

Politicizing risk assessment on vulnerability conditions

Towards a counter-hegemonic approach of risks in a “world at risk”

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- A critical approach of risk assessment and risk definition

- Between **realistic** and **constructivist** approaches:

Risk as an objective reality Vs Risk as a social construction

- **Problematic**: What are the social sciences' objectives and functions in risk assessment?

- **Hypothesis**: Political and social aspects must be highlighted in so far risks are situated. Social sciences ought to deal with the “**How**” (how is risk defined, or assessed), and with the “**what**” is really at stake when **defining and addressing** risks.

- Theoretical and methodological statements based on fieldworks and in Caracas (Venezuela), thought they make sense at different scales

OVERVIEW OF THE PRESENTATION

Three objectives:

- Figure out **theoretical basis** to **articulate** realist and constructivist positions in assessing – and handling – risks.
- **Politicize** systematically the construction of risk as it is a **situated category** that has **consequences on** urban space
- Push forward the **territories of risks** as an **integrative framework** for analysis and assessment.

Three parts:

- I- Risks are **hegemonic**
- II- Risks are **performative** and can be **instrumentalized**
- III- Towards an **encompassing** approach: **territorializing risks**

I- Risks are **hegemonic**

- * The rising of environmental and risk concerns

- Meadows Report, 1972; Brundtland Report, 1986; Rio Earth Summit, 1992.
- Risk / Security / Climate Change... among the current buzzwords.
- Hegemonic categories: generalized, legitimate, hardly questionable, Manichean...

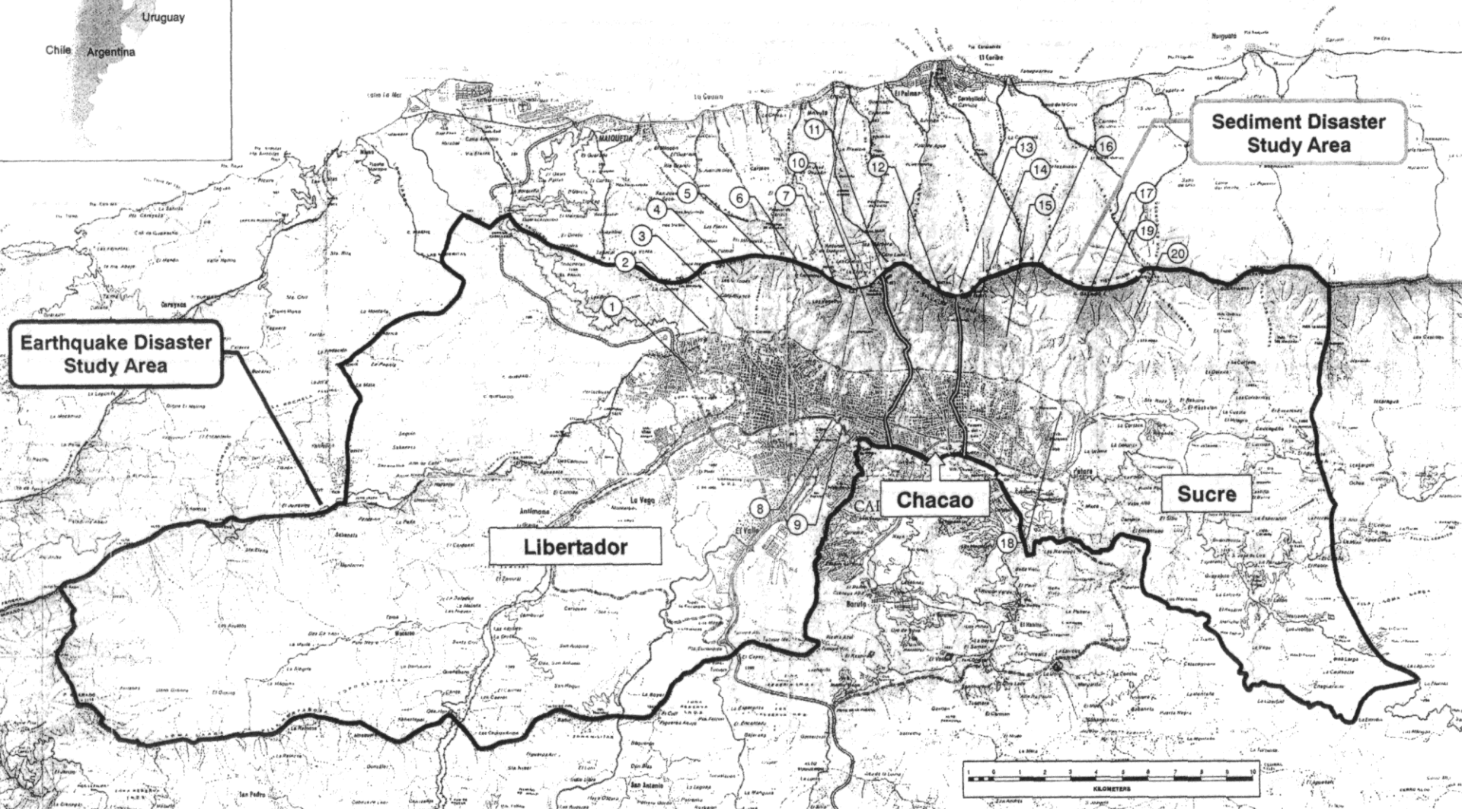
- * The Tragedy of Vargas a few kilometers North to Caracas, in 1999

- Huge rainfalls and debris-flows on the coast
- Risk definition and assessment do not rely on objective conditions

- * The need for critical and reflexive social sciences



- 20 target streams**
- | | | | |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| ① CAROATA | ⑥ ANAUCO | ⑪ CHACAITO | ⑯ TOCOME |
| ② AGUA SALUD | ⑦ GAMBOA | ⑫ QUINTERO | ⑰ LA JULIA |
| ③ AGUA SAL. | ⑧ SARRIA | ⑬ PAJARITOS | ⑱ PANAQUIRE |
| ④ CATUCHE | ⑨ MARIPEREZ | ⑭ SEBUCAN | ⑲ GALINDO |
| ⑤ COTIZA | ⑩ CHAPELLIN | ⑮ TENERIA | ⑳ CAURIMARE |



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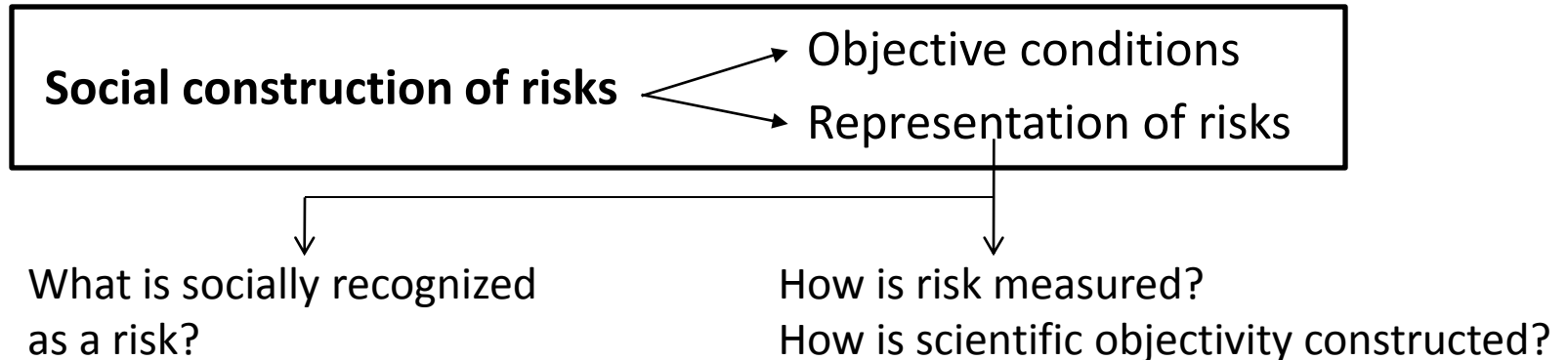
- Risks must be situated and embedded in social logics by asking:
 - °Adaptation to what? What for?
 - °How are societies adapting? How are scientists assessing risks?

II- Risks are **performative** and can be **instrumentalized**

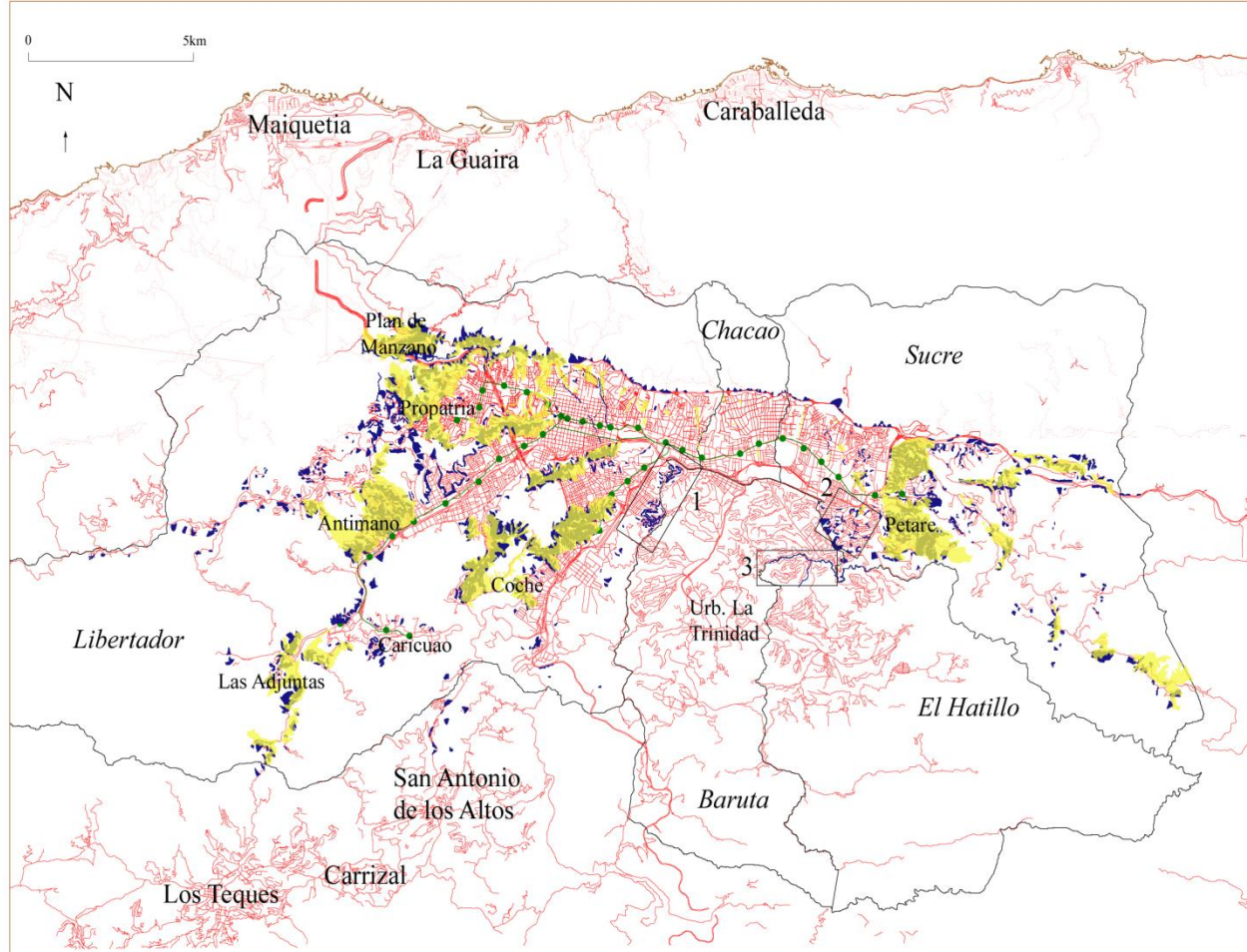
- * The realistic approach. The necessity to deal with the drama

$$\text{Risk} = \text{Hazard} * \text{Vulnerability}$$




- * The constructivist approach. The ability to consider performativity









- * How – and why – should we articulate the two approaches?

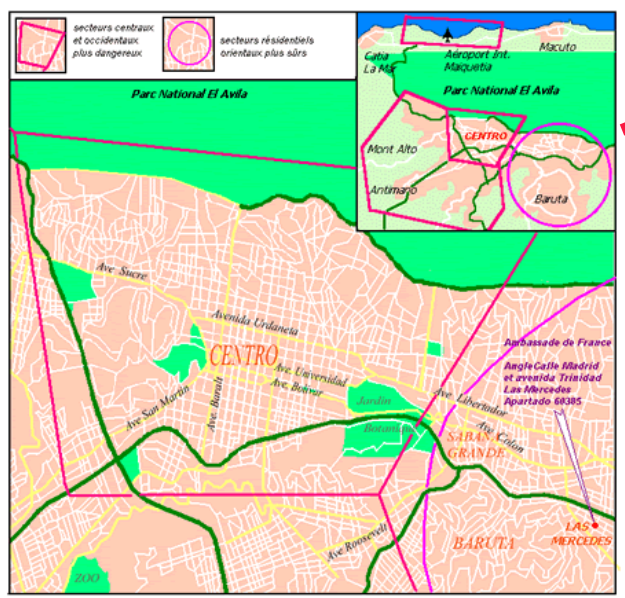
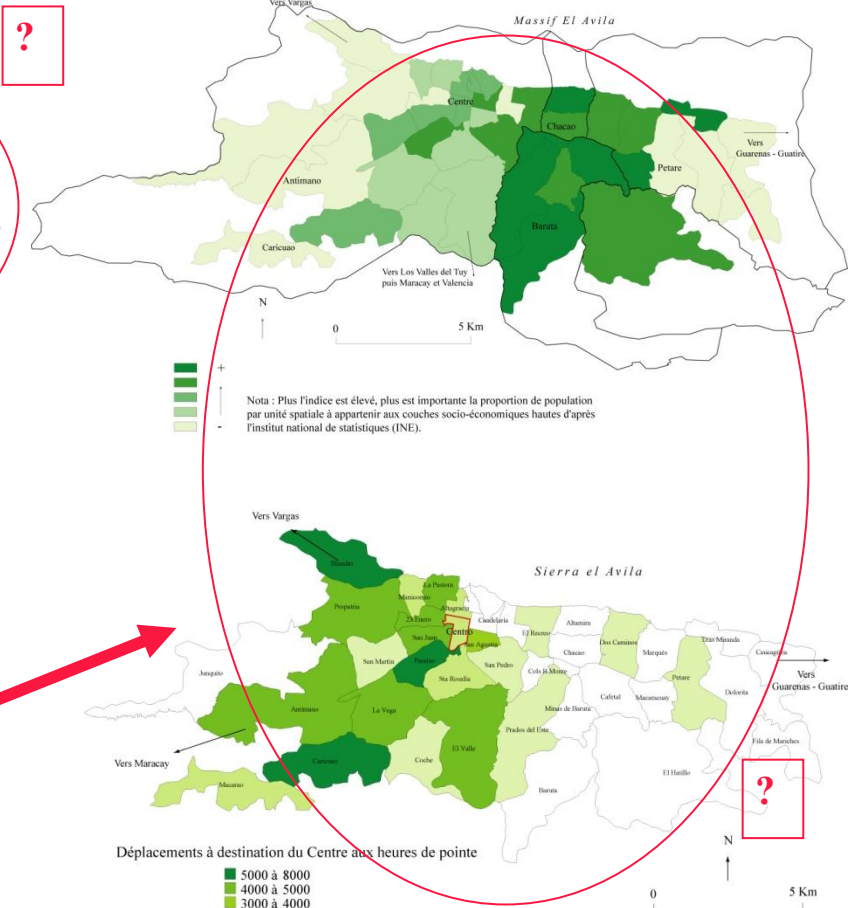
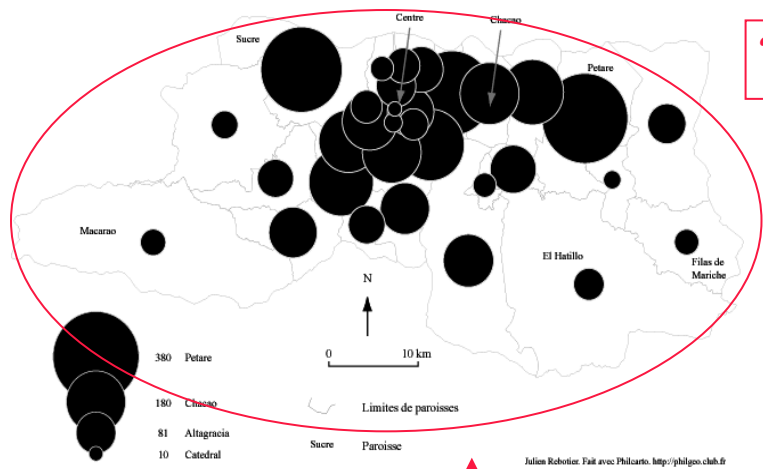


Source: D'après JICA, 2004

-  Lignes et stations de Métro
-  Limites du District Métropolitain de Caracas et de ses municipes
-  Principales routes et autoroutes

- Sucre* Municipie
- Los Teques Villes de la grande Caracas
- Coche Secteurs urbains de Caracas
-  Centre historique

-  Glissements de terrain avérés ou potentiels
-  Localisation des *barrios de ranchos* dans le DMC
- 3  Secteur Los Naranjos
- 2  Secteur California Sur / Macaracuay
- 1  Secteur Chaguaramos / Colinas Santa Monica



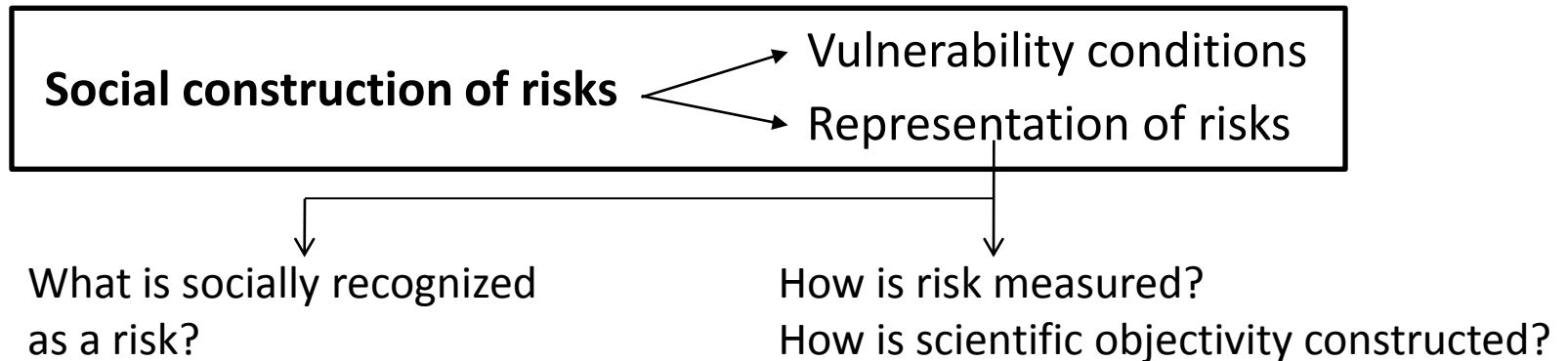
Mapa 8: La estigmatización espacial fundamentada en un discurso dominante del miedo a la inseguridad reproduce más los contornos de un orden socio-espacial que la geografía de los actos delictivos en la ciudad.

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In a social science vision, risks are a matter of power, justice, and democracy.
Why are territories important in addressing risks critically?

III- Towards an **encompassing** approach: **territorializing risks**

* Defining risks or shaping urban territories?

- Adaptation creates new risk conditions.
- Measuring risk is not neutral. It shapes our representations.
- Acceptability is shifting over time. It is dynamic.

➔ *Risk and adaptation have territorial consequences and they can be instrumentalized*

* Risks must be situated and politicized

- Articulation to multiple causes (from root causes to conjectural ones).
- Risk assessment is also a matter of power, justice and democracy.
- Scaling risk is important (risk is a situated notion. Contexts must be set out).

* Territories ↔ Risks

- Territories give a **context**. They help “situating” risks, actors and logics involved...
- Territories of risk are a result of the **performativity** of risks. Risk shapes territories

Risks = Situated outcomes AND Drivers, of socio-spatial order

Conclusion

Risks are **situated** notions. They can be territorialized

Risks are showing **hegemonic** aspects.

Risks are not just facts, they are also causes. They are **performative**.

Risks are **instrumentalized**. They are used according to interests.

What is defined as a risk? What for (what is really at stake when dealing with risks?)

How is risk assessed? How is it addressed?

A critical approach allows **denaturalizing** risks and consider them as **outcomes** and as **processes**. Risk assessment is part of the reality at stake, thus, It must be reflexive.