



Hazard Reduction & Recovery Center

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“Recovery after Disaster: Achieving Sustainable Development, Mitigation & Equity.”

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The aftermath of a natural disaster creates a huge challenge to local officials. Homeless citizens need replacement housing. Water, sewer and other public services need to be restored to maintain public health and support other recovery activities. Local businesses need to be reestablished to restore the local economy. There’s an opportunity to strengthen local organizational capacity to help, with economic, social and physical development during the recovery period after a disaster. The paper reviews key findings and raises issues that are not fully addressed by the dominant disaster recovery literature.

Findings

The central issue of the review is the achievement of equity, mitigation and sustainable development, particularly through local participation in redevelopment planning and institutional cooperation. Power differentials and inequality are evident in vertical integration, as communities with high degrees of vertical integration usually have a larger number of ties with larger political, social, and economic institutions. Vertical integration refers to the combination of two or more stages of production to operation by a single, rather than separate, company or entity. Vertical integration can be more successful at meeting local needs when activities that strengthen horizontal integration before and during recovery are present. In communities with more diverse distributions of power and resources, conflict and confrontation often need to occur in order for long-term recovery to be effective, as seen in disasters like Loma Prieta and Hurricane Hugo. Adaptations and learning from recovery can improve local capacity to solve problems and provide services.

Implications

Communities need to know how to use potentially relevant organizations and policy tools to prevent loss of important opportunities for reduction and development, and to increase the likelihood that external aid programs are flexible in meeting local needs and capabilities. Evidence suggests that what we term a developmental approach for recovery can have multiple benefits including cheaper costs and increasing the successfulness of recovery aid policies. Aid that comes from outside of the community can be used to build and support local organizations to be more effective in undertaking self-directed sustainable development initiatives. Many local organizational and citizen capabilities can be integrated into the recovery process, with organizational collaboration between community based groups and local government.