

THE CASE OF FRIULI, ITALY  
THE IMPACT OF AN EARTHQUAKE IN A HIGHLY DEVELOPED OLD CULTURE:  
REGIONAL IDENTITY VERSUS ECONOMIC EFFICIENCY  
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Introduction

During the past decade there has been a considerable increase in the number of research publications concerning natural hazards in general and earthquakes in particular. The reports on the 1964 Alaska earthquake [1970], the 1971 San Fernando earthquake [1973] and disasters in Managua, Anatolia and elsewhere provided information which could be used to develop rules for disaster management and reconstruction [Haas et al., 1977], [Friesma et al., 1979], [Wright et al., 1979]. However, the publications show the tendency to apply a systems analysis approach to these experiences and lose sight of the individual characteristics of a particular disaster. Because authors seek to fit their findings into existing models (which are taken mostly from a background of the two Americas), the individual traits of a particular disaster are often neglected, although they might be useful in giving breadth to models which are too narrow. This is especially apparent when disasters happen in the region of a highly developed older culture.

The purpose of this paper on the earthquakes of May 6 and September 15, 1976, in the Friuli area of northeastern Italy is to re-examine and extend existing knowledge about how a regional society behaves in a catastrophe. It is indispensable in doing so to take a careful account of social, economic, cultural and political circumstances in Friuli as they were before and at the time of the disaster, as well as during the period of reconstruction. The paper is intended as a contribution to the quest for a better understanding of the nature of natural hazards and the way in which inhabitants of vulnerable areas respond to them. While it draws upon the findings of research undertaken previously and especially in North America, it attempts to break new ground. Much of the previous work has been devoted to developing models of human reactions to disaster in a single city or parts of a city. In addition, many of the studies have not taken into account the problem of external