Chapter 3
Responding to Socio-environmental Disasters in High-Intensity Conflict Scenarios: Challenges and Legitimation Strategies

Rodrigo Mena

Abstract This chapter reviews the process of responding to socio-environmental disasters in places affected by high-intensity levels of conflict, and explores the essential features and challenges that this type of conflict poses for disaster response. Using the notions of humanitarian arena, legitimacy, and power relationships, the chapter presents the different strategies that aid and society actors (those for whom humanitarian aid action is part of their core function and those for whom is not) use to respond in these complex settings, contributing to the study of the nexus between social conflicts and socio-environmental disasters such as earthquakes, droughts, or hurricanes. This chapter makes an original contribution to the disaster response literature by reflecting on the utility of using high-intensity conflict scenarios as an analytical category, to inform better policies and practices on disaster response in these specific types of conflict.

Keywords Disaster response · High-intensity conflict · Aid-society actors
Legitimacy · Humanitarian arena

3.1 Introduction

The earthquake in Afghanistan in 2015, as well as the decade-long drought in Somalia, exemplify the challenges faced by multiple type of actors, including local and international ones, when responding to a socio-environmental disaster[1] such as

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[1]The concept of *socio-environmental* disaster is addressed in more detail below, including an explanation of the relevance of stressing the social aspects of it. In this paper, the terms disaster and socio-environmental disaster will be used interchangeably.

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earthquakes, droughts or hurricanes, in places affected by high levels of social conflict. Access and security issues of all involved stakeholders contribute to the political and social strategies required to develop a comprehensive and effective disaster response. This chapter examines the process of disaster response in places affected by high-intensity levels of conflict. The purpose of this chapter is to contribute to disaster response policies and practice by understanding better the special features required in responding in places where, among other response challenges, wide-spread violent social conflict occurs.

The reasons for this approach are three-fold. First, multiple studies demonstrate that the occurrence of socio-environmental disasters may affect social conflict and, vice versa, social conflict affecting the response to and ocurrence of disasters (e.g. Harris et al. 2013; Nel/Righarts 2008; Spiegel et al. 2007; Wisner 2012). However, little political and academic attention has been given to the differences between multiple conflict scenarios and the unique challenges that each of them represents for disaster response. Disaster response models and international agreements do not incorporate scenarios where disasters occur in situations of conflict. For example, the Sendai Framework,[2] the most recent active and long-term international agreement on disaster risk reduction, does not mention the concept of conflict or crisis. Secondly, regardless of how unfortunate it might seem, the co-occurrence of conflict and disaster happens, especially in places with widespread violent conflict or facing a complex emergency. During the decade from 1995–2004, a total of 87% of complex emergency sites were affected by socio-environmental disasters (Spiegel et al. 2007). Despite this trend, the features of responding to disaster in places affected by violent social conflict are under-studied or addressed in overly narrow manner. Thirdly, various studies give an account of the common social base that disasters and conflicts share, stressing the need to deal with them in a coordinated manner (Bankoff et al. 2004; Hilhorst 2013b; Wisner 2012).

Exploring the multiple dynamics of the social and political aspects of the co-occurrence of disaster response and widespread violent conflict is a critical issue. Using the term *high-intensity conflict* (HIC) as an analytical category to understand disaster response, this chapter sets itself the following questions: 'what does it mean to respond to socio-environmental disasters in places affected by HIC' and 'how can actors respond?'

The chapter has four main sections. Following the introduction, the key elements of HIC and disaster response are described. Next, the challenges that this type of conflict poses for disaster response are explored, and the actors involved in the process are identified. With this discussion as a basis, the chapter then explores the

[2]This framework refers to an international document – the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015–2030) – adopted by the UN state members. It seeks to achieve in the next fifteen year the following outcome: "The substantial reduction of disaster risk and losses in lives, livelihoods and health and in the economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets of persons, businesses, communities and countries" (United Nations 2015b: 12).

strategies used by different actors enabling them to perform in a socio-environmental disaster. Finally, the conclusion offers reflections, including a critical assessment of the value of using high-intensity conflict scenarios as an analytical category to inform disaster response. A summary of the main results and a critical review of them is presented in this final section.

The chapter is also an attempt to map and document the available literature related to the question being addressed in an effort to fill the identified knowledge gap. The conceptualisation of high-intensity conflict is proposed and developed in order to add to the existing literature. The theoretical concepts of *aid-society, humanitarian arena, legitimacy, and power relationships* are introduced as a method of studying the *problematic* presented.

These four terms are crucial in addressing the issues in question. In order to understand the complex, socially-constructed nature of the response in HIC settings, it is necessary not only to know how aid agencies and all society (state and non-state) actors respond, but also to know how the response is affecting, and is affected by, their interactions. The notions of *aid-society relationships* and *humanitarian arena* offer an appropriate analytical framework to observe the complex fabric of processes and actors that each specific context presents. The basic premise of the chapter is that the response is essentially socially constructed and embedded in wider social (power) relationships and scenarios. An effective response to a disaster is enhanced when the response is legitimate in the eyes of the affected population and other stakeholders. Even under a state of emergency such as HIC in which the option of coercive power is more available, the legitimacy of aid is crucial as the access, distribution and allocation of aid, and the protection of all people involved, depends on many actors on the ground. At the same time, aid resources can also offer legitimacy to actors that seek power, including the government or contesting parties. A focus on legitimacy thus shifts attention to the everyday politics of aid delivery in which actors invest their meaning and seek to enhance their strategic interests by engaging, altering or disengaging from the terms of aid. Consequently, aspects of the legitimacy, negotiation, empowerment, and institutional change associated with the response are also reviewed to understand disaster response in HIC settings better.

Methodologically, the chapter is based on an extensive literature review on humanitarian aid, disaster response, violent social conflict, and on legitimacy and institutional power relationships. The review included books, journal articles, reports, policy documents, and protocols[3] published or released up to November

[3]'Policy documents and protocols' refer to documents written by United Nations, NGOs, donors, and other aid organisations describing procedures, norms and/or standards. E.g. The Sphere Handbook, the International Humanitarian Law, security guidelines of some NGOs.

Table 3.1 Description of interviews. *Source* The author

Code	Interviewed	Gender	Description
AC1	Academic	Male	Professor of humanitarian aid with vast experience in consultancies and evaluation
AC2	Academic	Male	Researcher on humanitarian aid with experience in projects management with international non-governmental organisations (INGOS) and the United Nations
AP1	Aid practitioner	Female	INGO project manager with more than 10 years of experience in emergency projects, some of them in HIC areas
AP2	Aid practitioner	Male	National NGO project manager with experience in emergency response and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) programmes. NGO from a HIC country
C1	Consultant	Male	International consultant on disaster risk reduction and resilience with experience working with United Nation agencies, INGOs, Donors and developmental organisations. Experience in HIC countries
B1	Aid beneficiary	Female	Beneficiary of humanitarian aid, affected by extreme drought in a HIC affected country
B2	Aid beneficiary	Male	Person affected by extreme floods in areas of high intensity conflict, who then volunteered for rescue and humanitarian relief operations

2016. It also included grey literature and audiovisual material, including blog entries, websites and documentaries.[4] After this desk research, seven interviews were carried out with two academics, two aid practitioners, one consultant and two aid beneficiaries. Table 3.1 provides more details on each interviewed. The aim of the interviews was to present and discuss the results of the literature review with different actors and identify analytical blind spots. Finally, the chapter is also to some extent informed by the author's own experience conducting fieldwork in HIC countries like South Sudan or Afghanistan, although the interviews, participant observations, and other data gathered in those cases are not formally included in this chapter.

Regarding data analysis, a thematic content analysis was carried out by tabulating all the information obtained. Analytical codes consisted of 44 initial analytical categories and the construction of new emergent sub-categories. The codes, the sample, and further information are presented in the Appendix.

[4]Grey literature is commonly unpublished and less formal information, usually defined as a 'genre of literature [that] includes theses and dissertations, faculty research works, reports of meetings, conferences, seminars and workshops, students' projects, in-house publications of associations and organizations… [forming a] body of materials that cannot be found easily through conventional channels such as publishers, but which is frequently original and usually recent' (Okoroma 2011: 789). Every time that grey literature was used, the information was validated with peer-reviewed documents, official data and statistics, or via interviews and triangulation of the information presented.

3.2 Unwrapping High-Intensity Conflict Scenarios (HIC) and Disaster Response

As presented by Demmers (2012), it is important when studying violent conflict to be clear about the differences that exist with the concept of war and also to understand that there are multiple types of conflict, not all of them violent. For example, it is easy to find in the literature the notions of low-intensity conflict and post-conflict. However, there is very little discussion of high-intensity types of conflict. In this chapter, it is proposed that 'high-intensity' represents a valid type of conflict which allows situations or scenarios to be described that includes not only the presence of violent conflict but also of a particular set of governmental arrangements and social problems, without necessarily being a conflict which is called a war. Moreover, this scenario imposes specific challenges for disaster response, shaping the response itself.

To unwrap the notion of high-intensity conflict (HIC) scenarios, it is necessary first to understand better the role of violence and its relationship with conflict. Violent social conflict is generally depicted as a competition, clash, or contradiction between two or more social groups or actors over a specific goal, resource, or interest involving the use of manifest violence to pursue the objectives (Oberschall 1978; Homer-Dixon 1994; Galtung 1996; Demmers 2012; Estévez et al. 2015; Ide 2015). Manifest violence is here conceptualised as a "visible, instrumental and expressive action. It is this kind of violence that is generally defined as 'an act of physical hurt'" (Demmers 2012: 56). Sometimes it is also termed physical violence, when one person "is physically damaged or physically restricted without giving consent to the activity" (Cameron 1999 in Gasper 1999: 10). Although in HIC scenarios the manifest and direct forms of violence are more evident, structural and cultural forms of violence are also important. Structural violence is embedded in social structures or institutions, preventing people from meeting their basic needs or reducing their potential for realisation (Galtung 1996). Cultural violence is symbolic, lost-lasting, and present in many aspects of a culture that legitimises the other forms of violence (Galtung 1990). In other words, structural and manifest violence are 'legitimised and thus rendered acceptable in society' (Galtung 1996: 196).

Taking into consideration only the violent part of the conflict, it would be easy to conflate HIC and war; but HIC is broader. For example, war can be defined as a type of HIC where usually states are involved against each other or against non-state actors, and the casualty threshold reaches a thousand people through battle-related deaths per annum in international wars and per conflict in civil and intra-state wars (Collier/Hoeffler 2001; Demmers 2012). HIC scenarios, however, occur in more than those places where wide-spread social violent conflict involves over a thousand casualties. Other characteristics of HIC include places where, due to the level of conflict, local authorities and governments have minimal or no effective control over the country or regions, generating a high level of state fragility. The provision of goods and basic services is irregular or fragmented, causing, together with the levels of violence, high rates of migration of people looking for

safety from their localities, regions, or countries (see: Demmers 2012; Grünewald 2012; Healy/Tiller 2014; HIIK 2016; Hilhorst/Pereboom 2016; HPN/OPM 2010; Keen 2008; Maxwell/Majid 2015). As a result of this displacement, conflict spreads over the territory and beyond, creating impacts on neighbouring countries and regions (Keen 2008; Maxwell/Majid 2015). The provision of aid and response is difficult and restricted due to a range of challenges (detailed below), with access and security being the most overt ones.

An important consideration is that HIC scenarios are not permanent, isolated, nor occurring once and then disappearing. Most of the time, they represent specific moments in a protracted crisis, developing out of or leading into low conflict or post conflict periods. Some examples of HIC scenarios can be observed in South Sudan, Afghanistan, Yemen, Syria, or Somalia. In all these countries, it is possible to observe all the characteristics mentioned above, even though stronger in some cases or weaker in others. In some of those countries, the government is stronger than in another, but in all of them there are regions where the control of the territory is in the hands of state-contesting parties. Over a thousand casualties have occurred in all the cases, a large number of people have fled, and the provision of goods is fragmented in parts of the territory. Moreover, even within the HIC category, there are a variety of possible different cases.

A concept that includes similar elements to HIC is 'complex emergencies' which is used to describe a humanitarian crisis resulting from the combination of large-scale violent conflict, political and economic instability, and/or disasters, usually requiring an external humanitarian response (Keen 2008; OCHA 1999). However, although helpful in understanding HIC scenarios, they differ in some important respects. The concept of 'complex emergencies' describes the *outcome* of a diverse range of factors and the process of responding to them, mostly by aid interventions (Keen 2008). The construct of complex emergencies emerges not only because of the complexity of the emergency itself, but also because of the complexity of the responses to these scenarios that must take into account numerous factors such as dangerous settings, political use of aid, or donor dependency, to name a few (Davey et al. 2013; Duffield 1994). HIC scenarios describe a range of social and political arrangements without describing them as an emergency and without questioning the need or ways to respond to them. Moreover, HIC seeks to contribute to understanding that particular moment when the conflict reaches the highest socially violent period resulting in producing the conditions listed above. It might be possible to say that, if complex emergencies are 'protracted political crises' (Duffield 1994: 4), HIC are moments within them, describing key features of the conflict. The idea of complex emergencies has important attributes for the understanding of HIC including the relevance of the relationship between humanitarian aid and the military, peacekeeping operations and other protection groups (Duffield 1994; RPN 1997; Stoddard et al. 2006). Another relevant distinction is that HIC enables an analytical distinction from other types of conflict, notably low-intensity conflict. Complex emergencies and the large number of studies about it are also useful in understanding other types of conflict scenarios, including post-conflict settings.

Similar to ‘complex emergency’, ‘fragile state’ is another concept regularly used to study scenarios similar to HIC situations. A state defined as fragile is ‘unable to perform its core functions and displays vulnerability in the social, political, and economic domains’ (Sekhar 2010: 1). These states are also framed as failing in their role of providing human security due to the concentration of poverty they generate (Duffield 2007). Conflict is mentioned sometimes as a cause of fragile states, as much as fragile states are the cause of conflicts. Fragile states can suffer HIC moments, but also experience low- and post-conflict scenarios. Moreover, due to the vulnerability of their population, fragile states present a higher risk of suffering a socio-environmental disaster (Shreya/Vivekananda 2015). The following section will discuss one of the biggest challenges for disaster response in HIC which is dealing with fragile states. Fragile states play a role as a causative factor for both conflict and disaster.

The presence of fragile states in HIC scenarios does not necessarily mean that their governments are not strong in many respects. In every case of HIC studied, the national government had a tight level of control over sections of the territory and over some, or all, borders with neighbouring countries; and they still performed some level of international activity. Moreover, in all cases reviewed, national governments are one of the parties involved in the conflict. These features can be seen in Afghanistan, Yemen, South Sudan, Syria, or Somalia – with some important differences among them, though. This situation plays into a dual complexity in terms of the governance and coordination of disaster response. On the one hand, the national government has the main role in coordinating disaster response while their fragility and involvement in the conflict might hinder their capacity to act and manage disaster response. In fact, HIC-affected countries rely heavily on international aid in their responses and the coordination of it. On the other hand, by being the official government part of the conflict, aid actors adopting the principle of neutrality and independence may be persuaded not to include government in the coordination as it would compromise their access to territories held by contesting parties. At the same time, the strength of the government can mean that, at some level, aid actors should inform, respect, and seek authorisation for their actions from the national authority. This paradox and the ways in which aid and society actors deal with it is a familiar situation for emergency and developmental aid programmes but has not yet been a feature of disaster response models. The legitimation strategies the aid and society actors have adopted to manoeuvre through this challenge are described later.

These ideas about the role of states and the vulnerabilities of the local population reinforce the proposition that studying disaster response in places affected by high-intensity levels of conflict is more than just knowing how an action (the disaster response) occurs in a specific context. It is about understanding the shared social factors explaining the conflict and the disaster, an exercise in revealing a dynamic process where each phenomenon plays a role with the other. Socio-environmental disasters, as well as conflicts, result from a complex combination of multiple factors. On the one hand, natural events have the potential to damage property, produce social and economic disruption, cause death or injury,

and environmental degradation (UNISDR 2009: 4). On the other hand, vulnerable human populations lack the mechanisms, response institutions, resources, and knowledge to prevent being affected by, or to mitigate the impact of, socio-natural hazards (Aboagye 2012; Hewitt 2013; Todd/Todd 2011; Wisner et al. 2003). When a natural event affects people and their livelihoods significantly, the result is a socio-environmental disaster; the impact of natural forces or events that have severe consequences on vulnerable human populations and their possessions.[5] The use of the words *social* and *environmental* instead of the traditional phrase *natural disaster* seeks to stress the relevance and presence of social factors in these events, such as people's vulnerability, lack of preparedness, or poor environmental management, to name a few.

Natural events with the potential to cause damage are also termed *hazards*, defined as events that "may cause the loss of life or injury, property damage, social and economic disruption or environmental degradation" (UNISDR 2009: 4). Hazards also include latent conditions representing future threats but to produce direct social damage requires a particular set of conditions (leaving aside the effects on natural environments, e.g. the effects of volcanic eruption on an isolated island) (Parker 2006; Todd/Todd 2011; UNISDR 2009). Therefore, socio-environmental disasters are a social construction triggered by a natural hazard. These physical, social, economic, and environmental conditions which determine the susceptibility of a community to the impact of hazards are generally termed '*vulnerabilities*' (UNISDR 2009). Risk is another common term used, a function of hazards and vulnerability, establishing the likelihood of people being affected by hazards (Collins 2008; UNISDR 2009; Wisner et al. 2003). Risk can be reduced and managed by reducing people's exposure to hazards and/or reducing people's vulnerability (Todd/Todd 2011; UNISDR 2013).

Hazard also plays a role in the general classification of disasters. The speed of onset determines the time that it takes for a hazard to reach its peak manifestation or impact. Based on the speed of onset, disasters are usually classified into two categories: slow and rapid onset disaster. Slow onset emergencies, like disaster, is defined by the *United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs* (OCHA) as those "that do not emerge from a single, distinct event but one that emerges gradually over time, often based on a confluence of different events" (2011: 3). Rapid-onset disasters (sometimes also named sudden-onset disaster) develop, as the term implies, rapidly or almost immediately. The speed of onset must not be confused with the predictability of an event. Although there is no internationally agreed list classifying disasters or determining what is 'slow' or 'sudden', most disasters are classified as sudden-onset. In general terms, earthquakes, cyclones, typhoons or hurricanes, flash flooding, landslides, avalanches, and volcanic eruptions are seen as rapid-onset disasters. Some examples of slow-onset disaster are droughts, sea level rise, water salinisation, and erosion.

[5]In the present article, I am using the term disaster or socio-environmental disaster interchangeably.

Disasters, in brief, result from *vulnerable* populations being exposed to natural hazards (Bankoff et al. 2004; Cannon 1994; Harris et al. 2013). Conflict scenarios, on the other hand, play a key role in the development and maintenance of social vulnerabilities, resulting in disaster response in HIC scenarios becoming muddled with other relief and aid efforts related to the crisis (Hilhorst 2013a). Furthermore, people's lack of coping and responding mechanisms is also a result of conflict and other social situations, such as poverty (Bankoff 2001; Shreya/Vivekananda 2015). Vulnerability is, in this sense, a key concept working as a link between conflict and disaster. As defined by Bankoff (2001: 24), vulnerability "denotes much more than an area's, nation's or region's geographic or climatic predisposition to hazard and forms part of an ongoing debate about the nature of disasters and their causes".

To prevent, manage, and respond to disasters, disaster risk managers, specialized institutions, and aid agencies uses a multi-phase disaster management cycle. This cycle "includes [sic] sum total of all activities, programmes and measures which can be taken up before, during and after a disaster with the purpose to avoid a disaster, reduce its impact or recover from its losses" (Vasilescu et al. 2008: 44). The cycle has three main phases: The first is *pre-disaster*, including all prevention, mitigation, risk reduction, and preparedness activities and measures. This phase seeks to reduce human and property losses and vulnerability. The second phase is *disaster-response* including an initial damage and impact assessment and assistance to affected victims to ensure that needs and provisions are met and suffering is minimised (Todd/Todd 2011; UNISDR 2009). Media coverage and delivery of information are also part of this phase. Alongside and before this formal disaster response phase, a more spontaneous or less official response starts among the same people affected and local actors. The third phase is *post-disaster*, with a first sub-stage focused on providing continuity with the previous phase, initial infrastructure recovery, and rehabilitation of affected communities. In a second sub-stage, social and economic long-term recovery plans are implemented, together with risk reduction measures and activities focusing on enabling community self-protection (Parker 2006: 4–6; Vasilescu et al. 2008: 47).

The decision to focus the analysis on the disaster response phase is mainly because at that specific moment the opportunity exists to observe a larger number of actors, actions and procedures. During disaster response, all the other elements of the cycle are present in addition to the actors and actions that only occur at that precise moment of the emergency. Moreover, HIC are periods of a particularly protracted crisis and disaster responses are also periods in a longer continuum of the disaster management cycle. When both periods coincide, due to the nature of each of them, the impacts that the actions might have on the wider population are significant. Finally, as it will be shown, in HIC scenarios, disaster response occurs in ways not yet well understood thus providing the opportunity for a scholarly and political inquiry.

Studying disaster response in HIC entails multiple challenges. Firstly, disaster response is a complex process: alongside its technical and economic aspects, it is also highly political, social, and contextual-historical (Cannon 1994; Hilhorst 2013a). HIC scenarios never show clear distinctions between the conflict and the

disaster. It is difficult to know if the response is tackling the effects of one, the other, or both. The response, therefore, may always address planned and unplanned sufferings, as termed by Gasper (1999), like manifest intentional violence (planned) or reduced local capacity to respond due to societal dysfunction (unplanned). Moreover, every place is exposed to different hazards, and each population has its own vulnerabilities (Wisner 2010), and every society has its own history at the base of their conflict.

Another challenge lies in the fact that several theoretical prerequisites of disaster response on the ground in HIC places may not be present. For instance, in theory, disaster response activities may be organised and executed by local or national authorities. The organisation of international aid and humanitarian agencies is, supposedly, also coordinated by states within known protocols (Todd/Todd 2011). In reality, the process usually begins with local people, including the ones affected, providing aid to each other. Later, aid agencies assume the task, relating to local actors and modifying the shape that the response takes. The collection of information about what happened, the number of people affected and meeting basic needs is neither linear nor fast (Comfort et al. 2004; Walle/Turoff 2008). The former also applies to slow-onset disasters such as droughts because the defining process to classify them as a disaster in need of response can also be a complex and lengthy one (Maxwell/Majid 2015; OCHA 2011). In cases where the disaster occurs in places affected by violent social conflict, as in HIC scenarios, extra layers of complexity are added to the response (Harris et al. 2013; Keen 2008).

Disaster response, moreover, is supposedly a short-term intervention in advance of a long-term and more permanent response by governments and other organisations. In other words, disaster response seeks to focus in saving life and assessing the damages, leaving long term intervention (like recovery or reconstruction actions) to following phases. However this is not always the case: protracted crises tend to produce protracted aid and responses (Harmer/Macrae 2004). The actions to save lives tend to prolong and perpetuate, entering a cycle of response or emergency, not transitioning in a timely sequence to the following phases. The challenge here is to recognise when disaster response is moving into the post-disaster phase. In HIC scenarios a similar dilemma is faced by the actors responding to the conflict. Reaffirming these observations, one of the practitioners interviewed (AP1) mentioned a question frequently raised in HIC environments: ‘until when are we providing emergency aid for the conflict and when do we need to start moving or we are already developing development programmes?’.

This discussion reveals that HIC scenarios are dynamic. However, better understanding on how they change and what those changes might mean for disaster response are yet to be explored. HIC so far has been exemplified using countries as cases, but certainly some countries exhibit differences between cities and regions. Is it possible to have cases of environments with different conflict scenarios in play, and if so, how would the disaster response process be different? From the literature reviewed and the interviews it may be possible to hypothesise that the dynamics of the HIC scenario will dominate other types of conflict, for example, low- or post-conflict. During a protracted crisis, the HIC scenario tends to develop

suddenly. From the time a conflict turns violent and the most overt challenges emerge, the response to disasters occurring (like drought or floods) or suddenly striking in a particular area changes immediately. However, once the level of conflict diminishes, most of the actors continue to respond in the same way for a while with a kind of inertia. It may be that aid and society actors decide to wait until they are sure the level of conflict has really changed. Another option is that the transition period from HIC scenarios to low-level or post-conflict scenarios is slow and with no clear demarcation. Although the violence and other characteristics of HIC may not be present, many other challenges are still in place requiring a response. In this regard, the discussion would be enriched with further studies on the escalation/de-escalation process between HIC and other conflict scenarios, and how they relate to disaster response.

Despite the challenges of studying disaster response in HIC (not just from a theoretical point of view, as doing fieldwork in those cases has also proved to be challenging), the analytical categories of HIC scenarios present an opportunity to study various aspects of disaster response. This section unwrapped disaster response and HIC and presented some challenges in studying responses to these scenarios. The following section will explore what challenges HIC scenarios present for disaster response, and for whom. In other words, it will examine who in HIC is responding to disasters and what this singular type of conflict means for their actions. A subsequent section unwraps how these actors overcome these challenges and are enabled to respond.

3.3 Actors and Challenges of Disaster Response in HIC

3.3.1 Humanitarian Arena and Aid-society Actors

In responding to a disaster, several actors are present. In HIC scenarios, the available literature suggests that most commonly present are the single-mandate organisations – those with a “strict focus on life-saving humanitarian assistance” (Hilhorst/Pereboom 2016: 85) – and diaspora groups, while in humanitarian aid multi-mandate organisations are the majority (OCHA 1999; Wood et al. 2001b; Keen 2008; Demmers 2012; Maxwell/Majid 2015; Hilhorst/Pereboom 2016). Although mentioned less in the literature, the presence of other actors must not be ignored, as also stressed in four interviews (AC2, AP2, B2). For instance, local people and the private sector together create a large group of respondents. As an example of the scale of these actions, medium or large humanitarian operations may include tens of NGOs, *United Nations* (UN) agencies, different components of the *International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies* (IFRC), *International Committee of the Red Cross* (ICRC) and national societies, plus a dozen other private and corporate organisations as well as local people, institutions and governments (ALNAP 2015; Weiss 2007; Wood et al. 2001a).

Studying this large group of actors can be difficult. One way to facilitate the process is to find ways to organise or divide them into groups. It is easier to observe and analyse these sets of actors in aggregate mode, which also makes it possible to discover common patterns among groups. The sorting can be done via cluster analysis, the "art of finding groups in data" (Kaufman/Rousseeuw 2005: 1) but this requires studying all actors and then finding commonalities among them. Another option is to develop typologies (theoretical categories) and then, based on the attributes describing each group, to classify the actors (Babbie 2013). This section uses a typology analysis classifying the actor as part of the aid or society categories.

As an analytical concept, the aid-society construct is dynamic and represents the relationships between different actors of the aid and society spheres without always identifying to which specific sphere the actor belongs. Aid actors are those for whom humanitarian actions are part of their core function while they are usually part, or at least linked to, international institutions. Society actors play relevant roles in the response, but humanitarian aid is not part of their core function. Local state and non-state institutions and local people are some of these society actors. Aid actors, however, should not necessarily be seen as totally external to the realities of the places where they act: they 'add a layer to the complexity of governance in crisis-affected settings, creating an imprint on the institutional landscape as it unfolds' (Hilhorst 2016: 5). Conversely, society actors interact with aid in strategic ways to pursue their interests and agendas. As a result, all the actors involved in disaster response form an *aid-society arena* – an aid-society relationship that occurs within a humanitarian arena.

From an actor-oriented perspective the term 'humanitarian arena' seeks to represent "the outcome of the messy interaction of social actors struggling, negotiating and trying to further their interests" (Bakewell 2000: 108–9 in Hilhorst/Jansen 2010: 1120). However, the arena is not 'out there' but rather built by the multiple actors, institutions and stakeholders involved in the process, including those without exclusively humanitarian interests (Hilhorst/Jansen 2010; Hilhorst/Pereboom 2016). Humanitarian action is, in this sense, an arena where all actors related to the response, including recipients, negotiate and shape the outcomes of aid (Collinson/Duffield 2013; Hilhorst/Jansen 2010).

An aspect of the arena is that aid gets shaped in practice, in contrast with the concept of humanitarian space, as aid is not limited to the physical, working, and ideal spaces where it should be delivered following well-known humanitarian principles (Hilhorst/Jansen 2013). The notion of humanitarian space is also frequently used by many actors to legitimise their actions and interest, framing themselves as neutral, ethical, needed, or distant from local political contexts (DeChaine 2002; Hilhorst/Jansen 2010). The concept of arena, in contrast and as presented by Hilhorst and Jansen (2013), is empirical and built on people's practices, including all social-political strategies and negotiations, formal and informal actions, and everyday practices occurring in, and for the delivery of, aid. Therefore, this approach allows for observation of the ways in which it is possible for multiple actors to respond in HIC, recognising practices and the shape that the response takes as a result of the relationships amongst all involved players.

Table 3.2 Aid-society actors. *Source* The author

<table>
<tr><th>AID</th><th>SOCIETY</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">UN system and agencies</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Regional and inter-governmental humanitarian organisations</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">International aid and humanitarian organisations</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">IFRC – ICRC</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">National relief organism</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">ICRC national societies</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">INGOs (International non-governmental organizations)</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Inter-regional or transnational organization</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">International-multinational private and corporate organisms</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Donors</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Military and armed groups: Peacekeepers, blue helmet, national armies, armed rebel/opposition groups, mercenaries</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Media, journalist, photographers</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Evaluation teams (methodologist, evaluators, evaluation manager, facilitators)</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Volunteers</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Religious institutions</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Researchers</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">NGOs</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Funding and financial institutions</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Other national governments</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>National government</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Ministers and national agencies</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Parallel states-governments and state-contesting parties</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Local governments and authorities</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Local institutions</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Local people</td></tr>
</table>

Table 3.2 is an initial attempt to map aid-society actors in these two categories, accounting for the diversity of players involved in HIC scenarios for disaster response and humanitarian aid.

Each group of institutional actors is constituted out of an important number of sub-actors playing a particular role. It must be noticed, though, that given the combined effect of the disaster and the conflict, it becomes impossible to differentiate accurately between actors responding primarily to the conflict, or to the disaster. As stated by Wood et al. (2001a: 3), "to determine who are the actors participating in the humanitarian system seems to be an impossible mission, as it usually includes thousands of individuals worldwide and uncountable organisations".

3.3.2 Challenges of Disaster Response in HIC Scenarios

In HIC scenarios such as the ones here described, the actors have to respond to what is termed 'dual' disasters, "where a humanitarian crisis with human-made political

roots overlaps with a humanitarian crisis induced by environmental disaster" (Hyndman 2011: 1). These dual disasters present multiple challenges for the response that encompass all activities, processes, and mechanisms associated with affected victims and which ensures that their needs are met, suffering is minimised, and an initial damage and impact assessment is carried out.

The challenges in HIC scenarios (to be reviewed in detail below) include issues of security, access, reduced supply of services and goods, deficiency of information, complex governance at the local or national level, economic problems, difficulties of reaching people in need, challenges in the establishment of refugee camps and settlements. As presented in a report from Médecins Sans Frontières, as a result of these challenges "UN agencies and INGOs are increasingly absent from field locations, especially when there are any kind of significant security or logistical issues" (Healy/Tiller 2014: 4). These challenges on the ground affect not only disaster response but humanitarian aid actions.

Among the challenges (Illustrated in Fig. 3.1), weak or complex governance systems are an overarching challenge from which many others derive, such as reduced access to information or economic crisis. The governance issue also plays a significant role as a link between the response to disaster and to conflict. Complex systems of governance can involve the complexity of multiple and parallel systems of governance in one territory and can include different economic and political systems in some parts of the territories. For example, a study of the Central African Republic (CAR) mentioned the presence of "three parallel governance structures:

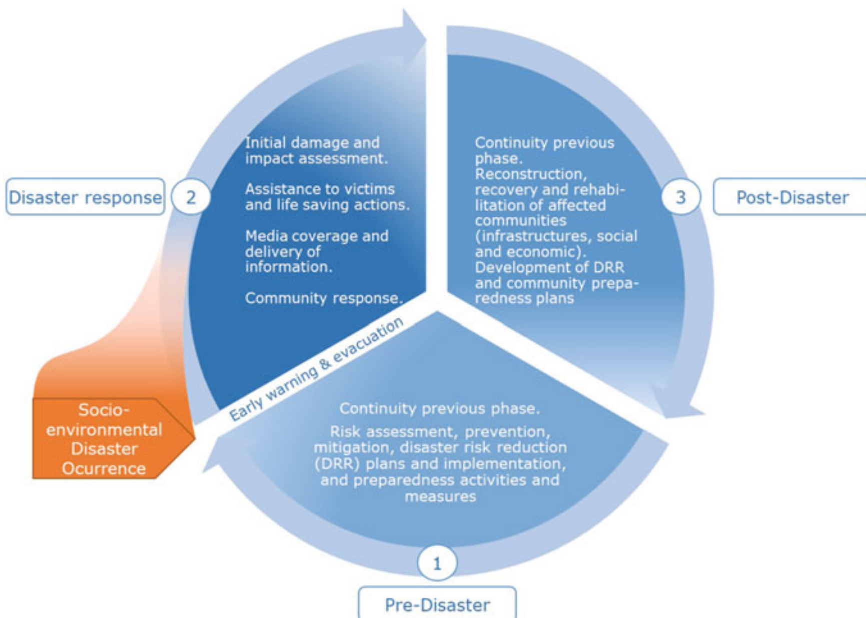

Fig. 3.1 Disaster management cycle. *Source* The author

local government or civic administration; the tribal administration for different tribal groups; and humanitarian governance structures which include the United Nations organizations, international, and national non-government organizations, and donor countries" (Young/Maxwell 2009: vii). Their complexity is not only based on the many (and sometimes unknown) governance systems in a place, but also from the lack of knowledge that could enable a way of manoeuvring through them. For example, the presence of parallel governance systems implies that the coordination of responses is not only fragmented but entails negotiation and coordination with multiple parties (Loeb 2013; Magone et al. 2011; Wood et al. 2001a). These multi-governed scenarios make the coordination, access to information and the whole process more complex and issues of legitimacy and power are intertwined with this challenge.

For humanitarian actors from the international aid community, the challenge of complex systems of governance includes, for example, having to negotiate with state-contesting parties that often fall under the political label of rebels or terrorists. Another name given to these actors is non-state armed groups. These negotiations are generally driven by political interest from both the armed groups controlling territories and from donors, national governments and the international community which may wish to have a say in allowing or participating in negotiations (Jackson/Davey 2014; Magone et al. 2011). For the UN system or donor countries, deals with these actors can be an opportunity to negotiate and/or pursue other agendas by imposing conditions on aid (Atmar 2001). Negotiating and engaging with those parties has also confronted many humanitarian actors with ethical, legal and political dilemmas, especially the international aid agencies (Jackson/Davey 2014; Loeb 2013). At the same time, local actors – both responders and aid beneficiaries – also pursue their agendas and interests in the negotiations with humanitarian players.

In addition, the contesting parties and the open social conflict affecting the territories may drive the development of norms, legal frameworks, and protocols that, although being developed most of the time within the framework of increasing the protection of people, many times might hinder disaster response. In HIC scenarios the use of drones is widely contested, but many disaster responders are using them to obtain data about affected areas. Introducing medicine or medical equipment to these places can be trapped in large multiple 'bureaucratic layers', as described by the two practitioners interviewed (AP1, AP2). The International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Cresent-United Nations Development Program (IFRC-UNDP) (2015) document 'The Checklist on Law and Disaster Risk Reduction' also presents more examples of these situations, especially with regard to the laws and legal frameworks required for appropriate disaster risk reduction and response. However, one academic interviewed (AC2) stated that in places with HIC levels of conflict, disaster response was not prioritised or facilitated because every action is read as a move in the conflict. The political reality of the conflict thus permeates into disaster response.

This politicisation of humanitarian aid is therefore another challenge for humanitarian response to disaster in conflict-ridden areas (Atmar 2001; Davey et al.

2013; Hilhorst 2013b; Kelman 2012). Humanitarian actors' decisions and actions unfold in a political arena (Hilhorst/Jansen 2013; Magone et al. 2011). These dynamics do not only occur at the local level, as the geopolitical use of aid and disasters reach regional and international arenas, too (Barnett 2011; Wood et al. 2001a). The political aspect of the disasters can also be seen as a window of opportunity, for example, in cases of disaster diplomacy, where disaster-related activities may reduce conflict by inducing cooperation, peaceful negotiation and diplomatic opportunities between the parties involved (Kelman 2006). For example, the case of the 1999 earthquake affecting Greece and Turkey explored by Ganapati et al. (2010) showed that, under specific conditions, disaster could lead to long-term collaboration between countries, including "disaster-related collaboration at non-governmental level" (Ganapati et al. 2010: 176). This politicisation also extends to the response funding processes in the HIC area. In some cases, as presented by Wood et al. (2001a), governments are cautious in support actions in these HIC scenarios so that, along with UN agencies grants and pool funds, NGOs and other responders working in this setting depend on funding coming from private sources, including bank loans. However, cases like South Sudan or Afghanistan showed that government-driven funds represent the majority of aid funding (Financial Tracking Service (FTS) 2016) (Fig. 3.2).

Another main challenge for disaster response in HIC is related to security. This challenge includes the protection and safety of multiple actors from different threats. One concern is the protection of affected people from the disaster itself and its related events or effects, for instance aftershocks, unstable terrains, or contaminated flood water (Healy/Tiller 2014; HPN/OPM 2010). In HIC scenarios, the protection of affected population and respondents from other people must be added to those concerns (Grünewald 2012; Healy/Tiller 2014; Maxwell/Majid 2015; Stoddard et al. 2014). Here, security concerns refers to violent acts associated with the course of the conflict and not the cases of looting or violence resulting from people's reaction to a disaster which is less frequent than suggested by the media (Alexander 2013). Some results arising out of security concerns have been the development of strong security policies, the construction of compounds or 'bunkerisation' of aid agencies, the development of remote management, and the increasing distance between aid workers and people in need (Donini/Maxwell 2014; Duffield 2012; HPN/OPM 2010; Maxwell/Majid 2015; Smirl 2015). Although this

Fig. 3.2 Challenges for disaster response in HIC. *Source* The author

last trend is generally associated with humanitarian aid actions, including emergency and developmental ones, multiple interviewees (AC1, AC2, AP1, AP2, C1) agreed that in HIC scenarios disaster responders, local and internationals, operate in the same way.

The claim of increasing distance between aid workers and beneficiaries can be contested if this is true only in the case of international actors. International organisations providing assistance commonly transfer security risk to local staff and local NGOs (Stoddard et al. 2006), resulting in local actors becoming closer to people in need and international actors becoming more distant. Another aspect of this ‘localisation of the response’ via national staff as a response to insecurity is the strengthening of remote management and remote programming (Donini/Maxwell 2014; Stoddard et al. 2006). Remote management entails “the practice of withdrawing international (or other at-risk staff) while transferring increased programming responsibilities to local staff or local partner organizations” (Egeland et al. 2011: xiv). Without being confused with the decentralisation of decision-making, remote management is supposedly a temporary managerial adaptation that occurs from outside of the affected country, but other times from the capital with respect to affected regions and territories (Donini/Maxwell 2014; Egeland et al. 2011). The localisation of the response as a way of outsourcing security risk raises multiple questions about the ethics of relocating this risk to local actors, the accountability of the process, and the possible impacts for humanitarian principles, to name a few (Donini/Maxwell 2014; Egeland et al. 2011; Stoddard et al. 2006).

The security challenge has also increased the inclusion of the private sector in HIC scenarios, particularly regarding access and securitisation. The case of Somalia is an example of the intervention of private groups: after the Black Hawk episode (helicopters from the U.S. were shot down), the only means to ensure access and provide security to the humanitarian sector was outsourcing that responsibility to private corporations (Maxwell/Majid 2015). The interviews conducted revealed another example of using the private sector including hiring private trucks and charter flights for the distribution of goods in South Sudan and the use of private financial service providers to transport cash needed for cash transfer programmes, paying salaries and for services, and buying local goods (AC2, AP1, AP2, C1). However, despite all soft and hard security measures, security is a constant concern for aid workers. Among others, books and chapters like Neuman and Weissman (2016), Roth (2011), Fink et al. (2014), Stoddard et al. (2006, 2014) or a report from IFRC (2011) provide a description of the experiences and what it means for aid actors to work in dangerous settings.

Mobility and access to different territories is challenging for all actors, from local people to international institutions (Hilhorst/Pereboom 2016). In addition to the safety issues already mentioned, roads are often not clearly mapped or in poor condition in countries or regions affected by HIC. Roadblocks, hijackings, check-points, landmines, and ambushes are also a general concern (Menkhaus 2010; Pottier 2006). If public transportation is available, it tends to be unstable, unsafe and irregular, especially between cities. Oil shortages and the high prices for fuel are further obstacles. This leads to the impediment of free movement for

seeking help, insecurity during long walks, as well as reduced access to respondents and providers of humanitarian aid (Caccavale 2015; Duffield 2012; Grünewald 2012; Hilhorst 2016).

The expected temporary solution to access issues was based on the principle of 'humanitarian negotiated access' which is underpinned by the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence. But nowadays access is fragmented and humanitarian institutions have to resort to their negotiating capacities, to hiring private security and helicopters, or to finding alternative ways of access[6] (Donini/Maxwell 2014; Duffield 2012; Grünewald 2012; Healy/Tiller 2014; Maxwell/Majid 2015). Actors like the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) play a role in negotiating access, but the increasing numbers of groups fighting each other and humanitarian organisations on the ground makes the coordination and negotiation of access in a unified way highly challenging (Donini 2012; Hilhorst/Pereboom 2016; Schwendimann 2011). In addition, when negotiating, humanitarian actors usually see themselves 'negotiating in practice that which is non-negotiable in principle' as many times they have to accept or deal with conditions that in other situations they would not have to confront (Mancini-Griffoli/Picot 2004: 11). In HIC scenarios, as also pointed out by some respondents (AC2, C1, AP2), these difficulties of access already existed before the disaster in the affected territories and produced a deficiency of goods and services that disable local responses (Grünewald 2012). The disaster can occur in a highly vulnerable situation which makes it more sensitive than it would be in a place with lower levels of conflict.

Technology plays a role in circumventing access and security issues. Airdrops or aerial delivery of aid and the use of drones to obtain information are strategies invoked by these issues (Bastian et al. 2016; Belliveau 2016; Emery 2016; Giugni 2016). The use of satellite imagery is more and more popular when responding to multiple disasters including drought, floods, earthquakes, and tsunamis (Harvard Humanitarian Initiative 2011; National Research Council 2007).

Another significant challenge that occurs at different stages in the disasters response-cycle is the lack of, reduced, or fragmented information on the country or some regions of it. First, it complicates the process of coordination and planning of aid and response (Comfort et al. 2004; Wood et al. 2001a). Secondly, any attempts at assessment and accountability of the response are frustrated (Wood et al. 2001a). These issues affect governments, local institutions, humanitarian aid agencies, and the international community in different ways. This information deficiency, though, is not exclusive to HIC settings and is also present in other disaster response settings. Some HIC countries, like Afghanistan, have a long history of research and aid operation and it is easier to access to some of the necessary data, although in some regions controlled by non-governmental parties this information may not be up-to-date. At the other end of the spectrum, in South Sudan the level of

[6]Mentioned and reaffirmed in two interviews (AC1, AP1).

information about disasters and aid operations is still low despite its protracted conflict history.

Local people, who are usually asking where to go, what to do, and wondering what is actually happening (particularly when affected by rapid-onset disasters), are confronted with a lack of, or reduced access to, information to help them make informed decisions. The level of rumours in these settings can be high and hence produce more collateral impact. In a different vein, not addressed in this article due to space constraints, data and information are political. The lack of, use, and ways in which information is produced, framed and managed is not neutral and usually responds to multiple agendas and interests, even in the humanitarian aid and disaster response spheres (Cottle 2014; Herman/Chomsky 2002; Olsen et al. 2003; Robinson 1999; Wanta et al. 2004).

Reaching people affected or in need of aid is also challenging for two reasons besides the previously mentioned ones. In HIC settings the levels of internally displaced people (IDPs) is usually high, meaning that it is not always clear how many people could have been present and affected by a disaster. Except for those in refugee/IDP camps, settlements, or in 'protection of civilians' sites (PoCs), the location of people can be in some cases difficult, especially in rapid-onset disasters. Although the fact that IDPs concentrated in PoCs may be advantageous for disaster response because aid agencies are already there at the time of the disaster and the access to affected territories may be easier, these places also represent a second set of challenges in HIC scenarios. Refugee camps and PoCs tend to be more permanent settlements (Jansen 2013, 2015; Lilly 2014), thus, the boundaries between the response and the post-disaster phase become blurred, making the initial task of meeting people's needs and reducing suffering more complex.

Reaching out to people to provide them with aid is usually described as an on-going process that lasts until they can regain certain levels of self-sufficiency or recovery. However, special cases such as the Angola 2013 drought showed that sometimes aid can be delivered only once and in a limited way and then people were left without help because of the denial of the existence of the disaster (Tran 2013). Both dynamics – people being displaced and settling down in refugee camps, settlements, or PoC sites – defy the notion that disaster response and relief is a temporary action. Once again, the border between the effects of the disaster and the conflict become blurred, making it difficult to know if people are moving and seeking refuge due to the conflict, or the disaster, or a combination of both. Interviewing one aid beneficiary living in a refugee settlement (B1) provided me with a good example of the first scenario. At the beginning of our conversation the person mentioned that the main reason to escape from her country was the conflict and the killings. However, after several minutes talking and building trust, she mentioned that, in reality, the main reason to flee was the drought and the incapacity to grow their own food because of the conflict. The drought compounded with the conflict (that prevents the normal trade of goods in the markets) was the real cause of her flight.

Refugee camps play a role in most HIC scenarios with their own political and social dynamics, which are not restricted to the camp itself. As Jansen asserts, "the

relation between refugees and aid actors does not stop at the camp's boundaries" (2015: 1). This implies another challenge for the response, because despite the existence of camps, it is not always clear how to reach people in need. In fact, many refugees or disaster-affected persons stay outside the camps, living in neighbouring areas.

Usually, HIC scenarios are also in economic crisis, including recession, instability, inflation or breaking up of the supply chain of goods and services (Grigorian/Kock 2010; Rother et al. 2016). The lack of or difficulty in accessing services and commodities under chaotic conditions expose external aid workers to the challenge of being self-sufficient, especially in cases like South Sudan or Syria. Responders must be able to bring with them everything that they need to provide relief or "have robust local supply chains, pre-planned and with a positive rather than negative impact on local economy" (Norton et al. 2013: 84) so as to not burden the limited supplies available. For local people, HIC scenarios may also include the imposition of substantial tax payments, as was the case in Somalia with Al-Shabaab (Maxwell/Majid 2015: 6). On top of the economic burden imposed by the conflict, socio-environmental disasters usually have a serious economic effect on the population (Keen 1998; Spiegel et al. 2007). On the one hand, they increase their expenses substantially since they should replace what was lost, and on the other hand, they may stop receiving income as many productive activities are affected and people stop working. Consequently, post-disaster recovery, reconstruction and rehabilitation processes may be delayed until the levels of conflict decrease (GFDRR et al. 2016; McGrady 1999). Protracted conflicts thus produce protracted recovery and reconstruction.

Because of the poor access to commodities and services in some regions (due to the economic crisis, disruption of supply chains and roads, and minimal purchasing power), the reliance on aid will be longer than disaster response in non-conflict zones, and the process of dependency and protracted crisis will be reinforced. Dependency here is used to mean that the response may result in a large web of interdependencies and co-shaping amongst multiple actors which becomes embedded in people's everyday lives (Harvey/Lind 2005; Hilhorst/Jansen 2010). This is not positive or negative, but shows the challenge of responding in a complex social context. Accessing services and goods depends on the capacity of each actor involved to move around in the social-humanitarian arena rather than only on a market-oriented strategy of buying and hiring. In many cases of disaster response, actors find it difficult to make the time to build or understand this larger social context.

Related to the economic crisis and the protracted state of the crisis where HIC occurs, disaster response is also many times confronted with corruption, bureaucratic procedures that are not always clear or are always changing, and lack of transparency. These issues affect both aid and society actors, making the response more expensive, slower or less efficient. In a similar vein, as discussed by Keen (1998), violence plays an economic role in civil wars and also in all HIC settings. Violent crisis are far from irrational: they are a rational response to the interest, frequently economic, of some actors (Keen 1998). Disaster response models cannot

be blind to this reality and they must start including this situation of 'rational', economically driven violence in the model development, especially when responding in HIC scenarios.

In relation to a more developmental model of action, these complex situations drove the development of the Sphere Project and its 'Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response' handbook, with a first edition at the end of the nineties (Sphere Project 2011). Part of this learning process and thinking about acting in a HIC was the occurrence of 'new wars' such as the military interventions of Africa and Asia, or the ex-Soviet conflict of the early nineties (Davey et al. 2013). These wars were 'new' insofar as they represented an intensification of attacks on civilians thus weakening and destabilisation governments' legitimacy and bringing new challenges to the humanitarian sector (Newman 2004).

Particularly relevant for a comprehensive understanding of disaster response in HIC is the human security approach. Human security brings the focus to people involved in everyday practices, even in areas of conflict, focusing on the role of military interventions or the state as the single protector of citizens (Gasper/Gómez 2014a). It also emphasises that complex situations have multiple stressors and, for instance, drought as a disaster may be the cause of more suffering than military interventions (Gasper/Gómez 2014b). Therefore, in HIC scenarios disaster response may play a vital role in reducing peoples' suffering even though disaster response may be seen as a side issue due to the conflict.

Coping with these challenges draws on the capacities of aid-society actors to negotiate with other players, legitimise their actions and presence, as well as change and adapt their actions and strategies according to the context. This last point is of utmost relevance because to act, people and institutions must have the power and legitimacy to do so. Power is relational and legitimacy is part of power relations (Beetham 2013). Without legitimacy, power relations are coercive, and with legitimate power the compliance and acceptance of others is ensured (McCullough 2015). But this can be a difficult task in HIC scenarios, where the level of legitimacy of multiple actors is at stake. For example, the government is not always legitimate and its actions may be seen as coercive by other groups. However, power exerted coercively is also common in these settings and for some actors a valid way to legitimise their actions. Legitimacy and power relations are complex, highly nuanced processes with multiple dynamics. The following section will discuss them in more detail and how they unfold in HIC settings during disaster response.

3.4 Responding to Disasters in HIC Scenarios

3.4.1 Legitimacy and Power

Situating the notions of *legitimacy, power* and *negotiation* at the core of disaster response in HIC scenarios is not a naïve proposal. It is to state that beyond the

moral drivers and technical aspects of these dynamics, disaster response is not only political, but also relational. It depends on a large aid-society arena where, as mentioned by Warner (2013: 83), disasters convey political capital, legitimacy and 'may serve humanitarian but also utilitarian political instrumentality'. Moreover, these concepts have long-standing political and sociological relevance, requiring a better understanding of what they mean here and how they are used to study disaster response.

Legitimacy is a concept that has been addressed by different schools of thought. One group of thinkers conceptualise legitimacy as belief or voluntary agreement on the part of a community that a rule or institution must be obeyed (e.g. Levi/Sacks 2009; OECD 2010; Stel et al. 2012). This perspective for Bauman (1992) and Beetham (2013) does not allow tracing of the relational aspect of legitimacy that involves the actor seeking legitimacy from those actors who legitimise it. The body of research using the first definition above is more associated with the study of states' and governments' legitimacy, especially as service providers. Other literature on legitimacy describes a process in which non-state actors find legitimacy in the citizenry, as holders of legitimacy in fragile states (La-Porte 2015; McCandless 2014), even in the case of armed non-state actors (McCullough 2015). Another approach studies legitimacy in a more focused manner, for example, NGOs' legitimacy based on a four-fold model: the market model, the social change model, the new institutionalism model, and the critical model (Thrandardottir 2015).

An alternative definition of legitimacy, and adopted in this chapter because it provides a better fit for the questions addressed is the one provided by Lamb (2014: 34): "worthiness of support, a sense that something is 'right' or 'good' or that one has the moral obligation to support it". This broader definition of legitimacy is contextual and can apply to all sorts of actors. The term 'conferee' is used in this Lamb's approach for the person who is being assessed for legitimacy and 'referee' is the person who judges the conferee as worthy of legitimacy. It must be stressed that this definition of legitimacy is used here within an actor-oriented perspective and so, as asserted by Pattison, "rather than the focus being on whether a particular action is justified, the concern is with the justifiability of the agent undertaking the act" (2008: 397). This notion is crucial for disaster response results in HIC, as will be discussed later.

The legitimacy of an actor may change depending on who the referee is (McCullough 2015), and the referee and conferee may also contest or negotiate the legitimation process of the other (Hilhorst/Jansen 2013; Lamb 2014). To study the legitimacy of aid-society actors, this multi-directional aspect of legitimation is of the utmost relevance, as each actor may need to seek legitimacy from different audiences, requiring different strategies. For instance, an NGO must seek legitimacy at the same time, and by different means, from a donor, from the government of the country where they are responding and from the beneficiary communities.

In the case of (international) humanitarian interventions, for example, two main legitimating factors justify the worthiness of support of their actions: the humanitarian motivations and the humanitarian outcomes (Bellamy 2004). These perspectives indicate that the disinterested, impartial and ethical call to prevent

suffering (motivation view) or the capacity of an intervention to produce humanitarian benefits (outcomes view) are the primary legitimising factors for humanitarian action and disaster response. The outcomes view must be complemented with the *effectiveness* approach, so that not any outcome is valid, but only the successful ones (Pattison 2008). Beyond these factors, there are multiple secondary and singular factors legitimising aid actions (Bellamy 2004). To recognise these other factors, including those associated with society actors, a more complex approach is necessary.

In line with the above, Lamb (2014) proposes a framework to assess legitimacy based on its multidimensional, multilevel and bilateral aspects. The first step is to identify legitimacy for what, according to whom, and by what criteria. Then, there are multiple indicators to be obtained and ways of analysing them. Without going into details of the methodology, his development and the variety of approaches articulated account for the relevance and complexity that the study of legitimacy involves. It is not only contextual but also dynamic and embedded in a large set of power relations.

Power is another concept with multiple theories explaining it (e.g. Dahl 1957; Foucault 1983; Parsons 1964; Weber 1964). The focus here is on power as a social construction, implying the capacity or ability of any subject to achieve outcomes and make decisions, as described by Giddens (1984: 257). Giddens' approach to power relates to the capacity of multiple actors to act. He presents an operationalisation of the concept of power based on who provides that capacity, who exerts power, and how it is produced and reproduced. This toolset proved to be useful in exploring further aid-society action in HIC and processes of legitimation.

The exercise of power, in Giddens' view, relates to two kinds of resources: first, allocative or economic resources, such as control over material things, including means of material production and reproduction, and secondly, authoritative resources, like control or organisation of other people's actions, relationships, and social time-space (Giddens 1984). People's actions are, therefore, based on their power and interest to act. But power is relational as people are embedded in social relationships and, as a result, their power interacts with the allocative and authoritative resources of others (den Hond et al. 2012). Power is, therefore, "generated in and through the reproduction of structures of domination" (Giddens 1984: 258), but this does not mean that power is associated with conflict only by producing oppression, struggle or division (Giddens 1984). It is just a medium to produce change that may, or may not, clash with others' interests. In places like HIC, many actors tend to feel powerless (for example, two interviewees: one beneficiary (B1) and one practitioner (AP2)) and at the same time many others need to gain power to respond to conflict and socio-environmental disasters.

Giddens also argues that "there is never a situation in which there is absence of choice" (as cited in den Hond et al. 2012: 239) and therefore people always make decisions on their actions, even if they are difficult, limited or constricted by the context. It is not uncommon to find in the media or hear by different society actors the idea that during HIC or disasters people are forced to act in specific ways or that the surrounding conditions predetermine their actions. Giddens' notion of power

allows defending the contrary: people always have agency, and they are active in the construction of their social reality (Giddens 1984). For instance, aid beneficiaries are far from passive and empty recipients; rather, they develop strategies to legitimise their position and pursue their objectives (Hilhorst 2013b).

The role of institutions here is key, as power is mediated by them. Institutions have greater time-space extension than individuals and may also have higher levels of allocative and authoritative resources (Giddens 1984). For example, in the case of nation-states, Giddens calls them 'power containers' (cited in Best 2002). Although institutions' capacity to take a decision and make changes are sometimes bigger than individual actors, they are also more constrained, because they are embedded in bigger social power systems (Best 2002). Therefore, as argued by Hilhorst (2013a: 7), it is necessary to understand "how power constellations are negotiated and how they are subject to change".

Power enables the actors to act, and *legitimacy* is the concurrence that these actions receive from other players. However, we should not oversimplify these relationships, as many actions may be legitimate for some people, but not for others. The capacity of some actors, individuals, or group to position their legitimation over the legitimation of others also requires the use of power. Power and legitimacy, in these terms, are a two-way dynamic, where both are mutually used by and for the other. Moreover, as warned by Beetham (2013: 39), legitimacy is not merely the legitimation of power, "[it] is not the icing on the cake of power, which is applied after (…) and leaves the cakes essentially unchanged. It is more like the yeast that permeates the dough, and makes the bread what it is". In a humanitarian arena, these institutional and aid-society actors' power to respond results in a complex set of processes that shape not only the response but also the actors involved in it. And humanitarian aid, from this perspective, is like "a conduit between places and people, facilitating relief and reconstruction assistance as well as political legitimacy and, hence, the political and economic stability of a place" (Kleinfeld 2007: 170 in Hilhorst/Jansen 2010: 1119).

3.4.2 Strategies to Respond in HIC Scenarios: Legitimacy and Negotiation in Practice

Due to the complexity of HIC and the challenges discussed, not all aid or society actors are able to access the places affected and to respond, and some need to negotiate and legitimise their actions. However, exploring the process in which aid and society actors relate, negotiate and legitimise themselves is a challenging task. In the first place, it is challenging because none of these aid-society groups is homogeneous and there can be significant differences among their actors. Secondly, not only do each of the actors engage in multiple relationships at the same time but also these relationships change over time. Even in the case of the same relationships, the strategies and legitimacy processes may change. Aid-society relationships

are multidimensional, multilevel and bilateral. Thirdly, the literature has two main biases. Firstly, the literature is mostly written from a top-down approach; discussing international humanitarian agencies (mainly INGOs and the UN apparatus) legitimacy and negotiation in relation to local-national governments and with armed groups. Secondly, the literature focuses on the frameworks enabling humanitarian interventions in foreign territories, and hence a focus on international actors.

This last point includes debates about international law and the rule of law (e.g. Beal/Graham 2014; Hehir 2011; Zifcak 2015) and the feasibility of the use of force or protected interventions (e.g. Malanczuk 1993; Recchia 2015; Seybolt 2008). Another body of literature discusses the role of the UN Security Council and the responsibility to protect (e.g. Chesterman 2002; MacFarlane et al. 2004; Newman 2002; Troit 2016; United Nations 2015a). In both literatures, there is also a cross-cutting debate about the differences between legality and legitimacy (e.g. Chesterman 2002; Newman 2002; Zajadlo 2005).

Notwithstanding the two biases just mentioned, there is an emergent and growing literature on (i) the internal legitimacy of humanitarian interventions, as the process in which national-local governments legitimate aid actions to their own citizenry (e.g. Buchanan 1999; Vernon 2008); (ii) humanitarian aid, legitimacy and parallel governments (e.g. McCullough 2015; McHugh/Bessler 2006); and (iii) the active involvement of aid beneficiaries and volunteers in negotiating and legitimating their actions.

Trying to separate aid and society actors' legitimacy strategies is intricate. They share many of the strategies, many others are interrelated, and also from a referee and conferee point of view, the legitimising strategies of one may or may not be judged as legitimate by the other. Despite how intricate this exercise might seem, it is possible to observe some broad sets of strategies in aid or society actors. The following paragraph will describe some examples of them in HIC scenarios for disaster response.

In addition to the humanitarian motivations and the humanitarian outcomes mentioned above, and regarding the legitimacy of aid actors for what, according to whom, and by what criteria, the right to intervene in cases of large-scale humanitarian crisis and disaster is well-recognised by the international community (Bellamy 2004). This international legitimacy has two main pillars: international law and the United Nations Security Council (Chesterman 2002; Hehir 2011). As presented by Bellamy through the examples of Somalia and Haiti, "the Security Council identified human suffering and governance issues as threats to international peace and security and therefore legitimate objects of intervention" (Bellamy 2004: 218). These two pillars are widely used in cases of violent armed conflict but their utilisation and validity is less clear for disaster response in places not affected by conflict. In fact, in 2014, with regard the Ebola outbreak[7] in Liberia, Sierra Leone,

[7]In this example, the Ebola epidemic outbreak is also considered a socio-natural disaster under the definition of a disaster presented before.

and Guinea, the UN Security Council held its first meeting ever to deliberate on an intervention in a public health crisis (Cohen 2014; UN News 2014).

The humanitarian principles of independence, neutrality and impartiality have also been set out for aid actors as “a magic key to the humanitarian space with an attitude of ultra-pragmatism” (Magone et al. 2011: 3). They act like a shield behind which any action is valid and legitimate, sustained by ideas about what is good, ethical, and moral (Hilhorst/Jansen 2010). In fact, in the interviews, the humanitarian principles were emphasised by all respondents as the main factor legitimising their actions. The principles, moreover, may legitimise aid actors’ presence in HIC by presenting themselves as detached from political struggles (Leader 2000), a situation also mentioned by one of the two aid beneficiaries interviewed (B2): ‘we accept them (the humanitarian actors and disaster respondents) because we know they are here to help all of us without caring about the conflict’. However, the other aid beneficiary (B1) problematised this assumption by asking the question: ‘how is possible that they don’t care about what the others are doing?’ I have seen this last question frequently raised during fieldwork in countries affected by HIC, not only by beneficiaries but also by NGOs. Some practitioners expressed the view that, although they follow the principle of neutrality, they will never voice it because that could be seen as lack of caring or that they do not stand against the actions of one or other of the fighting parties.

Not only in HIC scenarios, some aid actors see the principles as a universal legitimator, imposing them on others (Leader 2000). If other people respond without following the principles, they are not seen as part of the humanitarian space (Collinson et al. 2012; DeChaine 2002; Hilhorst/Jansen 2013). But they certainly remain part of the humanitarian arena, as discussed earlier. This is equally valid for aid and society actors: they both seek to be seen as following the principles in order to be valid actors in the arena (Hilhorst/Pereboom 2016). State-contesting armed groups also use the principles as an action framework and legitimator (McHugh/Bessler 2006). In HIC scenarios this can reach another level, where the principles are also seen as the borderline of what is ethically expected, and accepted, in social action, especially in war time. As Leader states (2000: 3), “the principles assume at least an acceptance that war has limits, that the belligerents are concerned with political legitimacy, and that all states have an interest in preserving respect for the IHL”.[8]

The process of professionalising humanitarian action and disaster response (in part to respond to the challenges, in part to increase the efficacy and efficiency) opens a new legitimator for aid actors and enables multiple actors to respond to disaster in HIC settings. For instance, water managers for droughts, or professional rescuers in cases of earthquakes, validate and legitimate their actions as professionals in those fields. Likewise, appropriate behaviour by staff members of aid and societal institutions also lays down a legitimacy base. Accountability and actions assessment is also a relevant legitimising factor, especially for aid actors to its

[8]International Humanitarian Law (IHL).

donors and beneficiary governments (Donini/Maxwell 2014; Wood et al. 2001a). Professionalism also legitimises actors to be present in HIC scenarios, especially considering the security risk. Disaster response and humanitarian aid organisations have increasingly hired security managers, developed security protocols, and focused on strengthening security managing (Donini/Maxwell 2014; Roth 2011; Stoddard et al. 2006).

In an arena like HIC, where resources and access are restricted, the professionalism stamp of some actors legitimises them over others (Hilhorst/Jansen 2010). This has also been relevant as legitimation between the same aid actors in competition for funds and personnel (Mosse 2013; Wood et al. 2001a). As a result, it can be difficult for societal (local) responding organisations to validate themselves against the more professional aid (international) actors in the arena (Hilhorst/Jansen 2010). That is why society actors develop different legitimacy strategies to aid actors. One situation that I have seen in HIC zones and confirmed by both practitioners interviewed (AB1 and AB2) is the growing trend for local NGOs to hire professional (sometimes international) grant managers and accountants to seek funds from the so-called 'big donors'.

The concept of 'gratuity', or debates about what can be paid or not, is a more hidden factor of legitimation. Aid actors provide their response to disaster not for profit or with commercial interest and any attempt to do it for profit can be criticised. This applies to initiatives offering help in exchange for work and also to the reduction of taxes in exchange for donating money. HIC scenarios allow this phenomenon to be observed in a particular way. For example, it seems to be legitimate for aid and society actors to find protection under state or internationally mandated armed forces (like UN peacekeepers) but not to pay for private armed protection (HPN/OPM 2010). However, and in the spirit of being legitimated by being professional or efficient, some initial debates have taken place about what can be learned from management techniques used by for-profit organisations that could be helpful in an aid and response context (McLachlin et al. 2009).

In a similar vein, but moving towards the strategies of legitimation used by society actors, it is also possible to find legitimated interventions of armed groups in disaster response in HIC scenarios. For example, states may use army intervention or authorise peacekeeping missions with humanitarian agendas (Malanczuk 1993). However, it is again important in these cases to distinguish between legitimacy and legality (Seybolt 2008). These actions may be perceived as legal and legitimate by some actors, but not by others.

In places in HIC, rebel armed groups may also act in the response, but their legitimacy usually pre-exists the disaster and then extends to the response (Arjona 2008; Magone et al. 2011). This legitimacy is in relation to local actors, so, to be legitimised by external actors, armed groups have begun to act in compliance with international legal norms (McHugh/Bessler 2006). State-contesting armed groups may also seek to build legitimacy by engaging with aid actors to counter the non-legitimisation that they meet from official governmental actors (Grace 2016). However, it must not be seen as the intention of aid actors to confer legitimacy on armed-groups by acting with them. This is a well-known dilemma among aid actors

usually dealt with by explicit declarations of non-recognition or legitimation of these groups, even when they sometimes need to work with them (Jackson/Davey 2014; McHugh/Bessler 2006). In high intensity conflict settings, it is thus useful to reflect on these controversial and complex situations, especially in cases of disaster response, as it is easy for many actors to name the *natural* disaster as the cause of local problems rather than the real social factors; in this sense, disasters are seen as external and non-related to the conflict.

Society actors may also find in the response arena that their legitimacy is part of what can be broadly called a cultural-community framework. As presented by McCandless (2014), heritage and blood as well as family and tribal bonds, can be legitimating factors rooted in the sense of community. For response activities, this local legitimacy is sometimes more relevant than the official recognition, as local actors are the ones reaching affected people first and local legitimacy, in turn, strengthens their power and general legitimacy, at least de facto. Similarly, some NGOs and other actors (from aid and society) claim their legitimacy through a religious approach (De Cordier 2009). They justify their actions on an ethical basis, but also they act in coordination with local groups of the same religious community, thus gaining access to the response arena (De Cordier 2009; Krafess 2005; Paulson/Menjívar 2012). In HIC settings this also means stronger social networks to facilitate security and manoeuvre through the challenges.

All the examples mentioned above show how legitimation is crucial for the overall success of humanitarian operations and disaster response yet such endeavours are inherently challenging. The legitimation strategies do not work as 'recipes' and often require negotiation. Magone et al. (2011) state that everything is open to negotiation in the provision of aid, although it is not always a recognised practice.

Humanitarian aid and response is highly politicised and negotiations, along with dealing with political issues, must weigh ethical (e.g. following the principles) and legal considerations (e.g. following the international humanitarian law) as well. For this reason, negotiations may operate under confidentiality agreements or within closed circles (Grace 2016). The response occurs in an arena, and competition among aid and society actors may also lead to privacy or secrecy throughout the negotiations. In cases of rapid-onset disaster, quick action is needed and it can be helpful to bend the rules and operate outside the normal conduits. One academic (AC1) and the consultant (C1) interviewed said that the mindset can be, 'the emergency requires prioritising the aid no matter how it is done'. An analysis of this trend leads to the conclusion that under HIC conditions and in cases of conflict such as those described here, rules and procedures are less relevant and the negotiations occurring in the field are the real enablers of disaster response.

Humanitarian negotiations do not only occur in confidential or closed circles but also in the everyday practices of aid-society actors (Hilhorst/Jansen 2010). In fact, a UN manual on negotiation says that humanitarian negotiations are "those negotiations undertaken by civilians engaged in managing, coordinating and providing humanitarian assistance and protection for the purposes of: (i) ensuring the provision of protection and humanitarian assistance to vulnerable populations;

(ii) preserving humanitarian space; and (iii) promoting better respect for international humanitarian and human rights law" (McHugh/Bessler 2006: 1).

It is through these negotiations and processes of building legitimacy that aid-society actors manoeuvre through the challenges in the HIC arena to respond to socio-environmental disasters. In doing so, the response is shaped and, conversely, the actors' power relationships are shaped, providing an opportunity to study the everyday practices of disaster response.

3.5 Conclusion

Current disaster response models do not incorporate scenarios where socio-environmental disasters, like earthquakes or floods, occur in places affected by violent social conflict. The political and academic attention given to (i) the relation between social conflicts and socio-environmental disaster response, and (ii) the differences between multiple conflict scenarios and disaster response, is still low. Contributing to filling these gaps and proposing a way to deal with them, this chapter explored the process of responding to disasters in places affected by one specific type of conflict: wide-spread violent social conflict.

The chapter proposed the use of high-intensity conflict scenarios (HIC) as an analytical category that would permit the study of disaster response in this particular type of scenario. By an extensive literature review on scenarios matching the HIC profile and using experiences of disaster responses 'which attracted international aid and responders, the chapter tested the value of HIC as an analytical category and answered its main question.

The findings suggest that the features of the HIC scenarios provide a unique opportunity be better understand the response processes. As distinct from terms like 'complex emergency' or 'fragile states', HIC scenarios represent a period in a protracted crisis where, alongside violent social conflict, a particular arrangement of social and political conditions generates a scenario that features complex governance systems, insecurity, access constraints, people displacement, economic instability or crisis, among others. Moreover, as reviewed, there is no one type of HIC setting but a range of possible settings fitting its definition. HIC as an analytical category allowed the study of the large network of actors involved in the process and the mechanisms that they use to cope and respond to disasters under these challenging conditions. The concepts of aid-society, humanitarian arena, and legitimacy played a key role in this.

Aid-society relationships and the humanitarian arena performed as effective analytical tools to explore and enable the study of the large constellation of actors and strategies present in disaster response. Aid-society made visible, and brought attention to, the need to include not only local actors but also donors, evaluators, and the private sector in the scenario, in addition to the best known actors in humanitarian aid like the UN agencies and international NGOs. The notion of the humanitarian arena strengthens the actor-oriented perspective by centering the

analysis not in the physical space where the response occurs but on the interaction of aid-society actors, as well as their negotiations and processes that shaped the responses. The legitimacy focus was demonstrated to be a consistent entry point revealing a multitude of strategies used by aid and society actors when responding to disasters. In HIC scenarios, where the coercive use of power is present, the analysis provided a more complex and broad overview of the different ways in which various actors, from UN, armed groups, aid beneficiaries or rescuers (to name a few) enable themselves to act and cope with the challenges that these settings produce. The role played by humanitarian principles, the process of professionalisation of disaster response, international law, and the cultural community background of each actor were all highlights in the analysis. Additionally, the analysis showed the way to explore further the notion of power and the relevance of institutions. These relationships shape the response which, in turn, shapes the aid-society relationships in a symbiotic dynamic.

Regarding the challenges, the analysis revealed that alongside the overt and well-known security and access complications, there is a wider web of social, political, and economic conditions hindering responses in HIC. It allowed the observation of the challenges faced not only by aid but also by society actors in the responding process. Complex governance arrangements during HIC proved to be an overarching challenge. Many other issues are dependent, result from, or are generated by being associated with this factor. Although these results can be expected given the fact that we are discussing places affected by high levels of conflict, it is no less important, especially because the solutions tend to be more technical and focused mainly on the logistics of providing aid and responding rather than political and social change. This last point also highlights the limitations of observing the response only from an aid actor's perspective and reinforces at the same time the need for an aid-society approach to disaster response. Moreover, it accounts for the relevance of studying the relationships of people involved and especially how they manoeuvre through the humanitarian arena. Being legitimate and having the capacity to negotiate, using different resources and strategies is essential in HIC settings (and most probably, in any social arena).

One of the challenges in HIC conditions is the overlap of disaster response and humanitarian aid programmes in responding to the effect of the disaster. It can be said that most of the challenges, legitimacy strategies, and aid-society actors mentioned here are also present in general emergency and humanitarian aid programmes in HIC scenarios. The new contribution of the chapter to the existing literature lies in the fact that responding to disaster in these scenarios requires an understanding of the compound social and political nature of disaster and conflict. Without a more in-depth comprehension of what that means, all disaster response models might fall short in meeting their objectives. However, we must beware that the compound nature of both -general emergency and humanitarian aid programmes- does not lead us to ignore the differences that exist, the special characteristics of one and the other. Maintaining awareness of the differences in the two spheres of activity allows us to understand better what that composite nature means, how the interaction works, and how it affects work on the ground.

This last challenge permeated this research and its analysis. From an analytical point of view, it was difficult at times to assess whether the information presented in the literature and the interviews was clearly about disaster response or about humanitarian aid in general terms. There is still little discussion about the relationship and the differences between both disaster response and humanitarian aid. This, at the same time, strengthens the value of the analysis presented here.

For policy makers, practitioners, and scholars, the concept of HIC offers a richer understanding of disaster response in situations of high level violent social conflict. Multiple documents provide information about the growing levels of insecurity that aid workers face nowadays in their work (e.g. Duffield 2012; Roth 2011; Stoddard et al. 2006, 2014) but how this translates into disaster response is less clear. This chapter contributes information about specific characteristics of HIC, enabling all these actors to assess whether the places in which they are responding match this scenario. For those cases where the response is occurring in HIC scenarios, the chapter systematises the multiple actors that could be found on the ground, facilitating the networking process and participation. Furthermore, it informs aid-society actors about the challenges they may face, allowing better planning and implementation of disaster response. The analysis of legitimacy and negotiation processes and the systematization mechanisms and strategies in place for disaster response, might help practitioners and policy makers in the development, but also evaluation of disaster response.

The extensive literature reviewed leads to the observation that, despite the information gathered here, there is still limited academic understanding on disaster response in HIC scenarios, especially regarding aid-society relationships and disaster governance. The reviewed theoretical frameworks provided a relevant starting point for further research to start filling the gaps. The recurrence of disasters in HIC and the effects of them on local populations and institutions make this task every day more urgent. Global climate change, increasing levels of socio-economic inequality, profound unsolved gender bias, global environmental resources depletion, and the increased rates of violent social conflict are just some factors pointing to the need for better and more comprehensive disaster response. Comprehensive management of and response to complex disasters and crises comes from a full understanding of them. In this regard, it would be fruitful to pursue further research on the topic, in order to continue contributing to disaster response policies and practice by understanding better the special characteristics of responding in HIC and other types of conflict scenarios.

Appendix

Literature Review Sample:

Without grey literature, the sample reaches close to 400 sources (approximate value as some sources are book chapters or short and compound reports).

Interviews:

Type: Semi structured interviews.
Dates: All interviews were conducted in person by the author between November 2016 and March 2017.
Location: The interviews were conducted in The Netherlands, Sierra Leone, Uganda, and South Sudan.
Average duration: 75 min

Thematic Analysis:

Analytical categories

1. Disaster response: formal phases
2. Disaster response: spontaneous
3. Crisis or conflict definitions
4. HIC (high-intensity conflicts)
5. HIC and rival-similar terms
6. Humanitarian aid: definition
7. Humanitarian aid: history
8. Humanitarian aid: actors and organisations
9. Spatio-temporal conditions of the response
10. Type of organisation/s in disaster response
11. Aim/drivers of the response
12. Main problems/constraints
13. Chain of actions
14. Negotiations strategies
15. Networks in disaster and conflict response
16. Legitimacy: definition and theory
17. Legitimacy: whom
18. Legitimacy: what
19. Legitimacy: mechanism and strategies
20. Legitimacy: interrelated
21. Power relationships: definition and theory
22. Funding or financing process
23. Media role and interference
24. State – government/s: role in the response
25. State – government/s: collaboration with aid-society actors
26. State – government/s: control and legitimacy over actions
27. State – government/s: relationship with responders
28. The UN role or presence
29. NGOs role or presence
30. INGOs role or presence
31. ICRC-IFRC role or presence, including national societies
32. Local organisations role or presence

33. Lay people/volunteers' role or presence
34. Local partners' collaboration
35. Military role and collaboration
36. Role and presence of other governments
37. Security/protection against other people: who?
38. Security/protection against other people: how?
39. Security/protection for the socio-environmental disaster: who?
40. Security/protection for the socio-environmental disaster: how?
41. Medical care of the affected population
42. Migration and displacement
43. Governmental, Legal or Regulatory frameworks: control, enforcement, supervision, incentives, rights and obligations.

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