MANAGING POST-DISASTER RISK CAPES
LESSONS LEARNED FROM PORT-AU-PRINCE, HAITI
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MANAGING POST-DISASTER RISKCAPES

MAIN POINTS:
1. Reframing the post-disaster recovery process in terms of risk and resiliency.
2. The need to define “acceptable risk”
3. Controlling risk in uncontrollable settings
4. Addressing structural causes of vulnerability through reformatative recovery
Lightening  
Hurricanes  
Accidents  
Economic Risks  
Disease  
Hail-Draught  
Theft  
Crime  
Earthquakes  
Tornadoes  
Floods  
Fires  
Storms
“Riskscapes” are Dynamic
Controlling Changing Riskscapes

What if all new construction is better designed for earthquakes?

20% EXPECTED REDUCTION IN 15 YEARS
Managing Post-Disaster Riskscapes

• Transformation in the urban landscape described in terms of changes in riskscapes...
• Post-disaster recovery described in terms of changes in riskscapes...
• ... so as to better control risk trajectories.
2010 Earthquake in Haiti
Remaining Earthquake Risk

Actual 2010 event
31,000 buildings collapsed

Expected Plausible Event
63,000 buildings collapsed

Track 2: Breakout #4 – The Continued Earthquake Risk of Port-au-Prince, Haiti
Post-Disaster Risk Reduction

• Remaining risk is very high (not only earthquakes)
• Nearly 5 years after the earthquake, the city is not any less vulnerable...
• Trying to answer “why?”
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“What do we mean by disaster recovery? If recovery is a process, than what is the intended outcome?”

Victoria Maynard
Initial Resilience

Disaster Event Response

Recovery / Reconstruction

Build Back Better

Reformative Recovery

More Resilient Future

Early Recovery

Post-Disaster Resiliency Diagram
The importance of distinguishing these processes is that each is linked to specific activities and goals in terms of risk reduction, both in terms of the risk considered and their time-frame.
Response: the process is one of stabilization, preventing further death or injuries due to the immediate crisis.
Early Recovery: the goal here is to address the extreme vulnerability following the disaster, such as lack of access to safe shelter, lack of physical security, basic economic security etc.
Recovery/reconstruction: strictly speaking, recovery and reconstruction means going back to the previous state. Hence this is a restorative process to the original level of resilience.
Building back better: What is rebuilt should be more resilient. Since “building” has a material reality, the term has mostly referred to increasing the resilience of the built environment. It is a classic (and very important!) engineering approach, focused on construction guidelines, material quality etc.
Reformative recovery: The concept of “reformative recovery” is set in contrast to the traditional “restorative recovery.” Reformative recovery by comparison is a process through which new dynamics for resilience are created, often through government and social reform. (similar to “fukko?”)
These processes create path-interdependencies. In other words, the earlier processes (those with most funds at the early stages) set the initial direction, therefore creating path dependencies for other activities. This can be very problematic in the absence of common targets.
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One of the obstacles for risk reduction in post-disaster Haiti was that while everyone agreed that risks should be reduced, no one knew what it should be reduced to.
In the absence of properly understood standards for ‘acceptable risk’, agencies tended to either avoid action altogether, ignore using risk as a criterion, or to significantly over-design their interventions.
Example: Transitional-Shelter Standards
How do you define acceptable risk?

Who defines acceptable risk?
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In Haiti as in many contexts, decisions that determine risk are made mostly at the household level, outside of any regulatory process.
Risk embedded in decision of where to build:

Canaan 2010
Risk embedded in decision of where to build:

Canaan 2013
Risk embedded in decision of what to build:

Self-construction
Risk embedded in decision of what to build: Self-construction
Constructing new riskscapes
Constructing new riskscapes
How do you promote risk reduction when the risk creation is outside any formal process?
Promote self-compliance to safe practices
Recognize that households make rational decisions about their own risk, based on their perception of the riskscape in which they live.
It was found outcomes falling short of “acceptable risk” therefore reflect:

(1) A lack of awareness of various risks, their frequency and their significance.
(2) A lack of knowledge of how to address these risks. (Cholera example)
(3) Socio-economic constraints for addressing these risks.
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While we focus on this...
While we focus on this... but this is also a reality.
We’ve focused so much on how to build resilience, but have ignored the systems that are creating vulnerability.
If we want to talk about resilience, than we have to recognize that the systems that create and perpetuate extreme vulnerability are extremely resilient.
Resilience of the current state of vulnerability

Vulnerability State

State of lower vulnerability
Political Disempowerment
No mechanism for accessing land
Land-holdings restricted to very few families

Vulnerability State

State of lower vulnerability
Reformative Recovery

Vulnerability State

Political Disempowerment
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State of lower vulnerability
Reformative Recovery

Reform: “Make changes in something (typically a social, political, or economic institution or practice) in order to improve it.”

It doesn’t throw away the existing, but reshapes it in fundamental ways.
Reformative Recovery

“Reformative recovery” is a process through which new dynamics for resilience are created, often through government and social reform.

While these long-term changes cannot realistically be fully addressed during the reconstruction process, “reformative recovery” should promote these debates and begin the reforms.
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