Organizing for Recovery

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How Does Recovery Work?

• What do we know about how rebuilding takes place?
• What does recovery success look like?
• What resources does successful recovery need?
• What are some unique characteristics of recovery?
• What is the role of government in successful recovery?
Urban Planning After Disasters ...

- ...has the same goals as normal urban planning—to help people to create settlements that:
  - are healthy and safe places to live,
  - provide viable livelihoods,
  - provide convenient access to all the things we need,
  - don’t disproportionately burden some groups
  - are environmentally sustainable,
  - provide opportunities for residents to enjoy and improve their lives
But it’s different than urban planning or urban development in normal times....
After disasters, urban planning occurs under “time compression”

• Because everything (buildings, livelihoods, places of social interaction) needs to be replaced in a short time, the post-disaster environment consists of a compression of activities in time and focused in space.

• The many unique challenges of post-disaster recovery all stem from this phenomenon.
Our Research

- Comparative study, based on 20 years of work on cases in:
  - U.S. (Northridge Earthquake, 9/11, Katrina, Sandy)
  - Japan (Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, Chuetsu Earthquake, GEJE)
  - China (Wenchuan Earthquake)
  - India (204 tsunami, Guajarat Earthquake)
  - New Zealand (Canterbury earthquakes)
  - And others!

- With Laurie Johnson and many colleagues and local collaborators.
Many actors

• The process is complex and multi-centric: Many people and organizations are involved:
  – Residents rebuilding
  – Businesses
  – Public agencies, utilities
  – NGOs of all types
  – Funding agencies, governments
Recovery requires money

• When a city is devastated, above all it needs money to pay for the labor and materials to rebuild it.
• Recovery is a search for sources of financing.
Funding requires plans

- Planning is a way to help spend the money wisely.
- Every disaster victim needs to make some sort of “plan,” to convince donors/investors to provide money, to assure them the money will be well spent.
- Planning is also a way to think about how to build back better.
Planning conflicts with need for speed

• Simultaneously a desire to rebuild, and a desire for betterment: tension between speed and deliberation.
• Both are important! (though contradictory)
• But, because of time compression, speed is a reality.
  – Deliberation must be able to occur in compressed time.
Some implications of time compression

• Time compression is uneven: Different activities compress unequally:
  • The place of disaster thus becomes different from other places in new ways.

• Speed of information does not compress: actions occur faster than information can support them. Planning is in a “fog of war.”

• Time compression creates illogical results, actions “out of sync.”

• Time compression of losses creates opportunities for change.
• Recovery overwhelms governments’ abilities. Bureaucracies are slow.
• Self-help networks and NGOs emerge to fill the gaps.
  – they increase the bandwidth of information in compressed time
But government also has an important role

• Money, information, technical assistance
• Support all the many actors in doing what they are good at.
• Need to create (or adapt existing) institutions to:
  – Identify and manage financing.
  – Collect, maintain, distribute information
SUCCESSFUL RECOVERY MANAGEMENT: SOME PROPOSITIONS
Proposition 1: New organizational structures are needed to enhance information flow and collaboration.

- The role of governmental organizations is to inform, support, and influence the many recovery actors.
- Institutional design should enhance existing institutional systems.
**Proposition 2:** Along with money, information is the fuel of the recovery process. Successful recovery requires large amounts of:

- **Data;**
- **Communication between organizations and with the public;**
- **Transparency; and**
- **Accountability.**
Proposition 3: Recovery requires planning approaches that:

- increase planning capacity (more staff and/or more citizen involvement),
- decentralize information gathering and decision processes, and/or
- iterate planning decisions over time.
Proposition 4: Budgets need to account for:

- Additional costs for information, data, communication, public involvement, and planning;
- Revision over time, because initial budgets will always be wrong; and
- Contingencies, because time compression creates a high probability of mistakes
**Proposition 5:** Most of the work of recovery should be done locally.

- The government level closest to the disaster is best suited to implement recovery actions,
- But it needs guidance and support from higher levels of government.
**Proposition 6:** Relocation of homes and communities after disasters should only be done if absolutely necessary

- When the existing site is unsafe or has poor access to livelihoods and services.

**6a:** If relocation is necessary, residents should fully participate in the process

- But they need technical assistance to do so.
Proposition 7: Although speed is important, recovery is not a race to build as fast as possible.

– Recovery is about communities, households and livelihoods. The challenge is to restore these social systems in compressed time.