Sharing Responsibility - perspectives & myths

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Bushfire CRC Research Advisory Forum
Perth, 14th May 2013
“There is a need for a new focus on shared responsibility.”

“shared responsibility much talked about, but not consistently understood.”
- Feedback at Canberra RAF, Oct 2011

“What exactly is responsibility?... It all depends on the perspective and on the goals pursued.” ¹

“How we define and frame problems will circumscribe our search for solutions.” ²
MY ELEVATOR PITCH

What?
- Investigating what shared responsibility means for emergency management from different perspectives

Why?
- To stimulate new ways of thinking about it and to support decision-making

Focus on sharing between government and ‘communities’
Laying groundwork

Stage 1 - Concept review
• Review ways that responsibility-sharing issues are conceptualized in relevant research

Stage 2 - Stakeholder engagement
• Direct research towards policy learning needs (ongoing)

Stage 3 - Policy review
• Identify responsibility-sharing issues encountered in a range of sectors internationally, & the policy responses

Stage 4 - Australian case studies
• Investigate specific responsibility-sharing issues encountered in Australian fire and emergency management

Stage 5 - Synthesis
• Identify and evaluate alternatives to share responsibility in Australian FEM in the context of what we learn via Stages 1-4

Research program integration
Responsibility has always been shared in Australian fire and emergency management.

‘Shared responsibility’ is a normative statement.

But the same statement is being used to make different normative claims.

See McLennan & Bosomworth forthcoming; McLennan & Handmer 2012b
# COMPARING LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE PERSPECTIVES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Legal (e.g. Michael)</th>
<th>1. Governance (e.g. Blythe)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Responsibility can only be held by individuals</td>
<td>1. Responsibility can be held collectively</td>
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<td>2. Communities can’t share responsibility because they don’t exist</td>
<td>2. Communities can share responsibility because they do exist</td>
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<td>3. Royal Commission’s can’t attribute responsibility</td>
<td>3. Anyone can attribute responsibility</td>
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<td>4. Only an external (formal) power can enforce responsibility</td>
<td>4. Responsibility can also be internally (and informally) enforced</td>
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<td>5. Law trumps social norms &amp; social institutions</td>
<td>5. Law reflects social norms &amp; social institutions</td>
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See McLennan & Eburn forthcoming; McLennan & Handmer 2012d.
Figure 1: Four hypothetical scenarios for sharing responsibility for wildfire management between governments and citizens (McLennan & Eburn forthcoming)
1. It is a many-headed beast
   a) Context-dependent
   b) Multiple activities
   c) Multiple values/interests/end goals to trade off.

2. Is a collection of overlapping challenges
   • Many types of ‘theoretical’ challenges (McLennan & Handmer 2011a,b)
   • Challenges in VBRC public submissions (McLennan & Handmer 2011c)
Ten theoretical Challenges

1. Social dilemma
2. Normative standards
3. Social contract
4. Governance
5. Social capacity
6. Attribution
7. Sociocultural context
8. Distribution
9. Practice
10. Complex systems
MYTH 2: SHARED RESPONSIBILITY IS A PROBLEM TO BE FIXED

1. Shared responsibility is an **emergent property**.

2. It is a **process** as much as an outcome.
MYTH 3 – AGREEMENT ON WHAT SHARED RESPONSIBILITY MEANS IS NECESSARY/DESIRABLE

- Disagreement is messy but...
- Interaction between diverse and contradictory perspectives can be an advantage
  - E.g. high reliability organisations
- Being ‘frame-reflective’
  - McLennan & Bosomworth forthcoming)
- Co/shared governance

KEY PROJECT DOCUMENTS


• McLennan, BJ, Bosomworth, K (forthcoming) *From risk to resilience: reframing responsibilities in Australia disaster policy discourse.* In preparation.

• McLennan, BJ et al. (forthcoming). Sharing responsibility for implementing the NSDR: written account of a stakeholder workshop. *In preparation.*


