These committees are also expected to appraise the NRA activities and make recommendations related to reconstruction. District Coordination Committees include a member of the Parliament who represents the district (the Committee Coordinator), the Chief District Officer and the district’s Local Development Officer. They may invite a government official or a social activist or a woman to serve in the committee.

Roles and Responsibilities: According to the 2015 Reconstruction Act, the NRA was established to undertake reconstruction “in a sustainable, resilient and planned manner, and to promote national interests and provide social justice.” (GoN 2016, 1). Its main roles and responsibilities are: (1) “identifying priorities for reconstruction based on damage assessments” in areas determined by the NRA as earthquake affected areas; (2) “allocating reconstruction funds” from the National Reconstruction Fund in accordance with the priorities; (3) “approving plans, budgets and programmes” for reconstruction; (4) “relocation and rehabilitation” through identifying and acquiring appropriate sites; (5) “collaborating with key stakeholders,” including international, governmental, non-governmental, private sector and community actors; (6) “building implementation capacity” (e.g., through training, technical assistance); (7) “monitoring and quality control” in reconstruction (e.g., through standards, inspections, ordering of demolition of unsafe structures); and, (8) “ensuring accountability and transparency” in the reconstruction process (GoN-NRA 2016, 22).

The National Reconstruction Advisory Council, expected to meet at least once every six months, advises the Steering Committee on formulating reconstruction policies and plans and is responsible for allocating the National Reconstruction Fund dedicated for reconstruction in the
country. NRA’s Steering Committee has four main responsibilities: to approve reconstruction policies and plans prepared by the Executive Committee; to provide direction to the Executive Committee to make reconstruction effective; to approve the NRA’s budget and to approve NRA’s organizational structure. The Executive Committee exercises and performs the functions and duties of the NRA. The Executive Committee CEO prepares draft reconstruction policies and plans in collaboration with other Executive Committee members and presents them for approval by the Steering Committee. The Executive Committee CEO manages the day-to-day operations of the agency. However, as the head of both the Advisory and Steering Committees, the Prime Minister has the ultimate authority (GoN-NRA 2016).

**Timeline to Completion**: The term of the NRA is for five years. Upon expiration of NRA’s term, the government may extend the agency’s term by one year or make the necessary arrangements to transfer its functions to another agency. Due to a late start, the agency is currently completing its third year. There is a growing consensus among the stakeholders that the NRA will need additional timeframe to complete its mission in an effective manner (Bashyal 2017):

**Local Level Involvement**: Although the proposed organizational structure of the agency delegates powers to lower levels of government for implementation, lower levels of governments (e.g., municipalities, villages, wards) feel excluded from “woefully slow” reconstruction processes and demand more voice (Kaini 2017). Daly and his colleagues (2017, 417) also argue that “the failure of the NRA to work with and empower municipalities and wards has been a major strategic mistake, and has led to significant delays.” Instead, they note, the government should have relied on existing governance structures (e.g., as proposed in the 2009 National
Disaster Management Strategy) and strengthened lower levels of government (i.e., district, municipal and ward levels) to enable them to undertake greater reconstruction related responsibilities.

5. COMPARING POST-DISASTER GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES

A comparative look at the three agencies reveals certain similarities and differences among the parallel structures of governance in how quickly they were set up, the nature and extent of their authority and timeline to completion. A summary of the comparison is provided in Table 1.

First, there were significant delays in establishing the agencies in Japan and Nepal. It took about eleven and nine months respectively for the agencies to be established. In both countries, the national government had taken steps to establish the agencies immediately after the disaster. In Japan, the Reconstruction Design Council was established within a month after the 3.11 disaster to develop reconstruction guidelines. In Nepal, the government announced plans to establish the NRA and named a CEO within two months after the Gorkha earthquake. Despite these early attempts, the agencies in Japan and Nepal became operational months after the disaster-impacted areas were well into long-term recovery. The GSDMA in India was established as an EOM two months after the earthquake to respond to the disaster. Registered as a non-profit non-government organization under the existing 1860 Societies Registration Act, it was an exception to the slow pace of the setting up process of post-disaster agencies in Japan and Nepal. Second,
in Japan and Nepal, the authority of the agencies was limited only to those areas impacted by the disaster. The authority of GSDMA however extends beyond the disaster-impacted region to the entire state. This was established two years after the disaster through the 2003 GSDM Act to empower the GSDMA to carry out preparedness, response and mitigation activities in addition to recovery across the entire state (GSDMA 2003). Third, the agencies in Japan and Nepal are temporary and have limited time frames of ten and five years respectively, with possibility to extend this period. In contrast, the GSDMA was envisioned as a permanent entity and converted from an EOM into a permanent statutory body through the 2003 GSDM Act. Fourth, in all three cases, a political executive office heads the agency rendering them political in nature. The agencies comprise various units that include elected and appointed officials and representatives from the academia, non-profit and the private sector. Yet, political leaders head all three agencies namely the Chief Minister of Gujarat in India and the Prime Ministers Offices in Japan and Nepal. Politicization led to delays in establishing the agencies in both Japan and Nepal and frequent changes in leadership in Nepal (i.e., three CEOs within two years) and in India (i.e., four District Collectors within two years).

The comparative analysis also indicates multiple issues that the creation of new parallel structures of governance, immediately after a disaster, can posit. First, although each of the three countries faced challenges in setting up a new agency that was unique to their contexts, in each case, the justification for the new agency was that it created efficiencies in terms of bureaucratic coordination. The centralization of post-disaster governance in each case through the creation of a new agency was seen as a necessary step in coordinating bureaucratic decision-making at the state or national level. The underlying assumption being that this in turn would offer
coordination efficiencies. However, it is debatable whether the centralization created such coordination efficiencies. In Japan, there was skepticism that the Agency would be able to overcome the ‘evils of vertical administration’, the term used in Japan for chronic lack of coordination and jurisdictional competition among national government ministries and agencies (Samuels 2013, 8). Although the Agency was established as a ‘control tower’ to create a one-stop shop to help local governments slice through national government regulations, it was unclear whether national ministries would cede any jurisdictional authority to the Agency (Samuels 2013). Critics also argued that this approach compounded the problems of vertical administration by “dispersing legal power across headquarters, councils, working groups, and task force in a maze of understaffed, competing, and ill-conceived new organizations” (Samuels 2013, 12). In India, approval delays and coordination hiccups between the GSDMA and international funding institutions (IFI) (e.g., the World Bank (WB) and Asian Development Bank (ADB)) was attributed to GSDMA’s lack of experience in dealing with IFI procurement procedures, which the GSDMA officials in turn considered cumbersome (Tiwari 2015). In Nepal, centralization through the creation of NRA contributed to lack of coordination and confusion among lower levels of government about their role in reconstruction, in turn slowing the pace of construction (Bashyal 2017; Daly et al. 2017; Kathmandu Post 2017). We argue that while centralization might have created some bureaucratic efficiencies at higher levels of government, it also created jurisdictional competition and confusion. Moreover, such efficiencies did not necessarily trickle down across different levels of government and in particular between national or state governments and local municipal bodies.
Second, the creation of a new centralized agency in each country was also based on the premise that it would speed up recovery planning and implementation. In each of the three cases, challenges such as inter-agency or sectoral coordination and staffing issues, however, created roadblocks that often slowed the speed of recovery planning and implementation. In India, despite a centralized agency that aimed to coordinate decision-making among various departments, the lack of coordination among GSDMA funded housing reconstruction, consultant driven urban development planning, and implementation driven by the newly created ADAs led to confusion and significant reconstruction delays for households trying to repair or rebuild their homes. In Japan, the Reconstruction Promotion Committee created a reconstruction framework through a menu of options from which municipalities chose ones that best fit their local recovery plans. This framework was released after the Reconstruction Agency was operationalized in February 2012. By this time, most municipalities had already completed their initial draft plans, as required by the national government, that largely contained general policies and abstract land use concepts (Ubaura 2015). The lack of details in the local municipal draft plans created hurdles when the plans had to be reconciled retroactively with the national reconstruction framework during implementation causing significant delays. In Nepal, in part due to NRA’s inability to fill in its approved staff and technician positions that conduct inspections for disbursement of housing aid (GoN-NRA 2016; Rastriya Samachar Samiti 2017), there were significant delays in housing reconstruction inspections, especially in rural areas (Kathmandu Post 2017), slowing the pace of recovery. Critics note (Daly et al. 2017, 421) that “critical time was lost establishing the NRA, and it [the agency] was never able to build a suitable team to carry out its core mission.”

Third, we have argued that the creation of a new centralized agency in each country outside of
existing governance structures often undermines local governments. Centralized entities created outside of local municipal bodies are not accountable to local communities. They remain within a parallel structure that centralizes and controls decision-making power at the national or state level. Indeed, the need for a new agency in certain contexts has been justified more as a mechanism to arrange grants and credits from IFIs and other donors, and to manage procurement, disbursement, monitoring and evaluation for post-disaster reconstruction (Jha et al. 2010; Thiruppugazh 2014) than to coordinate with local governments. In India, most key decision-makers, planners, and implementing agencies came from outside the impacted region whose staff had little to no interaction with local government bodies prior to the disaster (Mukherji 2016). The GSDMA had appointed handpicked CEOs to the ADAs established in each of the four impacted urban areas (i.e. Bhuj, Bachhau, Anjar and Rapar) (Mukherji 2016). Though, municipalities are traditionally responsible for development planning and enforcement, there was no local municipal representation on the boards of the ADAs, which could have helped to improve the proposed plans and lend them legitimacy. Moreover, operations and management were to be eventually handed over to the municipality, yet, there was no systematic process of involving municipalities and/or building local municipal capacity to enable a smooth transition (Balachandran 2010). In Japan, only one-third of local government spending is funded from local taxes, the rest comes from various transfers from the national government. The national government also has the power to grant or withhold approval for certain local policy initiatives and often places its own officials in strategic positions within local governments, e.g., vice mayors who have been delegated from MLIT (Samuel 2013). Such arrangements, which limit the power of local governments to make funding decisions based on local needs, remained in place during the reconstruction process in Tohoku. Moreover, as de Lourdes Melo Zurita and
colleagues (2015) note elsewhere, in Japan, disaster-planning aspects that included urban planning controls and land use planning remained prescriptive and top-down. In Nepal, although the proposed organizational structure of the agency delegated powers to local governments for implementation, lower levels of government (e.g., municipalities, villages, wards) felt excluded from the reconstruction processes and demanded more voice (Kaini 2017). Daly and his colleagues (2017) note that the reconstruction efforts in the country could have been better off without a newly formed, top-down agency that had no prior operations and no prior history of working with organizations in Nepal. For undertaking the responsibilities of the NRA, they argue, the government should have relied on government structures that existed prior to the earthquake (e.g., as proposed in the 2009 National Disaster Management Strategy) and strengthened lower levels of government (i.e., district, municipal and ward levels) so they could take greater responsibilities in reconstruction.

6. CONCLUSIONS

This paper questions an underlying premise of greater efficiency and speed for parallel governance structures that are created after a disaster and that lie outside the domain of established modes of governance within a government. Our findings indicate that such structures do not live up to their promise and often fall short. First, in terms of efficiency, parallel structures might be able to create limited coordination efficiencies at the state and national levels, but are unable to create efficiencies of coordination with local municipal governments. Moreover, creating a new organization immediately after a disaster during a period defined by processes compressed in time (Olshansky et al. 2012), can generate its own set of perils such as understaffed units lacking adequate experience and competing jurisdictions. Second, instead of a
more speedy process, parallel structures of governance can encounter the very same perils that they were set up to overcome, namely delays due to lack of inter-agency coordination, planning mismatch, and staff shortage. Third, parallel structures of governance often undermine local governments by centralizing the decision making process. Local municipal governments are either not included in decision-making impacting the legitimacy and transparency of decisions made for local communities or face limited decision-making powers about funding and rebuilding options that are designed to accommodate bureaucratic efficiencies rather than specific local needs.

The findings of this paper are in line with previous scholarship that note local community exclusion from decision-making due to lack of empowerment and participation in post-disaster governance (e.g., Fan 2015; Ng 2016; Van Voorst 2016), the differences in power and authority among local, state (prefecture, province), and national jurisdictional levels, which are reflected in disaster governance (Marks & Lebel 2016; Tierney 2012), the tendency of centralized government agencies to assert command over local governments instead of working with them as partners (Kapucu 2012; Moynihan 2009), and the risk of creating new institutions that end up without a clear mandate or sufficient autonomy (Jha et al. 2010). While this paper sheds much needed light on state-based parallel structures of governance established after a disaster, further research is needed to better understand post-disaster governance mechanisms among newly formed state-based agencies and IFIs and international NGOs. Studies that look at the impact on local disaster management capacity once post-disaster agencies are terminated, and research that maps post-disaster governance links among new state-based agencies and various domestic and
international entities to understand how such networks change over time and why are also needed.

The organizational models for state-based governance in post-disaster contexts are to either create a new dedicated agency, or a dedicated organization with staff drawn from existing line ministries, or carry out post-disaster reconstruction governance through existing government agencies (Jha et al. 2010; Fenglar et al. 2008). Of the three options, post-disaster governance centralized within newly created agencies is becoming more of a norm than exception (Fenglar et al. 2008). The findings of this study and previous scholarship point to the difficulty of creating new institutions from a scratch and making them efficient during the fast paced post-disaster period, which does not allow for mistakes (Olshansky et al., 2012) and can be time consuming (Inam 2005).

Nevertheless, if the decision to create a new agency has been made, first, the impetus should be to establish it immediately. In both Japan and Nepal, it took a long time for a new agency to be established. Pre-disaster legislation, as used in India, could enable an agency to be established quickly. Instead of enacting new legislation through a lengthy bureaucratic process following a disaster event, pre-disaster legislation in place could activate a coordinating agency in the event of a disaster. As part of such legislation, agency personnel, including senior leadership drawn from career bureaucrats, could be specified beforehand and selected from units that are involved in the various phases of a disaster. This could tackle staffing challenges, minimize political interference, and ensure that agency personnel have some pre-existing relationships with other actors involved in the disaster recovery process. Second, to maximize efficiencies, the pre-
disaster legislation should be prepared with input from relevant units to minimize bureaucratic competition, confusion, duplication and tension among various units and actors involved when the agency is activated. Moreover, an advisory board that includes representatives from relevant units involved in disaster response and recovery and pre-disaster preparedness should be part of such an agency. Third, the duration of a coordinating agency should be for a period of at least 10 years. A permanent agency would be more effective as they can better integrate mitigation efforts into recovery, ensure better coordination of preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation activities and have ongoing relationships with other actors likely to be involved during the event of a disaster. Fourth, the pre-disaster legislation should dedicate space to outline a framework for post-disaster governance that defines the role of local governments, involves them in the decision-making process, and includes mechanisms to build local capacities where appropriate. This could mitigate what Daly and colleagues (2017) describe as the tendency to dismiss decentralization of disaster governance in the face of an emergency.

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