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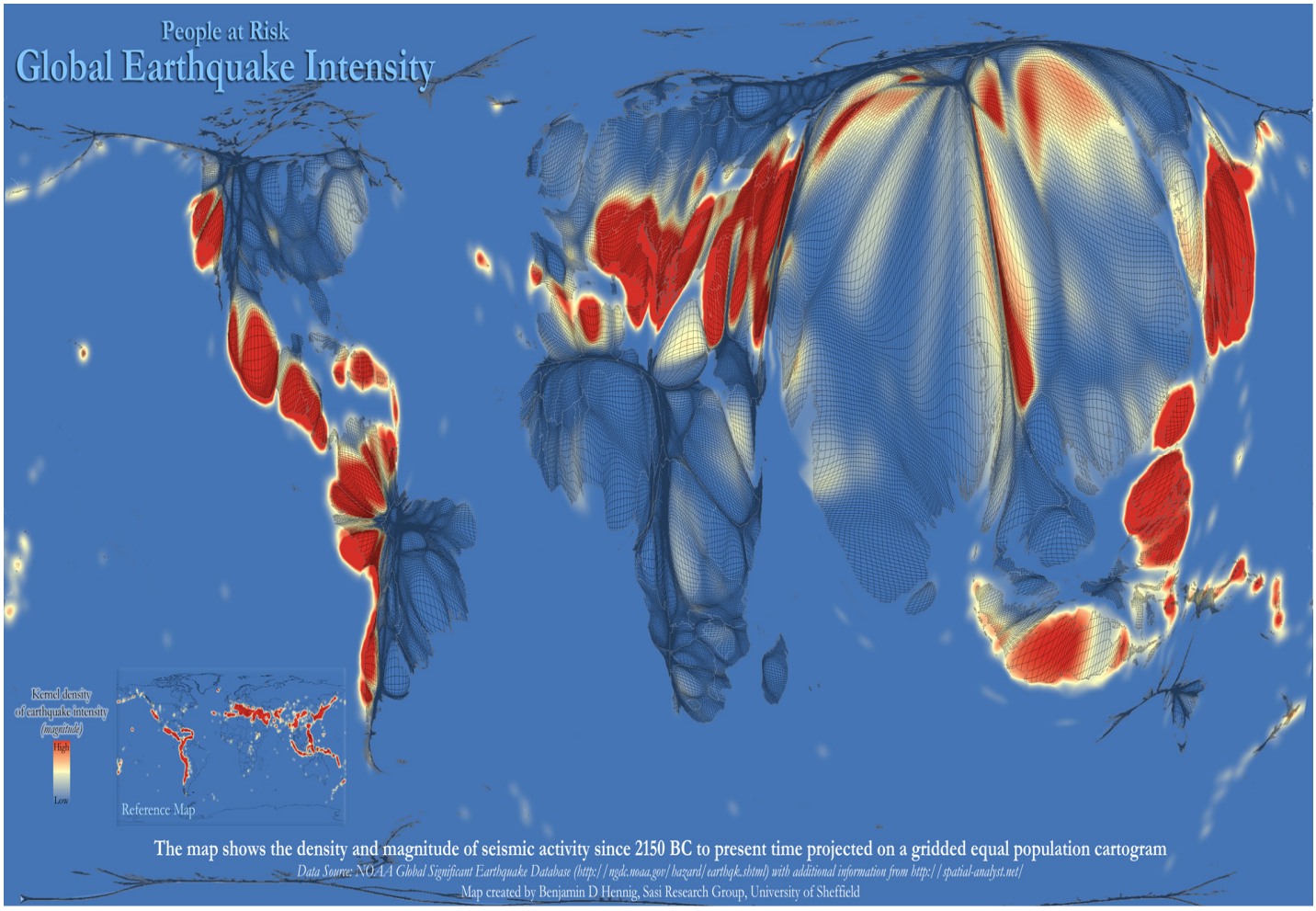
Editorial

The African Plate

In a period of a little more than a year, our world was "rocked" by two major Earthquakes of global proportions. The 2010 Earthquake in Haiti continues to have devastating effects on public health on that island, with the emergence of cholera and other consequences of natural disasters in impoverished countries. The March 2011 earthquake of Japan and the ensuing Tsunami threatens to contaminate the world with potent radioactive contaminants spewing from damaged nuclear reactors.

Earthquakes occur on this planet every day. For example, on March 28th, 2011, eight notable Earthquakes occurred at the margins of the "African Plate," one of the fourteen primary and secondary tectonic plates that keep the planet on its toes, figuratively speaking (Figure 1). One of the recent quakes on the Southern Mid-Atlantic Ridge of the African Plate measured at least 6.1 on the scale that seismologists use to compare quakes[1] - sufficient powerful to topple buildings and disrupt social infrastructures. However, most of these daily Earthquakes are "harmless" in that they occur in unpopulated regions of the planet. Disaster occurs in those places where Earthquake intensity meets populations (Figure 2).



[1] United States Geological Survey. Earthquake Hazards Program: http://earthquake.usgs.gov/earthquakes/recenteqsww/Maps/region/Africa.php

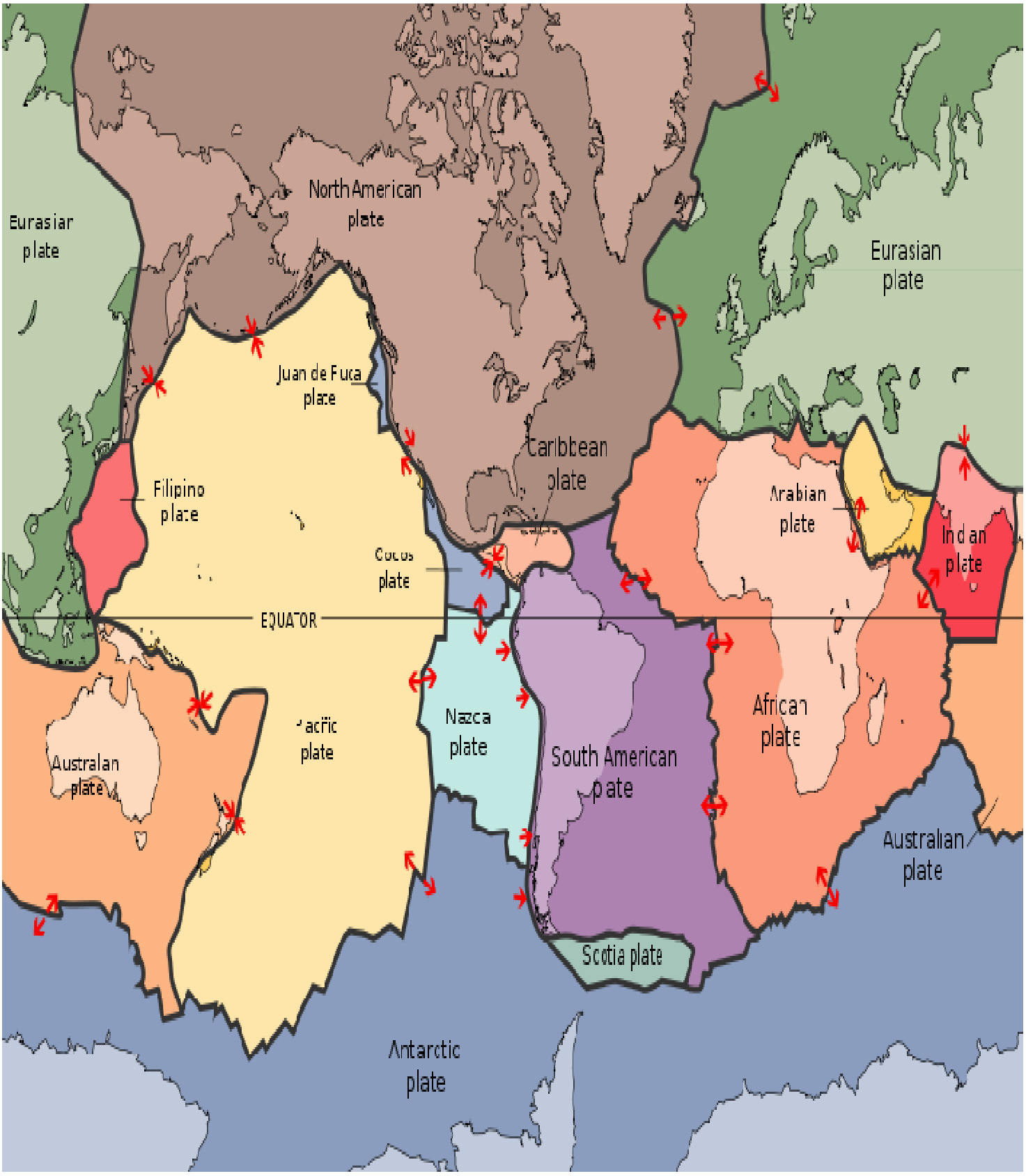


Figure 1. Global Earthquake Intensity.

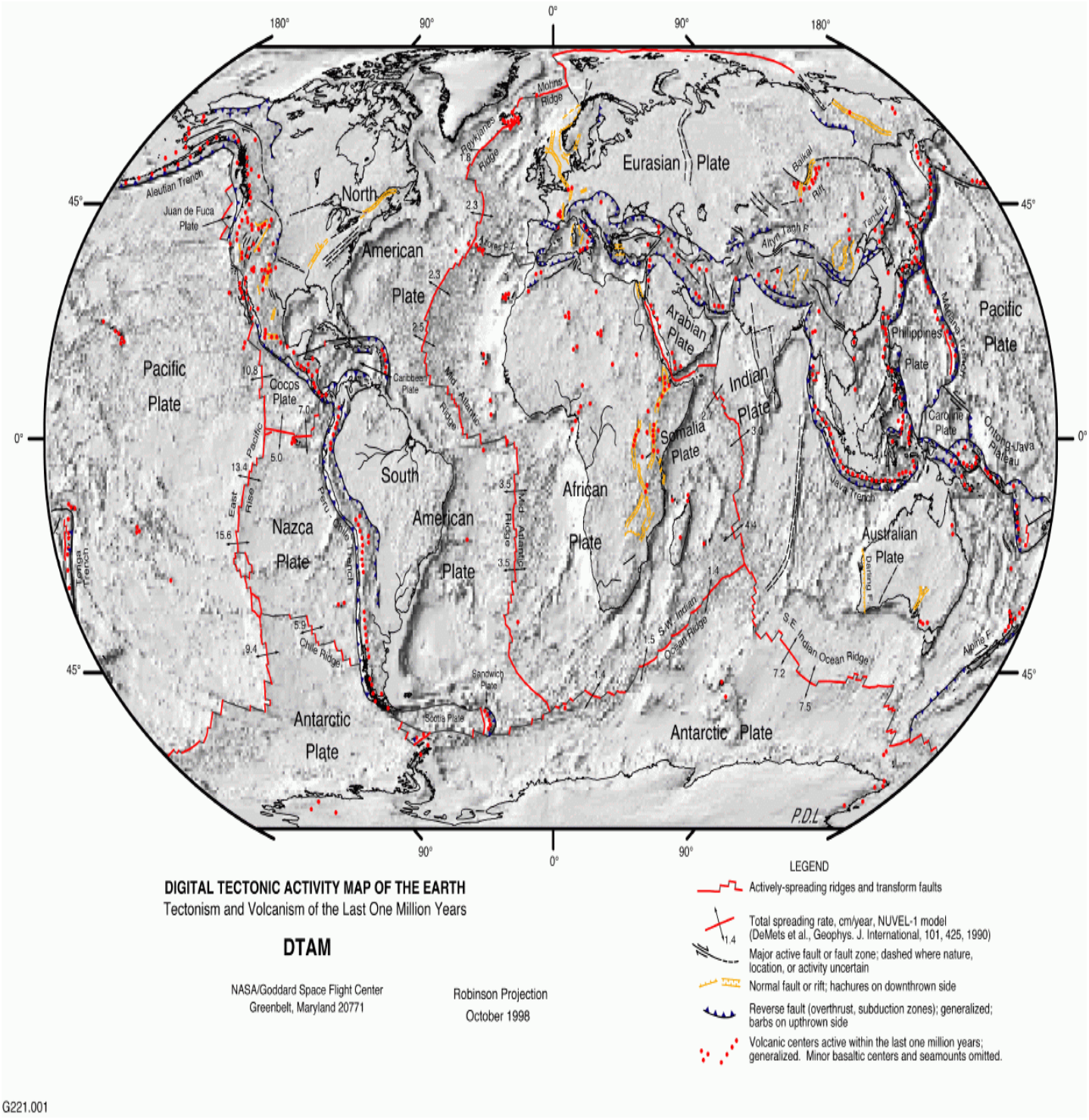


Figure 2. Digital Tectonic Activity Map of The Earth.

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