

Retreat

Rosetta S. Elkin

According to the geological classification system, landslide is a blanket term for the downslope movement of a mass of earth, rock or debris and includes subsets such as mudflows, avalanches, falls and topples. Hurricanes—predominantly a coastal hazard—presently represent the second most costly disaster in terms of property losses and the third most injurious. Tsunamis strike as repeated waves, generated by a sharp and sudden vertical impulse to the ocean floor, typically following an earthquake. As one of the more commonly experienced geophysical hazards, global citizen-scientists can now index earthquakes, mapping each strain, fault and magnitude through a network of quake-detectors and earth-trackers that chart the global trembling of the earth. Each event is subject to a chain of exacting hazard measurements that quantify risk and result in a series of procedures, a contradiction to the qualitative risks experienced as human tragedy.

In the aftermath of disasters, the primary response is to rebuild that which was lost, a reaction that has become standard procedure despite the possibility that some land may actually be vulnerable to chronic environmental stress. Natural hazards are not synonymous to natural disasters; rather hazards become disastrous when they encounter the built environment.¹ The relationship between the hazard itself and the extents of its damage is fundamentally an outcome of characteristics of the built environment, such as population density, urbanization and industrial operations that lay claim to land.

Revealed in the statistics of a rapidly changing climate, events are escalating and intensifying such that each hazard can also remind us that any adaptive response must consider the possibility of retreat from the risk itself. In other words, the disaster cannot be avoided but the response can be valued. In cases where the risk is specifically environmental, predictable and chronic, there are opportunities for post-disaster response found in the common operations between design, planning and humanitarian aid.² Thus conceived, the understanding of disaster recovery is advanced through an

examination of retreat as a viable post-disaster operation, in order to inform future adaptive operations within the cycles of development that tend to prioritize built-environment capitalism.

“Under the influence of a given culture, itself changing through time, the landscape undergoes development, passing through phases, and probably reaching ultimately the end of its cycle of development. With the introduction of a different—that is alien—culture, a rejuvenation of the cultural landscape sets in, or a new landscape is superimposed on remnants of an older one.”³

The proliferation of acronyms and terms framing long-term recovery currently galvanize around two specific themes: resilience planning and housing, land, property (HLP) issues. These themes have been developed by various public and private entities, including international, national and local organizations. Coded by expertise such as design, planning and humanitarian aid, efforts tend to promote rebuild operations whereby reconstruction in situ, and reestablishment of land rights on vulnerable land is deemed preferable to the potential complications of relocation or long-term withdrawal. As such, rebuild procedures in the context of natural hazards superimpose built procedures on remnant conditions. This is exacerbated by the relatively slow progress made by many humanitarian actors in adapting their response to the particularities of urban contexts.⁴ Any conceivable notion of relocation is considered a last resort, labeled ‘extreme’ and in all cases requires a more active intervention that can only be addressed through larger, more cumbersome policy frameworks.⁵ In many cases, the immediacy of such a response does not address

[1] N. Smith “There’s no such thing as a natural disaster.” *Understanding Katrina: perspectives from the social Sciences* 11 (2006).

[2] The current global refugee crisis and response is not addressed in this study, as factors of critical political and social protection associated with violence remain outside the scope of retreat as defined here.

[3] C. Sauer, ‘The morphology of landscape’ [1925], in J. Leighley, ed., *Land and life: selections from the writings of Carl Ortwin Sauer* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963) 343.

[4] Pantuliano, S., Metcalfe, V., Haysom, S. and Davey, E. (2012), “Urban vulnerability and displacement: a review of current issues” in *Disasters*, 36: S1–S22. Doi: 10.1111/j.1467-7717.2012.01282.

Retreat

Rosetta S. Elkin

the plurality of the underlying causes. This places any alternative configuration outside the scope of recovery operations and the viability of long-term livelihood into question. Currently, existing models of practice within HLP standards and resilience planning only make a procedural response possible. If the risk is known, chronic, and avoidable then why does decision-making across fields insist on resettling communities into high-risk environments or onto vulnerable land?

Currently, the mere mention of retreat is associated with a sense of defeat, suggesting that the term normalizes failure. From this sense of perceived hopelessness emerges an intellectual conflict over how to explain the process of recovery from natural hazards and the ensuing rebuild techniques that assume people (and places) can adapt to chronic risk. The current language of resilience is grafted to notions of rebuild that perpetuate capital agendas and obscure varying local needs. Structural solutions—from strengthening a building code to reinforcing a levee—can deceive communities into a false sense of security.⁶ The deceptive character of these measures, and the ways in which they contribute to an insistence on restoring infrastructure is, the surest way to preserve failure and continue the cycles of capital rebuildism. Capital investments that are tied to specific land, political and economic structures that gain value from existing configurations, all serve to further lock-in rebuild agendas focused on maintaining settlement in their historic locations. But as repeated failures of protective infrastructure around the world indicate, the built environment cannot overcome episodic or chronic stress.⁷ Given the ability for landscape processes to recover from disturbance and produce an alternative arrangement, consideration can be given to restoring the living over the built environment.

In this context, stabilizing the definition of retreat can help to reconcile the theories and practices of recovery. A more nuanced definition must take into consideration a key tenant of resilience—the ability to value and adapt to the prospect of an alternate configuration.⁸

Within the built environment, when the structures, patterns and arrangements of the built environment are disturbed repeatedly, achieving resilience calls for a different form of settlement that takes disturbance seriously. Retreat advocates for a set of practices that yield novel spatial outcomes. Unlike relocation or displacement, retreat is defined as the choice of moving to stable ground, in light of a consideration that the land is uninhabitable for dwelling. Therefore, retreat is both the recognition of the limits to operational or technical rebuild procedures and a sensitivity to the forces of the living environment. Retreat emerges through a human capacity to understand that the status of the land is likely to cause an increase in social and economic vulnerability. From a geomorphological perspective, retreat pays specific attention to the terrestrial properties that manifest on the surface of the earth, the thin layer of human settlement. Implicit in the notion of retreat is a dynamic land-swap between landscape conditions. Under certain land-based conditions, retreat and the rejection of the insistence that people learn how to creatively accommodate or mitigate vulnerabilities in a given location, may be the best option. Recognizing the value and viability of retreat challenges existing paradigms in disaster preparedness, response and planning but helps establish future patterns of settlement and a more nuanced approach to resilience. Explicated below, three cases demonstrate the potential value of retreat, and can be used to help generate an expanded definition of the term.

[5] The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) is the globally designated Focal Point Agencies for Housing, Land and Property (HLP) within the humanitarian coordination system. The HLP Area of Responsibility (AoR) was established in 2007. Urban resilience planning has largely been defined by the initiatives of the Rockefeller foundation, as a means to help cities become more adaptable to physical, social and economic shocks. The term is seeing increased use across both sectors.

[6] White, G.F. *Human Adjustment to Floods*. Department of Geography Research Paper no. 29. (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1945).

[7] Recent failures of protective infrastructure for example, power outages post-Sandy (NYC, 2012), levees post-Katrina (New Orleans, 2005), pump systems in monsoon season (Bangkok, 2011), evacuation highway collapse (Haiti, 2010).

[8] In the first ecological application of the term resilience, Holling describes a systems ability to not only recover but also create what he terms an 'alternative configuration'. See: Holling CS. 1973. "Resilience and stability of ecological systems." *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics* 4:1–23.

Retreat

Rosetta S. Elkin

During the early morning hours of March 03, 1933, a historic tsunami in the Sanriku Region of Japan generated enough detestation to change government policy, reflecting a list of measures and countermeasures would set the course for global Tsunami research. Significantly, the policy called for a unique combination of assisted relocation and cultural memorial.⁹ In areas of significant damage, where loss of life was predicated on coastal proximity, a new configuration was presented not only as a strategy but also as a transaction between built and living form. Rather than simply reconstruct housing or relocate ownership value, the government established a series of control forests in the areas of devastation, planted and offered as a public amenity to the stricken community. As both a new site of mourning and a landscape that could dampen and attenuate wave action the forests became a prominent feature in the effort to restructure a sense of community with the demands of daily life. Each meter or mile planted imposes a meaningful setback for development, delineating a historical relationship between landscape dynamics, human settlement and a choice to follow the promise of change as opposed to a strategy of resistance. The forests offer an alternative configuration from settlement, and from beachfront, anticipating the physical processes of erosion and renewal. Instead, each tree planted represents a significant form of cultural restoration, assisting in the reconstruction of the community. Rebuilding is no longer conceived of as the action of returning something to a former condition, and relocation is not a last resort. Rather, the disturbance is transformed into an opportunity to intensify the value of cyclical change within patterns of settlement.

Exactly 80 years later, the path of Typhoon Haiyan (also called Yolanda) devastated coastal Philippines. In a country where urban growth and acute poverty fringe the archipelago, over 4 million people were immediately displaced. Following the storms and the surges, this tenuous ground between land and water became the site where levels of inequality manifest, as widespread destruction complicates HLP signatures

that merely promote hazard resistance and sustainable building reconstruction.¹⁰ Within weeks, the government instigated a regulatory policy of NBZ (no build zones), proposing a buffer system that prohibited the construction of dwellings and buildings. The proposal detailed a 40-meter setback of mangrove plantations, as both as a means to justify relocation and to reduce future devastation.¹¹ The ensuing estimations were rapid and tended to unfold across the vast scale of devastation, astonishing local governance, global media and non-governmental actors. While this brutal combination of speed and scale is often blamed for the breakdown of NBZ, it is conceivable to imagine that it was the simple disregard for the land being abandoned that contributed most significantly to its failure to mobilize. Rather than offering landowners, squatters or regional authorities alike a positive outcome, the transmission prioritized codes, indexes, documents and classifications that revealed the cost of relocation and the linear homogeneity of a planted monoculture. A mangrove plantation offers no cultural value, and impedes fishing and trade. Further, it necessitates years of cultivation whereby access to humans is denied. While promoting a so-called 'restorative' practice, the policy did little to offer residents anything in return. In other words, there was no articulation of land-swap, creative reuse or restructuring whereby manipulation, design, recreation and livelihoods could punctuate coastal communities and evolve a public landscape in which people and plants could contribute in unique ways.

The increasing embrace of applied retreat is explicated in the layers of response in Nepal, indexed by the

[9] Forests were modeled after those from pre-modern development, as such hurricane forests have been planted since the Edo period. See: Shuto, Nobuo, 'A Short History of Tsunami Research and Countermeasures in Japan' Proceedings of the Japan Academy. Ser. B, Physical and Biological Sciences, 2009-10, Vol.85 (8), 267-275. <http://doi.org/10.2183/pjab.85.267>

[10] United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT), 2010. Land and Natural Disasters: Guidance for practitioners, (21).

[11] Government of the Philippines (2014). Adoption of Hazard Zone Classification in Areas Affected by Typhoon Yolanda and Providing the Guidelines for Activities therein. Available: <http://pcij.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Joint-DENR-DILG-DND-DPWH-DOST-Adoption-of-Hazard-Zone-Classification.pdf> (accessed February 18, 2017)

Retreat

Rosetta S. Elkin

release of a domestic strategy for disaster risk management in 2009. The vision expressly reiterated the disparity between natural and human induced disaster and linked disaster management with climate change for the first time.¹² As shocking as the events of 2015 were, the tragedy was neither unique nor unexpected. Therefore, the strength of the 2009 policy formulation and the information collected through separate interim plans, now enables a constant and ongoing response to the physical and social disaster of the earthquake. As a framework, the strategy facilitates a flexible response whereby an allowance is made for communities that recognize the chronic stress wrought on their way of life, due not only to fragile geology, but the ongoing destabilization of slopes and lack of access to clean water. Currently, surveys are being prepared that include the possible relocation of over 500 villages. In the case of Nepal, anticipatory planning and the acknowledgment of the physical vulnerability coalesce as a new model for long-term recovery. The subject probes the potential disruption to culture and history while offering the choice and potential of an alternative configuration. Can future preparedness include a contingency plan for the abandoned land? Can the design become a catalyst for relocation and a future public amenity?

The significant difference between the case of public control forests, restorative monocultures, and national preparedness is revealed in the intentions of civic space. In the case of control forests, path systems, fishing docks, seating, memorial areas and leisure space contribute to the rebuilding of the social and cultural life without resorting to a single engineering solution. In post-earthquake villages, community response merges with national policy, so that international aid operations can include alternative scenarios. Perhaps the failure of the NBZ buffer system along vulnerable coastlines can be considered for its inadequate suggestion that a singular restorative practice can be a meaningful exchange for local livelihoods, culture and memory, which are embedded in both the site and its former inhabitants. Retreat—rather than relocation—considers

the opportunity of disaster as means to generate novel outcomes that can increase stability and lower vulnerability. It comes packaged with a preemptive strategy that proposes an alternative configuration to the land, and an amenity to the community in question.

Attention to the living environment is especially significant as the climate warms and disasters escalate. Yet, the signature of HLP and resilience planning has found an accomplice in the practices of restoration so that response is more reliant on known states and less reliant on changing, emergent conditions. The ensuing results emboss a fixed reading of the world, mobilized by the inability of design rebuild and humanitarian aid to stray from procedure. Perhaps future recovery operations can begin to coalesce around an expanded definition of retreat, an agenda that is starkly opposed to repeating the formulas that offer building back better as a framework for progress. Have we become so focused on collapse and disaster that we have failed to see the prospect of the future condition? The idea of resorting to a former state, fixing it, elevating or defending territory only rehearses known itineraries, rather than working with the disturbance regimes we inhabit to inform the duration of the responses we cultivate. In particular, this presents unexplored ground for disaster responders and designers to work together. The expanded definition of retreat introduces meaning and value to the procedures of response that bind our professions, a prospect that can strengthen our ability to adapt to natural hazards, and the conflict between quantitative and qualitative response.

[12] An International consortium was formed to support the Government of Nepal to develop a long-term risk reduction action plan (NSDRM) see: Ministry of Home Affairs, National Strategy on Disaster Risk Management (Kathmandu: MOHA, 2009).

Retreat

Panelist Reactions

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“...a sea of miseries is not a proscenium, a man screaming is not a dancing bear.”¹

What are the “internal peripheries” of disaster? Simone Weil and Giorgio Agamben have termed decreation as a means to describe social contexts that are informed by violent creation.² Violating norms, upending moral construction—the disaster often places responsibility at the feet of those whose vulnerability exceeds propriety. Across topological spectrums with which humanitarian and other agencies interface, the edges—of a people, a territory, a camp—are the most fragile, yet they surface as arenas for and by which engagement occurs. Networks embedded along these boundaries reassemble modes of governance and sovereignty allowing for sustained remediation... but to what end?

Disasters occur within social contexts. Unlike operations that promote singular restorative action, responses to disaster often catalyze the periphery—as a condition, or, perhaps as an order—and have the potential to become over-determined as representation. Dynamic façades informed by rebuilding are engaged through multiple lenses, or grounds, yet do not eschew suffering instead embodying it. We know disaster when we *see* it.

Temporality befalls resilience as an unaccounted tool that relies on the enframing of agency. Among “a set of operational categories, or space-bound circumstantial conditions,” multiple forms of humanitarian assistance host, convey and illustrate vulnerabilities that have been exposed.³ That the “humanitarian present” connotes a diminution of ethical repair, responsiveness is that which often tolerates weaknesses at borders while bolstering an expectant center. And the in-between remains a space in need of designed repair.

Retreat can thus be read as a value system in which repair reinforces the local even in transit. Rather than deploying a dialectics in which flawed interiors are construed by aid providers and victims, retreat as repair embeds a means by which communal responsibility is asserted. With rehabilitation comes renovation. Internal movements that transpose value from one political or spatial order to individuals may also foster justice.

Situated at the intersection of the measured and unknown, repair, like retreat, is as structural as it is litmus to those populations that necessitate aid. With its complements linked to disaster, repair at all scales will emerge not only as a process, language and form, but also as a promise.

[1] Aimé Césaire, *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*, trans. by A. James Arnold and Clayton Eshleman (Wesleyan University Press, 2013), 16-17.

[2] Arguably, disaster may be read as a form of creation as much as dissonance. For Agamben, creation is resistance as it “means decreating what exists, de-creating the real, being stronger than the fact in front of you. Every act of creation is also an act of thought, and an act of thought is a creative act, because it is define above all by its capacity to de-create the real.” Giorgio Agamben, “Difference and Repetition: On Guy Debord’s Films,” in *Art and the Moving Image: A Critical Reader*, edited by Tanya Leighton (Tate Publishing, 2008), 313-19; 318.

[3] “These kinds of humanitarian spaces are often marked as circles on maps around the areas where relief operations take place—at the ‘internal peripheries of war’.” Eyal Weizman, *The Least of All Possible Evils: Humanitarian Violence from Arendt to Gaza* (London: Verso, 2012), 56-7.

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In the cases under discussion in these excellent papers, the failures of even the most well-intentioned planning and humanitarian efforts might point to an underexploited opportunity. In addition to the laws, econometrics and standards that have fluency in global governance, are their spatial variables and organs of design that offer another structure, temporal dimension and political capacity? Is it possible to slither between the state and the NGOcracy to shape global agreements

not only as “one size fits all” declarations and standard policy solutions, but as bargains, chain reactions or ratchets—protocols of interplay between spatial variables to recondition spaces over time?

The expertise of planners, geologists and environmental scientists already provides the means to value territories according to heavy attributes related weather, energy, transportation, seismic activity, landscape position and flooding. Rather than master plans, an alternative design organ might offer not a solution but a protocol by which properties might operate interdependently in market and non-market exchanges. With such a protocol, designers could suggest ways to link properties with complementary or counterbalancing attributes that incentivize retreat and reaggregation as a matter of choice for property owners, cities and regional authorities?

Consider a way of encouraging retreat from sensitive landscapes or flood plains by simply rating and grouping transactions. In this interplay, the owners of House A are in a flood zone facing increased insurance risks, and their move to House B on higher ground reduces collective risk for all. All of the transactions of both House A and B are taken together and given a high rating with lower banking and insurance rates. Since their relative value may change, now the business of retreat is a game of multiple players even for properties that are not at risk. Continuing to play the game, if a group of houses in the flood plane have no hope of selling their now devalued properties, they can gather together and sell those properties to a city that will use the land for dune replenishment. All of those transactions of the owners and the city together compound the favorable rating and favorable terms, so that a losing game begins to get traction against loss with small ratcheting moves.

The details of any one example are less important than the organ of interplay itself. A “portfolio” of environmental assets in interdependence can facilitate a kind of collective bargaining with property and position in the landscape. And the actual terms of the interplay might

be different in every case and changing over time to adapt to emerging conditions.

Infrastructure decisions have perennial winners and losers. In any retreat or subtraction, the disenfranchised are usually on the wrong end of the bulldozer. But linking properties and allowing them to share fortunes and risks might be empowering or it might mean that no property is ever worth nothing. Altering expectations about control, can these ratcheting organs of interplay simply set up potentials for the pieces in play and continual tend to the time lapse of spatial change that ensues?

Tomas Holderness

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In cities, “natural disasters” are a function of infrastructure failure. It is the response of our urban fabric to external shocks that determines the scale and magnitude of impact. In the case of urban flooding the conflict is one of space – the water of an overflowing river seeks a way out the floodplain, regardless of the number of homes built upon it.

As climate change increasingly negates the capabilities of “hard engineering” strategies through ever increasing extremes, including temperatures, rainfall, water volumes, and frequency of events, “soft engineering” solutions are presented as alternatives. While these approaches of retreat can be effective – such as moving the houses back from the river, or allowing the floodplain to flood de-populated areas – critically, these methods often only exist at the urban-rural fringe, in the hinterland between human and natural. The core of our cities, the focus of populations, economies, and much of society, still rely on hard engineering resources, such as levees, air-conditioning units and building codes to protect us from disaster (for example, see Note 1) .

As put forth in the essay, disasters will come, but the cited relocation methodologies for outlying villages in Nepal, or regulatory policy of no build zones in the Philippines will not scale to established population centres. It is unfeasible to think of moving the 277,000,000 people in flood-prone Asian megacities, prior to disaster. Therefore, in the urban environment at least, we must adopt the essay's proposal of retreat as an opportunity for increased stability and lower vulnerability and in this context there is a modality available that is hitherto unconsidered – retreat into digital infrastructure.

Since the widespread adoption of both smartphones and social media, digital infrastructure has been used by residents to collect information and coordinate response to disaster. In Indonesia, residents upstream will warn friends and family downstream of approaching floodwaters, so that they might prepare to retreat to the second floor, effectively abandoning the ground floor for the monsoon season. In Australia and the United States, residents have used social sites to organise the collection and distribution of aid and shelter to residents who have had to flee their homes from wildfire. In these examples residents are digitally self-organising their response to the necessary retreat from urban spaces; just as in everyday life, citizens will use technologies available to determine their interactions with both society and the urban environment.

Digital infrastructure does not solve the material conflict between cities and natural hazards, but offers alternative modes of retreat when physical infrastructure fails.² Importantly, it affords a “just-in-time” approach, one that is certainly not ideal, but is realistic in that it can increase the resilience of a city, principally through information sharing and coordination that can occur at any stage of the disaster cycle. Yet, digital approaches also present unique challenges around infrastructure interdependency and software sustainability, where social, electrical and telecommunications networks become intertwined to form new critical infrastructures, which along with issues of data ownership and privacy

need to be considered. The challenge as researchers and practitioners is how to design modes of retreat which co-opt these digital networks into methodologies that reduce exposure to natural hazards.

[1] Ogie, Robert, Tomas Holderness, Michelle Dunbar, and Etienne Turpin. “Spatio-topological network analysis of hydrological infrastructure as a decision support tool for flood mitigation in coastal mega-cities.” *Environment and Planning B: Planning and Design* (2016)

[2] Holderness, Tomas, and Etienne Turpin. “From Social Media to GeoSocial Intelligence: Crowdsourcing Civic Co-management for Flood Response in Jakarta, Indonesia.” In *Social media for government services*, pp. 115-133. Springer International Publishing, 2015.

Response

Vincenzo Bollettino

Forced migration from climate related events or from conflict impacts millions of people each year. With anticipated changes in weather patterns associated with drought, flooding, and severe weather, millions more people are likely to be displaced in coming years. Poor and economically and socially marginalized communities often pay the highest costs when disasters happen as they disproportionately occupy physically dangerous places and have the fewest economic resources needed to cushion the impact of disasters. Moreover their livelihoods are often rooted in and dependent on coastal areas that are the most prone to damage from severe weather events and flooding. In densely packed urban areas millions live in the margins occupying “informal” settlements that are often subject to devastation from floods, crime, and receive few of the social services afforded more affluent areas.

When we think about the terms resilience, adaptation, mitigation it should be with respect to these most marginalized communities asking ourselves what do these academically contested terms mean for the everyday lives of communities? We must consider not just how best to define these terms but to consider as well the ethical responsibilities and duties governments and societies have both to mitigate the risks faced by their citizens but also to improve quality of life. These are longer-term goals that are the responsibility of governments, communities, and development agencies. In the face of immediate disasters, saving lives is paramount as is mitigating the impact of the disaster on the fabric of communities and ensuring that activities taken to provide assistance enable and not hinder economic and social systems.

The terms resilience, adaptation, mitigation are tightly linked ideas and are often defined as interlinked concepts in a variety of different literatures. So, for example, a resilient system may be defined as a system that is able to ‘mitigate’ the impact of severe shocks (whether internal or external) and is able to ‘adapt’ to changing pressures. Resilience can be said to offer a “conceptu-

al umbrella under which different disciplines can come together to tackle complex problems with more holistic interventions.”¹

From its early days as an ecological concept resilience has evolved into a multi-disciplinary term used in nearly every field of study. Whereas early definitions of resilience emphasized the ability of a system to absorb shocks and bounce back from them to the pre-shock equilibrium, later definitions highlight the ability of a system to adapt to shocks and ‘build back better’.² Resilience as it applies to disasters connotes an ability of a system (whether a community or state), to cope with immediate shocks, recover quickly from loss, and rebuild or adapt in a manner that reduces the impact of future shocks. Thus immediate response (the area of humanitarian action) and longer-term development are inextricably linked.³

As climate change-related events coupled with longer-term climate change impacts, especially sea-level rise, impact vulnerable communities living in low-lying areas, a debate arises over how best to serve communities that face recurring disasters. Is there a point at which states or local communities themselves decide that historically inhabited areas must be abandoned for higher or safer ground? What does this mean for disaster-affected and vulnerable communities? What impact would relocation have on social cohesion, livelihoods, sense of wellbeing, and identity? If communities that are strongly rooted to their land are forced to move, whose responsibility is it to make these decisions and what are the respective rights and obligations of the affected communities? What are the expectations on the part

1 Simon Levine, “Political Flag or Conceptual Umbrella?,” Humanitarian Policy Group Brief 60 (July 2, 2014): 1–4.

2 “Resilience determines the persistence of relationships within a system and is a measure of the ability of these systems to absorb changes of state variables, driving variables, and parameters, and still persist” C S Holling, “Resilience and Stability of Ecological Systems,” *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics* 4 (1973): 1–23.

3 Susan L Cutter et al., “A Place-Based Model for Understanding Community Resilience to Natural Disasters,” *Global Environmental Change* 18, no. 4 (October 2008): 598–606, doi:10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2008.07.013.

of the state and the international community to meet the long-term needs of disaster-displaced populations?

These questions are rarely on the minds of humanitarian actors when disaster strikes. Instead, humanitarians are focused on the need to rapidly assess the situation by gathering data on deaths, disease, and damage to infrastructure. While land and land tenure are crucial considerations for shelter and later permanent housing, humanitarians are not generally trained in “land right and settlement and use patterns.” Yet, humanitarians are often implicated in land use decisions as they provide shelter, decide on the locations of camps, and influence local power dynamics and economies with the provision of aid.

This leaves open a serious question that is greatly contested. Should humanitarians be prepared to learn about and become engaged with “land rights and settlement use patterns,” as humanitarian aid is invariably an “intervention in the livelihoods, authority, politics and land access of the targeted population?” Or, should humanitarians avoid the notion that “crises can be turned into transformational opportunities by building resilience in post-crisis relief assistance (“building back better”) a notion that challenges the very nature and role of emergency relief?” Several scholars have noted the danger inherent in disasters that humanitarians may “not be equipped with the necessary political-economy savoir faire to avoid acquiescing,” in powerful domestic forces “advancing their own private interests and political agendas.”⁴

These issues pose challenges for both the humanitarian community and the development community. They also raise important design questions that get to the heart of the dilemma about whether to rebuild or retreat. Are there design methods or approaches that can provide disaster communities with the ability to adapt to changing and vulnerable environments? Are there situations in which design either cannot provide a solution because of the inherent geomorphology of the

land in concern or the costs of staying are so high that it makes more sense to retreat? What are the lessons we should be examining from past experience and what approaches should we adopt as diverse communities of practice moving forward?

Resilience is a term deeply embedded in social context. Its meaning is socially constructed which may explain in part the lack of a single coherent framework for defining resilience and disagreement over how to empirically measure resilience. In the disaster literature, studies on resilience employ different units of analysis (individual, household, community, nation, etc.) and different levels of analysis. In each case though the resilience can be said to be the product of the interaction of some units (communities for example) interacting with one another and the natural or built environment (the spatial component) that experience various shocks (internal and external) over time. Importantly, resilience is a concept that encompasses the integrity of the units in a system, the quality of the interactions amongst the units in the system, and some temporal component that defines how the system and its parts respond to environmental changes.

The number and nature of geophysical or environmental or climatic events shape the context in which societies prepare for and learn to respond to disasters. For example, the countries we are considering in our discussions, the Philippines and Nepal, have markedly different disaster morphologies. Both share fault lines and are vulnerable to earthquakes, though the Philippines, sitting in the ring of fire, experiences far more seismic activity and is also susceptible to the secondary impact of tsunamis. The Philippines is also subject to frequent floods that disproportionately impact marginalized and coastal communities and is struck by numerous typhoons yearly. The greater frequency with which the Philippines is hit by disasters has cultivated a rich set of

⁴ Simon Levine et al., “The Relevance of ‘Resilience’? HPG Policy Briefs 49, Briefing Papers,” Humanitarian Policy Group Brief 49 (September 27, 2012): 1–4.

local community measures to mitigate their impact. This is captured in the term *bayanihan* that roughly translates to the spirit of members of a community helping one another without the expectation of something in return. The term *bayanihan* is often depicted by the image of community members physically picking up and moving a home to a new location. The Philippines has developed a robust capacity of dealing with disasters with the development of governmental, non-governmental, and private sector institutions and practices informed by science.

In short, ‘disasters’ are as much a feature of social systems as they are of the physical environment in which they occur. Disasters are what we make of them. This may explain in part the vast diversity of definitions of resilience and the approaches taken to measure resilience. Resilience captures elements of the physical environment in which people live, the geo-hazards and weather patterns they experience, but more directly the social choices they make. Decisions about where to build, how to build and which materials to build with will determine how people fare in the face of environmental challenges. Similarly the decisions made to create social safety nets, to educate, train, and prepare people for the hazards they face will determine how effectively societies are able to ‘mitigate’ disasters. Levels of social cohesion amongst a society’s members influence the speed with which they are able to recover from disaster and ‘adapt’ to environmental changes.

When disasters happen, humanitarians must be cognizant not only of the physical environment in which they are intervening, but of the social context they will invariably impact. Humanitarians will be focused on assessing the immediate life-saving needs of the disaster-affected population their *modus operandi*, but they must equally be aware of the social context in which they are operating, taking care, at minimum, to not disrupt the social order in ways that do more harm than good (the do no harm principle). This is difficult to do as international intervention does have an impact both

directly with respect to the monetary, medical, and material benefits humanitarians distribute as well as the norms and ideas they introduce. Moreover humanitarians’ very presence on the ground may be interpreted by the disaster-affected state as evidence of its own lack of resilience. States often are reticent to have foreign organizations on the ground for long as those organizations’ presence are a daily reminder of the inability of the disaster-affected state to manage itself.

The complex nature of ‘disasters’ calls into sharp relief the multi-dimensional nature of the terms resilience, mitigation, and adaptation. The idea that disasters are socially produced, that disasters happen because of the decisions made by societies also means that the terms resilience, mitigation, and adaptation are politically charged and carry both ethical and legal responsibilities for the states impacted by them. When disasters are particularly severe, resulting in the loss of thousands of lives, international humanitarian organizations can play a key role in mitigating the disaster’s immediate impact. Yet, these organizations step into a social and political milieu the complexities of which they are not fully aware of but nonetheless impact by their very presence (in the failures they illuminate) and by their actions in the goods and services they provide and the social norms and ideas they carry. This explains in part why humanitarians operate according to a universal set of humanitarian principles that seek to avoid being implicated in local politics and social norms, and to distribute relief according to need only. These principles provide both a set of operational guidelines for humanitarian organizations and ensure that they are serving the most affected and often most marginalized communities.

Whether to retreat or rebuild in the wake of a devastating disaster is an intimately cultural, social, economic, and political question. Because it is rooted in the fabric of social relations it is a question humanitarian organizations often seek to avoid becoming entangled in, even though what these organizations do, intended or not, influences the disaster-affected community’s

Response

Vincenzo Bollettino

capacity to adapt and build resilience. Should humanitarian organizations openly engage in conversations about whether to retreat or rebuild? If so, what role should the international humanitarian community play? Answers to this will certainly be normative but evidence about the impact international humanitarian organizations have on the adaptive capacity of local communities and their ability to mitigate the impact of disasters should also be considered. We need to have some grounded sense of whether humanitarian organizations contribute to or hinder the disaster resilience of the communities they seek to serve.

Response

Panelist Reactions

Emma E. Porio

ANTENEO DE MANILA UNIVERSITY

How do humanitarian initiatives contextualize, operationalize and redesign their responses? How do historical-structural issues of land, tenure, livelihood and institutional power relations embed and reconfigure humanitarian emergency-recovery approaches? Climate disasters transform people's lives and institutions in different communities of practice (academe, policy-governance, private sector, at risk communities) based on past and anticipated extreme events. Based on my institution's research engagements in Metro Manila, Cebu and Samar, I would like to advance the following points:

(1) The bio-physical and contextual (socio-cultural, political-economic) vulnerabilities of society/community interact, recast and heighten the impacts of climate disasters. Understanding disaster risks and impacts are embedded in the designs of humanitarian initiatives but constantly revisited in the emergency operations' drawing boards and reconfigured in the course of services delivery before, during and after emergency-recovery operations. These "revisits" and its intended/unintended consequences constantly straddle the practical-strategic platforms of action because both outcome and contextual drivers of vulnerability shape the city's (e.g., local government's disaster risk and reduction officer or DRRMO) and community's (e.g., barangay council) "consumption" of humanitarian interventions to flooding/tsunami¹ or earthquake disaster.² In these instances, governance structures (national-local-community) strongly mediated internal and external humanitarian actions within/without, in the process, reconfiguring emergency-recovery program designs on the ground.³

(2) In the above extreme events, inequality of access to basic services (water, energy, housing) and resources (wealth, land, livelihood, social capital/trust networks)

heightened the physical-social displacements of vulnerable peoples/communities and transformed their social geographies of power (i.e., differentiated resource access lines by gender, generation, ethnicity, old/new climate migrants, etc.). Thus, differences in financial/social capital and adaptive capacities among highly exposed (to hazards) households define high vulnerability to climate disasters and more importantly their resilience-building initiatives (see Fig. 1).

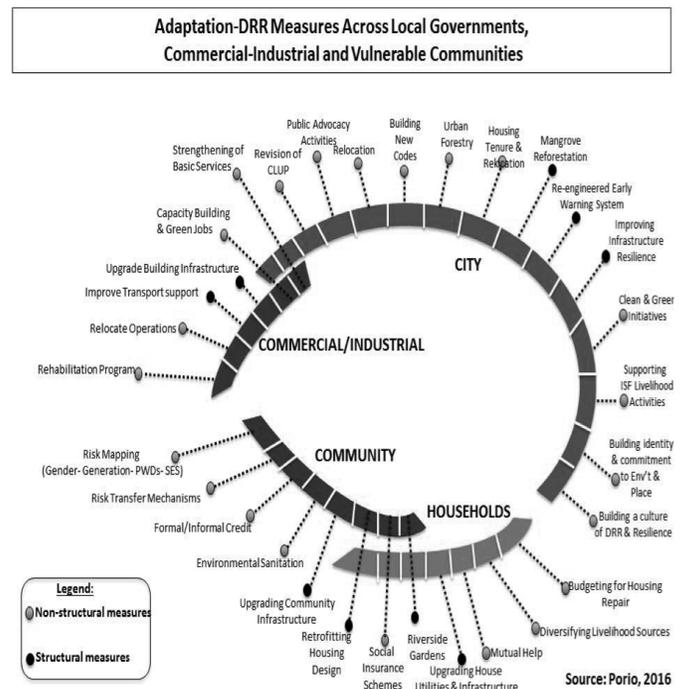


Fig. 1. Structural and Non-structural Adaptation Measures of City/ Local Government, Commercial-Industrial, Community and Family/Household Sectors in Metro Manila.⁴

(3) In closing, I would like to commend HHI (cf. Bollettino) and other organizers (HUGSD, HUAM) for recognizing the urgent need to embed and reconfigure the design of humanitarian initiatives/responses, with the issues underpinning and shaping the physical (e.g., land use, topographies of risk) and social geographies (e.g., settlement and/or resettlement and livelihood options) of vulnerable, marginal communities highly at risk to the impacts of climate/seismic shocks. Thus, recasting humanitarian responses must be anchored on pre-di-

saster resilience frameworks that address the dynamic interactions between sectors and among stakeholders situated in multi-scalar levels of governance structures with the corresponding actions/responses of the different layers of communities of practice and localities.^{3,4}

(4) So, how should humanitarian-focused institutions actively embed their designs with long-term issues of land and related bio-social geographies of highly-at-risk communities which also drive our socio-economic development pathways? Our experiences (e.g., *Coast Cities at Risk*) show that policy-program design approaches must be systems-oriented, trans-disciplinary and participatory with both external and internal humanitarian actors-stakeholders for effective-efficient risk governance.

[1] E.g. Ketsana 2009; Habagat Floods 2012-2013; Haiyan 2013

[2] E.g. Visayas, Phil., 2013; Batangas, 2017

[3] Porio, E, Yulo-Loyzaga, A. and Bercilla, "Coastal Cities at Risk: Systems Dynamic and Trans-Disciplinary Approaches to Climate Disaster and Resilience" Quezon City: Manila Observatory, (forthcoming, 2018).

[4] Porio, Emma. Risk Governance in Metro Manila: Resilience for Whom? Paper presented at the Conference on Resilient Cities for Human Flourishing: Governing the Asia Pacific Transition in the Anthropocene, Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore, (2-3 March 2017), Singapore.

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There were anecdotal accounts about families refusing to evacuate, prior to Super typhoon Haiyan's landfall, for fear of not being allowed to return to where they live. The fear was especially magnified among those who lived in poorer communities, who were likely to be informal settlers in the first place. Any discussion of retreat versus rebuild would then have to take into consideration that the possibility of retreat can be a compelling reason for communities in the line of risk to resist preemptive evacuation during response operations.

People are attached to the land on which they live for various reasons. While physical attributes such as proximity to livelihoods or access to natural resources do matter, research suggests that the issue is far more complex: "... places are more than geographic settings with definitive physical and textual characteristics; they are fluid, changeable, dynamic contexts of social interaction and memory."¹ The technical term some researchers use to capture this notion is "place attachment." Perhaps "place attachment" can be so powerful to the extent it can override considerations of risk exposure.

Building back better must then be more than physically rebuilding what was previously there, according to standards that integrate climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction measures. Equally important, building back better entails taking into consideration the much messier task of reconstructing the social context that communities have gotten used to. Disasters are traumatic experiences for people, and as a result survivors long for normalcy at the soonest possible time. Between rebuilding and retreating, normalcy is more obviously provided by the former. Being relocated after a disaster prolongs, rather than arrests, the trauma the people have just undergone as they are forced to contend with even more changes. Viewed this way, it is no wonder that the implementation of the Philippine government's decision to impose no build zones after Haiyan was largely a failure.

The issue of "place attachment" is an important one because physical location is a huge factor when it comes to experiencing risk. According to one framework, risk results from the combination of: (1) hazard, "an event or an agent that has the potential to cause harm or losses," (2) exposure, "the extent at which populations and elements of human value... are subjected to a hazard;" and (3) vulnerability, " [the] ability to cope or deal with the potential impacts of a hazard."² Of the three, both hazard and exposure are intricately linked to physical location. In the Philippines, one trend is government and private sector efforts converging on community-based

approaches for disaster preparedness and response, even down to the household level. These often focus on training sessions, drills, and simulations that provide communities with the requisite knowledge, skills and equipment. These are all important work. But more and more, these platforms can be likewise leveraged to facilitate community conversations that can soften the ground for eventual relocation, especially for communities in danger zones, preferably prior to disasters striking. The debate between rebuild versus retreat should be one that is ultimately settled by the community itself.

[1] Gerard Kyle et al, "Effects of place attachment on users' perception of social and environmental conditions in a natural setting," *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 24 (2004): 213.

[2] C. Kendra G. Castillo, "Volume 1: CCA-DRRM Addendum to the FORIN Project Document," January 2013: 23-24, <http://www.irrinternational.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/FORIN-Final-Project-Report.pdf>.

George Varughese &

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Mohan Das Manandhar

NEPAL ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF COLLEGE

Any conversation about rebuild vs. retreat must include consideration of the pre-existing conditions of the country context where disaster has occurred. The paper by Bollettino is largely silent about this consideration (except in passing in the two case studies), whereas pre-existing conditions related to state capability and reliance on foreign-aided development assistance, state-society relations, and sociocultural milieu of least developed countries pose significant, binding constraints on disaster response. These constraints also subsequently affect disaster resilience. Our reaction focuses on these constraints and by doing so seeks to draw attention to their considerable effect on the immediate aftermath of disaster, with specific reference to Nepal.

The response of state and international agencies in the immediate aftermath of the Gorkha earthquake in Nepal was influenced by at least three pre-existing, inter-related conditions: (1) state capability and development assistance; (2) the relationship of the Nepal Army with government and the public; and (3) Nepali sociocultural structure.

State Capability and Development Assistance

Nepal is in the least-developed group of countries with lofty ambitions of graduating into a middle-income country within the next 10-15 years. It hopes to do so on the back of steadfast development assistance since the 1950s for almost all aspects of state delivery of public goods and services. However, decades of feudal rule followed by 25 years of wrangling between political parties has held the country back, given rise to a culture of collusion and impunity, and diminished state capability and performance. The Gorkha earthquake occurred at a time when the Nepali state was at its least capable.

Importantly, local elections have not been held in Nepal since 1997. The absence of elected representatives, combined with often weak local response capabilities, created severe shortcomings in targeting response in the aftermath of the 2015 earthquakes. Though in some areas sub-national and local structures operated with considerable effectiveness, considering the scale and severe stress of the disaster, in others, they were nearly inoperative or taken over by parochial interests.¹ As a result, when national government, international aid givers, or NGO relief forces from farther away arrived on the scene, they frequently lacked data on damages, contextual information, and well-organized, knowledgeable local partners onto whose capacities they could couple and coordinate.

Historically, foreign aid agencies have shored up the role of the state mainly through budgetary and technical assistance. In parallel, they have also mobilized and supported non-state organizations, seeking to shape and target complementary development assistance in

areas and sectors where government has had less capability. This has over the years led to a closer relationship between Nepali non-state actors and external development agencies. The relationship between the Nepali state and Nepali society has soured over the years of instability and lack of elected local government.

Because of their on-the-ground presence/relationships and their experience in partnering with external development agencies, these organizations played a crucial role in rescue and distribution of essentials – food, water, medicine, and in building temporary shelters. It is ironic that community organizations were able to easily work with development aid agencies in coordinated response – relief distribution and recovery in communities. Because of their historically antagonistic relationship, however, state agencies were unable to coordinate with community organizations in response, recovery and rebuilding effort.

Relationship of Nepal Army with Government and Public
The historical and contemporary relationship between the Nepal Army and the Nepali people is complex. The role of the military has historically been to protect the monarchy, to be a “private army of the king” – in many cases against the people of Nepal.² Over the past several years, however, the Nepal Army has evolved from an absolute, royal instrument to a somewhat democratic, civilian instrument, playing a vital role in the country’s transitional political landscape as well as in humanitarian crises.

The 2015 earthquake response showed that the Nepal Army is a crucial actor in disasters – it mobilized critical resources. Within minutes of the devastating 2015 earthquake, the army began mobilizing – ultimately mustering 90 percent of its personnel and rescuing 1336 people alive from collapsed buildings. Forty-one percent of all lives saved were in the first 72 hours of the earthquake, before most of the foreign teams had arrived. The army provided medical care for 85,954 survivors and distributed 5,707 tons of relief materials.³

Following the 2015 earthquakes, public opinion surveys identified the Nepal Army as a more “trusted” institution than the police, courts, government, civil service, and others. This may be attributed to the broad visibility of military responses to the earthquakes, including those of international military forces. The Nepal Army’s human resources – almost a hundred thousand strong – its logistical capabilities, and the institutional character displayed by its disciplined, nationalistic, and patriotic conduct in a broadly orchestrated response immediately after the disaster, have conveyed the impression that the Nepal Army is a more effective institution than others during national crises and emergencies.

Among the challenges encountered in the response, an overall need for improved domestic military-civil coordination within Nepal’s national disaster preparedness and response framework has been clearly indicated.

Nepali Sociocultural Structure

At present, Nepal is witnessing an identity politics-driven discourse of divisiveness that emanates from a larger context of sociocultural behavior and political practice over centuries. It is clear, for example, that the most pernicious characteristic of Nepali political practice over the past several decades – marginalization – persists in the new 2015 constitution, despite the rhetoric of inclusion and social justice. From the promulgation of a Civil Code in the 1800s endorsing a hierarchy of rulership and social order based largely on Hinduism to the demarcation of administrative boundaries in the 1960s redistributing and diluting ethno-linguistic concentrations across 75 districts, the architecture of the national government remains heavily influenced by traditional elites. The prevalent caste-based social hierarchy limits and excludes marginalized communities’ participation in developmental activities of Nepali state and society, and results in a lack of adequate resources to achieve acceptable standards of wellbeing.

Fresh evidence shows that exclusionary practices persist in most aspects of Nepali life including, sadly, in

facing the ongoing challenges of disaster relief and recovery. The context of social exclusion had profound significance for the earthquake response, because the overwhelming majority of the affected population were from vulnerable and marginalized groups: 41 percent of houses damaged in the earthquake belonged to Dalit (lower caste) and indigenous communities, 26 percent to female-headed households and 23 percent to senior citizens.

Assessments and studies of many agencies access to relief aid was unevenly and unfairly distributed by caste, ethnicity, gender discrimination and the degree of political connectedness. Also, significant for the earthquake response was the fact that these vulnerable and marginalized groups were not meaningfully engaged in local governance structures and decision-making bodies, nor proactively engaged in the earthquake response by international responders.

The International Dalit Solidarity Network has documented how widespread non-equitable access to these resources has been in the wake of the disaster for Dalits, with 80 percent of Dalits surveyed reporting feeling that there had been willful negligence in providing relief and support to their communities. Sixty-five percent also said they had been unable to access rescue services and shelter on time.

Similarly, it was not only during the relief distribution phase that discrimination by caste and ethnicity was observed but even the policies for reconstruction have discriminatory elements in them. Every step of the recovery process, from identification of the affected and assessment of their losses to the disbursement of aid, all contain discriminatory elements. Firstly, to acquire government reconstruction grant or concessional loan, an individual needs to have his citizenship and land ownership certificate. Many from the marginalized groups, who often are poor and lack access to the state mechanisms, do not possess these documents and rarely have occasion to use them. Furthermore, individuals

from marginalized groups are often illiterate, which further hinders their ability to comprehend and access legal requirements and services.

Already-vulnerable groups face further discrimination during times of disaster. Situating their disaster-related vulnerability within a larger historical context of socio-cultural and political marginalization is critically important for disaster response.

[1] Bengali, Shashank, "Nepal Quake Victims Fear Government Won't Help Much, if History is Guide", LA Times, (4 May 2015), <http://www.latimes.com/world/asia/la-fg-nepal-compensation-20150504-story.html>

[2] Jha, Prashant, *Battles of the New Republic: A Contemporary History of Nepal*. London: Hurst, (2014), Print. (pp. 71)

[3] Nepal Army, Snapshot, (July 2015) <http://www.nepalarmy.mil.np/ops-sankatmochan/centerpage.pdf>

[4] Save the Children, *Did the humanitarian Response to the Nepal Earthquake Ensure No One was Left Behind?*, Save the Childre, Nepal, (2016), <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Nepal%20earthquake%20report%20March%202016.pdf>

Engage

Patrick Vinck

Experiencing a natural disaster is a life-changing event. For those affected, forced displacement may be the most disruptive consequence. People flee, abandon their houses, belongings, and means of survival to seek shelter. Sometimes they cannot return home because of the destruction. Even if they can, returning and rebuilding is not always a sustainable or durable solution. In high risk zones which regularly experience destructive events and in zones made increasingly vulnerable by climate change, rebuilding may not be the best option. But resettlement is not always a durable solution either. Places of refuge or other alternative elsewhere may lack available land, accessible health care and education services, employment opportunities, or food supplies and clean water. Mass relocation can further have serious socio-economic and political consequences. In this context, finding a durable solution to disaster-induced displacement is critical. It must necessarily guarantee long term safety and access to livelihoods and basic services for the concerned communities.

National and local authorities, humanitarians, and development actors largely drive the search for durable solutions and shape the strategies and activities in response to forced displacement. As forced displacement by natural disasters increases, these actors are facing new, shifting and increasingly complex challenges in more sensitive and insecure contexts. But ultimately, those affected are the most directly confronted to the difficult choice of rebuilding or resettling. Their recovery, their future and their lives and livelihoods are at stake. Their support for and acceptance of policy choices is critical to reducing the potential for future disasters and for the successful development of resilient communities. This requires meaningful engagement, trust and understanding of the factors that influence settlement choices. Yet the strategies and activities identified by key stakeholders are rarely based on empirical assessments and meaningful engagement reflecting the views and opinions of those who have been displaced.

Over the last decade, progress has been made to set up more systematic, predictable and evidence-based two-way communication initiatives to better engage with and be accountable to communities affected by natural disasters. It builds on the recognition that disaster-affected communities are not ‘victims’ but a significant force for long term solutions. They need to be empowered and engaged in the overall return and resettlement efforts. However, the implications and opportunities of engaging with communities on durable solutions to displacement are less well known and documented possibly because of the short term focus of humanitarian action and the political and operational complexities of solutions to displacement. Those involved in the response to displacement have yet to take full advantage of new opportunities to listen to and engage with communities and gain a more accurate understanding of their needs. They are also ill-equipped to analyze the flood of data from communities at risk and turn it into actionable information.

The objectives of this session are:

- Take stock on some of the main developments and emerging trends in this area of humanitarian practice in order to draw operational recommendations.
- Analyze gaps in current knowledge, understanding and practice, both within humanitarian organizations and sector-wide.
- Provide a series of recommendations on what humanitarians and planners can do now to improve engagement with communities at risk of natural disasters, both offline and online, and what trends need to be further explored. Global and regional current and future trends will inform these recommendations.
- Inform the futures thinking on this area of humanitarian practice in the humanitarian and development sectors and the donor community.

Engage

Paneslist Reactions

Alain Lempereur

BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY

In early 2015, a small US-based development organization had secured donors' support to provide specific health assistance to women in Nepal. Its leader recruited two interns from a conflict resolution academic program for the 2015 summer and approved of their Terms of Reference. There was a clear plan for the interns to help implement a supply-driven approach.

But, on April 25, a 7.8 magnitude earthquake hit the central Region of Nepal, making 3.5M homeless. Circumstances had changed, which would impact the plan that was concocted miles away before the disaster. Our two students had learnt in class that aid should be provided on a needs assessment basis. Their approach would be to first empower the affected people in the field, to listen to them and make them express urgent requests and then to navigate within the organization to drive a demand-driven approach.

When our interns arrived in Kathmandu, they started working with a local leader, who introduced them to the reality of post-disaster chaos and to its affected men, women and children. They quickly apprehended the tension between the assistance their organization wanted to supply and the one that the interviewees actually demanded. They became strong advocates of the latter. If you give people a voice, they talk and you do not hear them to ignore their inputs afterwards. Your responsibility is to strive to deliver on their needs.

As in Dunant's *Souvenirs of Solferino*, our interns brought home the field messages to trigger a humanitarian impulse in their faraway organization leader. They informed him of the gap between the plan and the local needs, and relayed the required actions to alleviate suffering. Though it was a difficult conversation, students realized they had to leverage the negotiation skills they had learnt. They mediated between their remote "boss"

(who was accountable to donors and felt there was only one way of assisting) and the local leader (who was accountable to the affected people who most needed financial support). They helped them communicate effectively with each other, for as long as their support was useful.

The S.A.N.I.T.A.S. framework summarizes the various steps here: See for yourself, Assess needs, Negotiate with all the stakeholders, Inquire and inform, Trigger humanitarian impulse, Alleviate suffering and Stay engaged.

These interns were frustrated at times, but learnt a lot from their negotiation experience, as much as I learnt from them. In conclusion, let me add one of their last illustrations of the need for a demand-driven approach. Humanitarian aid agencies had provided tents for the homeless; but torrential rains blew them away. If only the Nepalese people had been asked about the kind of shelters they needed, they would have probably excluded tents for obvious climate reasons, but nobody had inquired. Humanitarians had supplied what they assumed everybody needed in such situation. Empowering the people and trusting them to identify the potential workable solutions is often the surest way of fitting the solutions to the problems, ensuring their ownership and increasing the chance of success.

Niels Harild

SOLUTIONS ALLIANCE

This note is in response to the framing essay authored by Patrick Vinck for panel participants speaking on engagement methods at the upcoming Retreat vs. Rebuild colloquium. Vinck's note speaks to the dimensions of displacement caused by natural disasters and how durable solutions such as return, resettlement, or local integration are difficult to achieve in the aftermath of such events. These issues are strikingly familiar to those working on conflict induced forced displacement – a

subject that I have engaged for over thirty years. In places like Syria and in the nations hosting an estimated 5 million Syrian refugees, durable solutions are elusive and conflict, much like dangerous terrain, often deters return.

There are key differences between these types of displacement, however, and these should be acknowledged up front. For conflict-induced displacement (CIFD), the option of return is dominated by protection concerns rather than physical features such as land and other productive assets. It is also the case that CIFD flows are typically larger and they can be more protracted than displacements caused by natural disasters, lasting an average of ten years. Moreover, voluntary return is frequently not an option for security reasons for the estimated 65 million refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the world.

But there is also common ground. The displaced from natural disasters and conflict frequently seek refuge in urban areas, intermingle uneasily with host communities, endure service delivery deficits and are excluded from the formal job market and business opportunities. In large displacement situations of both types, the socio-economic and macro-economic impact on host communities and countries can be substantial. In such situations, the needs of the displaced and affected host populations are predominantly developmental – not humanitarian. And this is the bridge to what I feel must be said about “engagement”.

Displacement resulting from natural disasters or conflict creates developmental consequences with humanitarian elements – and not the other way around. Developmental impact begins with the onset of each type of disaster. Livelihood impacts, access to service delivery, loss of assets and shelter, social and political marginalization – these begin on day one, as in the examples of Ghoroka and Typhoon Haiyan – not sometime down the road after humanitarian needs are met. Yet until recently, the predominant mode of response to these crises has been humanitarian, not developmental. Solu-

tions (and avoidance of protracted displacement and its consequences) require developmental engagement, not simply ensuring survival.

What does successful developmental engagement look like? In practical terms, displaced persons need to be seen as potential assets for local growth rather than as a burden. For this to happen, there is a need for affected governments and their development partners to place forced displacement in national development plans. It also means, as in the cases of Kosovo, Iraqi Kurdistan, Afghanistan, Colombia and many more places, that consultative development between the displaced and their hosts is extraordinarily important and useful in addressing housing, livelihoods and jobs, access to services, inclusion and governance impacts in ways that benefit both the displaced and their host communities. New financing arrangements by donors that encourage developmental approaches are just beginning as are response frameworks like the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) that emerged last September from the New York Declaration. This is promising. Solutions require such innovation and commitment as well as the recognition that, fundamentally, at issue is basic human dignity, resilience, and sense of place.

Margaret Arnold

WORLD BANK

We know from decades of disaster recovery assistance that affected people want to drive their own recovery process, even if it means it will take longer. We also know that for solutions to disaster-induced displacement to be sustainable, communities must control the decisions and resources as much as possible. So why is this not standard practice in disaster response and recovery?

Both governments and aid agencies are under tremendous pressure to make quick programming decisions

based on limited information, disburse large amounts of funding, and show quick results, preferably by the one-year anniversary of the disaster event. This leads to prioritizing deadlines over meaningful citizen engagement, and making important decisions based on quick, one-off assessments of needs. It also leads to prioritizing reconstruction of physical assets over the less tangible and more challenging aspects of recovery such as livelihood restoration, governance, and social cohesion. The results can be inappropriate or ineffective programming, lack of ownership of affected communities, exclusion of vulnerable groups from programs, capture of benefits by better-off households, or newly built settlements that go unused or are sold off as community members return to their original location. Particularly when it comes to relocating communities after a disaster, process must be prioritized over physical construction.

Even more critically, there is often a lack of investment in understanding and addressing the pre-existing social, political, and economic factors that contributed to the vulnerability of the poor and marginalized before the disaster. Just as disasters are not neutral, reconstruction and recovery efforts can also compound and reinforce existing inequalities. A better understanding of the political economies involved in disaster recovery and resettlement can contribute to better informed responses that protect human rights and avoid contributing to existing social inequalities.¹ There have been numerous cases in which poor communities have been relocated away from coastal areas in the name of safety, only to have those lands sold to hotel companies.

People's livelihoods, culture and very sense of identity are deeply rooted in the land they live on and the communities they build. Immediately after a disaster, they may agree to relocate due to fear of reoccurrence. However, experience has been shown that most people eventually return to their original location despite the high level of risk. Rebuilding or relocating communities after a disaster is not a humanitarian task, and should not be treated as such. It takes years, and in or-

der to be sustainable, requires a pro-poor, people-centered process in which communities drive the decision making. The process requires a clear understanding of the social risks involved, and an open dialogue on the tradeoffs and benefits of different decisions.

The tools exist to enable these processes – examples include methodologies to bring communities, technical experts, and governments together as equal partners to guide the decision of whether to stay or move; ongoing participatory assessment mechanisms to monitor recovery efforts and their impacts on social dynamics; grievance mechanisms for feedback and accountability; and, Community Driven Development,² which provides block grants to communities that they control and monitor. Community Driven Development has been used with good results in Indonesia after the Indian Ocean tsunami, and is helping communities in the Philippines rebuild after Typhoon Haiyan. What's required but often lacking are proactive strategies to manage expectations and timelines, the political will to ensure that “building back better” also means building more inclusive societies and governance structures, and more intensive investment in capacity for community facilitation to build partnerships between communities and their local and national authorities.

[1] Margaret Arnold and Cynthia Burton, “Protecting and Empowering Vulnerable Groups in Disaster Recovery,” in *World Reconstruction Conference: Proceedings*, Washington DC: World Bank, (2011), 210-240.

[2] Margaret Arnold, Robin Mearns, Kaori Oshima and Vivek Prasad, *Climate and Disaster Resilience: The Role for Community-Driven Development*, Washington DC: World Bank, (2014).

Nat J. Colleta

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Context is King. Understanding the contextual factors and actors shaping a crisis or disaster whether a natural disaster, a technological mishap, or a civil conflict

is critical.³ The multiple, often interacting factors are typically economic, security, political, and socio-cultural related. As noted in the discussion starter on engagement, the confluence of livelihood, safety, and agency are often paramount considerations in the decision-making calculus of the “victims” of a disaster. In fact, the very language of disaster engagement can shape the behavior of responders as well as the affected.

A first engagement principle is to guard against seeing those affected as victims with needs, but to see them as survivors with capacities. This entails undertaking an initial profile or assessment of the characteristics, needs and aspirations of those disaster affected populations. For example, in the Typhoon Haiyan case, I visited Tacloban, the main site of the disaster, and found resettlement of basically fisher folk in the agricultural hinterland or hills. This made sense from a purely physical perspective of safety but totally overlooked the misfit in terms of livelihood options given their traditional mode of subsistence near the sea. The resettlement quickly relegated the affected as victims or candidates for a dependency producing syndrome of emergency relief rather than enabling them as agents of their own recovery.

A second engagement principle is the strategic choice to be downward accountable to the affected (i.e., beneficiaries) rather than upward accountable to the bureaucracy. Doing the right thing is highly dependent on what I like to call “creative deviance”. This typically means taking the moral high ground, not necessarily the politically correct choice, and often at a substantial career risk. One cannot be thinking promotion. You will not sleep well at nights.

Operationalization is key. Operationalization begins with an effective implementation of one’s engagement strategy. This typically depends on three factors: (a) capacity mobilization; (b) partnership selection; and (c) targeting criteria.

In a crisis situation where response time is critical,

capacity mobilization is more effective than capacity building. For example, in the case of Typhoon Haiyan, mobilizing skilled responders with personal family and ethnic connections to those affected by the typhoon regardless of where they were living was critical to effective engagement. As in any service delivery, the first principle in bringing human capacity to bear on the crisis is closing the socio-economic gap (class, ethnic, racial, etc.) between the provider and the client.

Identifying and engaging through credible local institutional intermediaries is necessary for effective engagement. This entails working through and with credible local partners be they formal and-or informal institutions. Clifford Geertz, the renowned Indonesian ethnographer, coined the term ‘middle-rung institutions’. His example of the Arisan or informal rotating credit associations in Indonesia is an excellent example of resource mobilization through a local partner or ‘middle rung’ institutional intermediary in the face of economic adversity and challenging banking requirements for collateral.² As noted in the Nepal case, “pre-existing economic vulnerability and political instability” can contribute to the endurance of the humanitarian crisis.

Finally, targeting criteria completes the trifecta of effective engagement. My experience in community development from my early peace corps days introducing a poultry project in the Eastern Caroline Islands to my Fulbright action research in the plantation frontier in Malaysia to my World Bank work in war torn Africa with combatants and communities has reinforced the importance of targeting in the first instance for success to ensure a credible demonstration effect. This means not necessarily targeting those in greatest need, but those proximate persons and communities that can bring along those most vulnerable.

Adaptive response is necessary. There are multiple forms of adaptive response or engagement. Engagement is a continuous learning process. Every humanitarian or development intervention is in effect a hypothesis

to be continually field tested in the institutional and operational environment. The adaptive response to institutional (donor), government, and community constraints on engagement has taken several forms. These are: (1) embedding one's engagement or piggy backing on existing, credible local civil society efforts at dialogue; (2) engaging incrementally, continually reflecting on experience-drawing lessons, and self-correcting; (3) identifying safe spaces for engagement such as primary schools, religious centers, and sports areas; and (4) continuing coalition and network building in efforts to expand the stakeholder base.

Recommendations.

- **Context.** Understanding the economic, political, and socio-cultural factors shaping the conflict and the motivations of key actors is a critical first step to effective engagement.
- **Accountability.** Be downward accountable to the beneficiaries even at upward accountable bureaucratic risk.
- **Operationalization.** Capacity mobilization (closing the social distance between provider and beneficiary); partnership selection (use credible middle rung local institutions); and targeting for success in the first instance (not necessarily the most dire populations) in order to establish a demonstration effect.
- **Adaptive Response.** Embed engagement on existing local civil society efforts at dialogue. Engage incrementally drawing lessons and adjusting as one goes along. Act like a learning organization. Build coalitions to expand the stakeholder base of engagement.

[1] Colletta, N. J. Human Driven Disasters: Violent Conflict, Terrorism and Technology. 2004. Technical paper series. Sustainable Development Department, Inter-American Development Bank: Washington.

[2] Clifford Geertz. "The Rotating Credit Association: a Middle Rung in Development" in Journal of Culture and Economic Development. Vol. 10, no. 2, April 1962, University of Chicago press: Chicago.

Rebuild

Jesse M. Keenan

Across the fields of humanitarianism, disaster risk management, climate change adaptation and the built environment, there is a great deal of diversity in the conceptualization of the problems associated with physical rebuilding. Humanitarian and disaster risk management have primarily advanced the concept of disaster resilience, which speaks the elastic characteristics of a community (i.e., social and physical infrastructure) to revert to a single equilibrium steady state following a disaster or disruption.¹ By contrast, climate change actors and scholars have looked beyond the static implications of disaster resilience to conceptualize multi-equilibrium dynamics by and between social and ecological systems through the lens of adaptation, which can be defined as both the intervention and capacity to transition or transform to an alternative domain of operation.² It is the political and economic implications of the transformative capacity of adaptation that represents a significant challenge to humanitarian actors who have sought to remain free of politics. This essay seeks to identify those processes of institutionalized humanitarianism that are caught at the intersection of short-term interventions advanced in the name of disaster resilience and those mid-term to long-term structural forces that are steering transformation through environmental change, resource markets, agents of cultural preservation and state actors.

Beyond physical exposure, one consistent precept among these fields is that physical rebuilding must be understood within the parameters of social, cultural and environmental vulnerability.³ Adaptive capacity is often understood as a critical counterpoint for mitigating the negative implications of one's vulnerability. However, little research has theorized or evaluated the extent to which the adaptive capacity of actors, including external humanitarian actors, within a post-disaster context are able to design, plan, and deliver material reconstruction.⁴ Instead, the top-down policy agenda of the humanitarian community has been one oriented towards advancing the general resilience communities under the rubric of "build back better." This has been

problematic for two reasons. First, empirical research has shown that the material intent of disaster resilience is not well understood by beneficiaries who are often asked to change their ways of living in a manner that is often disconnected from their understanding of their respective exposure and vulnerability.⁵ Second, in this context, disaster resilience is conceptualized as returning communities to a single equilibrium steady state that doesn't adequately challenge the institutions that are often central to defining a population's vulnerability in the first place.⁶ Although, recovery may dictate incremental advances of engineering resilience in the built environment or community resilience in social networks, there are many circumstances where resilience is inadequate in the face of necessary transformative adaptation required for mid-term to long-term sustainability of the core elements of the social systems comprising the 'community.'

While humanitarian actors are sensitive to project that they are politically-neutral actors in the advancement of the health and safety of beneficiaries, one can argue that their non-discretionary operations protocol and discretionary recovery decisions create path dependencies that have the capacity to shape both resilience and

1 Julie Davidson, Chris Jacobson, Anna Lyth, Aysin Dedekorkut-Howes, Claudia Baldwin, Joanna Ellison, and Neil Holbrook, "Interrogating Resilience: Towards a Typology to Improve Its Operationalization," *Ecology and Society* 21, no. 2 (2016): 27.

2 Neil W. Adger, Nigel W. Arnell, and Emma L. Tompkins, "Successful Adaptation to Climate Change Across Scales," *Global Environmental Change* 15, no. 2 (2005): 77-86; Mark, Pelling, Karen O'Brien, and David Matyas, "Adaptation and Transformation," *Climatic Change* 133, no. 1 (2015): 113-127.

3 Susan L. Cutter, Lindsay Barnes, Melissa Berry, Christopher Burton, Elijah Evans, Eric Tate and Jennifer Webb, "A Place-based Model for Understanding Community Resilience to natural Disasters," *Global Environmental Change* 18, no. 4 (2008): 598-606.

4 Carolyn S. Hayles, "An Examination of Decision Making in Post Disaster Housing Reconstruction," *International Journal of Disaster Resilience in the Built Environment* 1, no. 1 (2010): 103-122.

5 Yenny Rahmayati, "Reframing 'Building Back Better' for Post-Disaster Housing Design: A Community Perspective," *International Journal of Disaster Resilience in the Built Environment* 7, no. 5 (2016): 344-360; Fiona Tweed and Gordon Walker, "Some Lessons for Resilience from the 2011 Multi-disaster in Japan," *Local Environment* 16, no. 9 (2011): 937-942.

6 Richard J.T. Klein, Robert J. Nicholls, and Frank Thomalla, "Resilience to Natural Hazards: How Useful is this Concept?," *Environmental Hazards* 5, no. 1 (2003): 35-45.

adaptation trajectories.⁷ When those recovery decisions are prefaced with a deterministic conceptualization of disaster resilience, the resulting allocations of social, political, financial, and environmental capital frame resource trade-offs that shape institutions whose ‘lock-in’ is arguably the ultimate pathway of resistance to transformative adaptation.⁸ Of course, both resilience and adaptation are processes with the potential for positive, negative and neutral implications across scales of time, space and system hierarchy (e.g., between local, national and trans-national organizations). As such, actions taken in the name of transformative adaptation may over time prove to be either maladaptive or no consequence. As such, one must ask who is responsible for determining whether recovery interventions should be taken in the name of resilience and/or adaptation. This comes with the acknowledgement that, in time, those who made such decisions are ethically responsible for the implications of their decisions and representative agency. Therefore, the construction of agency and the process of determination are centrally grounded in matters of equity and justice.⁹

In practice, many humanitarians cite that resilience and adaptation are only marginal considerations in light of the immediacy of shelter, food, water, sanitation and medicine. Many humanitarians will confide that resilience is a metaphor for self-determination and self-organization that is inclusive of a broad agenda for human development that has gained traction with international donors and philanthropies. Some practitioners have argued that implicit in resilience is the prospect of building an adaptive city that reduces vulnerability and hence serves the dual function of reducing long-term stewardship and promoting socially progressive human development. To this end, some scholars have challenged both resilience and adaptation as being covers for an unsustainable development agenda that doesn’t fundamentally challenge the institutions that often work to perpetuate vulnerability and inequality.¹⁰ Design of the built environment offers the potential for an adaptive capacity that offers a range of optionality that

reflects not only evolving vulnerability and exposure, but also allows for both internal and external inputs that reflect evolving institutional allocation of resources and rights.

Like many applications of resilience, humanitarian actors are less concerned with descriptive resilience as they are with the normative and metaphorical applications of the concept. If resilience is more or less a boundary object that is removed from every day practice, then how would one expect formal analytical processes to arise and mature in a manner that can inform not only decision making but matters of governance and due process that are central to equity and justice? Do we endanger the mission of humanitarians by imposing upon them processes of transformative adaptation that are politically and culturally fractious? Have practices associated with disaster resilience always been a part of the humanitarian practice without the interference of formal constructs and modes of engagement?

From a normative point of view, one could argue that the most impactful place for such deliberations of resilience and adaptation are internal to the humanitarian organization through mainstreaming. As a consequence, both strategic and tactical decisions and processes could be tempered by a reflexive evaluation of the object of intervention, as well as the cross-scale implications for efficacy, efficiency, implementability, sustainability and equity.¹¹ For instance, does promoting the specific engineering resilience of newly constructed houses in a highly exposed floodplain correspond to general community resilience wherein such a community may be asked

7 Mark Pelling and Kathleen Dill, “Disaster Politics: Tipping Points for Change in the Adaptation of Sociopolitical Regimes,” *Progress in Human Geography* 34, no. 1 (2010): 21-37.

8 Rolf Pendall, Kathryn A. Foster, and Margaret Cowell, “Resilience and Regions: Building Understanding of the Metaphor,” *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society* 3, no. 1 (2009): 71-84.

9 Harriet Bulkeley, Gareth Edwards, and Sara Fuller, “Contesting Climate Justice in the City: Examining Politics and Practice in Urban Climate Change Experiments,” *Global Environmental Change* 25 (2014): 31-40.

10 Katrina Brown, “Sustainable Adaptation: An Oxymoron?,” *Climate and Development* 3, no. 1 (2011): 21-31.

to expend collective resources for more regularized events in the future? If the answer is objectively clear in terms of a probabilistic risk assessment, then temporary housing measures may be located to an alternative location and reinforced with transitional assistance (e.g., mobility, social groups, etc...) that may help ease what will be a transformational adaptation. However, it is rare that substitute locations are so clear cut as one is often substituting one hazard for another hazard.¹² Adaptation will result in winners and losers and the long-perspective is to result in net advances. Short-term spatial dislocation may result in a deterioration of support systems whose costs may resonate for several generations. If the answer is not so clear, then what are the processes for engaging and informing relevant actors of the trade-offs between alternative settlement patterns? In the case of an immediate radical transformation for settling in a new location, the costs may be measured by the collapse of social networks, the loss of income and the occurrence of a broader set of social disruptions. Relevant stakeholders must decide whether these immediate costs have some parity with the potential for avoided costs in the future.

Intra-organizational mainstreaming could also advance initial pre-deployment strategic decisions concerning the prioritization of geographies and objects that are most ripe for resilience interventions and those that are the in the need for more structural adaptations. The challenge is to add an additional metric to the existing calculations for deploying resources that maximize the speed and quantity of recovery—quality. Very often, in practice, these assessments are made on the ground based on less than perfect information. As a result, immediate responses for prioritizing the security and service support of privileged landscapes often dictate the course of future options. Emerging resilience practices in advance jurisdictions are often based on robust enough data to support some degree of inference based on indicators of existing capacity.¹³ However, across the global very little data is in place to support these types of analysis. Pre-planning would require not only

geospatial analytics but also rapid response teams of anthropologists, engineers, public health professionals and built environment professionals to document, survey and evaluate existing and future capacities. Existing models of practice do not support such a mobilization based on limitations to support field work based on accessibility and time. While pre-mobilization planning is significantly constrained, it does provide a powerful impetus for governments to understand the value of pre-disaster data collection and surveying to support post-event evaluation. Any such exchange will require regular monitoring and some degree of transparency. Given that exposure and vulnerability is often deeply connect to political realities, the process is not without natural frictions.

Humanitarian actors are charged with more precisely identifying the objects of resilience and adaptation, as well as developing an intra-organizational strategic capacity for pre-planning such interventions. While these ambitions may be clearly articulated, there are several practical barriers thwarting implementation. One major challenge is that resilience and adaptation may be happening simultaneously at different scales. In carry forward the prior example, engineering resilience may be proceeding at an architectural or infrastructural scale, while social service delivery may be preparing for incremental adaptations in an agriculture based labor economy that may have reciprocal effect on household investment. In this same example, resilience in existing infrastructure subject to greater probability occurrence of extreme events (e.g., less extreme and more regular events) may also be maladaptive to broad regional economic transformations that are dependent on some minimal level of household capitalization to promote economic mobility. In practical terms, these conflicts may be resolved by virtue of the conventions of the

11 Barry Smit, Barry and Johanna Wandel, "Adaptation, Adaptive Capacity and Vulnerability," *Global Environmental Change* 16, no. 3 (2006): 282-292.

12 See Footnote 3, Tweed and Walker (2011).

13 Susan L. Cutter, "The Landscape of Disaster Resilience Indicators in the USA," *Natural Hazards* 80, no. 2 (2016): 741-758.

Rebuild

Jesse M. Keenan

asymmetrical distribution of power and agency. For instance, the conventional experience in many jurisdictions is to rely on a central command and control model for everything from environmental resource management to housing relocation.

Humanitarian actors are stuck at the intersection of short-term and long-term responses. This is within the context of a perpetual mismatch of funding pressures and waning political capital. They are tasked with not only the collection of data but also the registration of value systems that often defy external engagement. They must balance the short-term needs of suffering with the mid-term ambitions of resilience, and the long-term trends of adaptation. They must bring ordered processes to a landscape of chaotic interactions. They must identify deterministic variables of effect to leverage their limited resources, and they bear the ethical and economic consequences of getting it wrong. Resilience and adaptation offer salient concepts for analysis but not for action. The struggle to separate descriptive concepts from normative ambitions results in the increasing pressure to impose decision making on local populations that are often unwilling or ill prepared to make the tough decisions. As a consequence, humanitarian actors are challenged to be more precise in identifying the objects of resilience and adaptation across scales and to develop strategic pre-planning to support those efforts. However, one could argue that these activities have long been the purview and operation of humanitarian actors. The only new ingredient is the recognition of the potential—if not trajectory—of rapid dynamic change. For now, resilience and adaptation force a reflexive recognition of cross-scale interactions and matters of equity and justice that position these actors not only as agents of good will for rebuilding but also mediators of past vulnerabilities and future capacities. In light of these collective influences, the central question remains: (i) is what we are rebuilding today in order to advance the resilience of one group of beneficiaries going to be a barrier to the positive adaptation of a collective body of future generations?; (ii) are the

processes of transformation adaptation that we have set in place going to critically undermine systematic general resilience of a socio-ecological system whose identity and performance is the object of our rebuilding interventions?

Rebuild

Panelist Reactions

Greet De Block

UNIVERSITY OF ANTWERP

“Resilience and adaption offer salient concepts for analysis but not for action. The struggle to separate descriptive concepts from normative ambitions results in the increasing pressure to impose decision making on local populations that are often unwilling or ill prepared to make the tough decisions.”¹

“A more modern humanitarian action requires letting go of power and control by the formal Western-inspired system and reorienting the sector’s view outwards. It should ask, not ‘what can I give?’, but ‘what support can I provide?’. Rather than reforming mandates, this requires mindset change and the development of a more diversified model that accepts greater local autonomy and cedes power and resources to structures and actors currently at the margins of the formal system.”²

The choice between retreat or rebuild is often presented as a radical one between opposite rationales, ideologies and mindsets, between long term-short term, dynamic-static, innovative-traditional approaches to disaster response, or indeed conceptualized as the contrast between the romantic coproduction with nature and local specificity, on the one hand, and technonatural monsters and universal placeholders, on the other. However, I would argue that they are both rooted in a fundamentally conservative attitude towards societal change, exemplified by the aim to provide resilient solutions to socio-ecological crisis. In a recent article, Maria Kaika takes it one step further and compares resilience to immunology, vaccinating “citizens and environments so that they can take larger doses of inequality and degradation in the future; it mediates the effects of global socio-environmental inequality, but does little towards alleviating it”.³ In that way both retreat and rebuild could be considered as a spatial fix, making sure nothing really changes. Or worse, when retreat from eco-

logical risk leads to ‘letting go’ of practices of control and leaves communities to ‘self-regulate’, ‘co-adapt’ or ‘co-evolve’ with the environment. Or when rebuild strategies build back better, more resilient constellations, conflating ecological resilience and social resilience, reproduce social inequalities often with the most socially vulnerable group living in the most risk prone places. Should we want to rebuild certain communities, injecting them with more resilience? Is co-production with the environment in se egalitarian, a way out of the reproduction of labor and land? Or does it increase the divide between the ‘vaccinated’ and ‘non-vaccinated’, thus enhancing global eco-gentrification?

Political choice tends to be foreclosed in the name of stability, be it the geomorphological condition of land (retreat) or maintaining social and cultural constellations (rebuild). The political aim of humanitarian aid (HA), or indeed ‘humanitarian exceptionalism’, can no longer be sustained, as so aptly underlined by the Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG) in the ground-breaking report *Time to Let Go*.⁴ HPG states that in order to both address the causes and effects of crisis, to combine urgent response with long-term solutions to societal transformation, requires HA to be “more explicit and upfront about the nature of their aspirations, objectives and operational frameworks”⁵ and to cede “power and resources to structures and actors currently at the margins of the formal system”⁶; a Gordian knot between description and prescription resulting in the imposition of “decision making on local population”.⁷ However, we should be cautious to let go of concepts and practices of power and control too hastily, to replace them with the acceptance of a general paradigm shift in planning of decentralization celebrating the informal and/or romantic ideas about bottom-up self-regulation and co-production. In other words, we should be cautious not to replace the ‘traditional’ aim to preserve neutrality and impartiality with ‘modern’ processes of depoliticization.

How are we then going to combine descriptive analytical concepts, such as socio-ecological systems and

resilience, with explicit political choice and position? How are we going to combine careful environmental concerns with radical political strategies and imaginaries generating more socially just constellations? And how can we translate the analysis of socio-ecological systems into the design of decidedly political-ecological projects?

Possible entries could be:

- Re-think responsibility, or better accountability, and the associated position of the expert and designer;
- Imagine other constellations of ownership, of the common (not as new fix); and
- Re-engage with questions of scale and how local intervention connects to other geo-political scales and concerns.

[1] Keenan, Jesse M, "Rebuild", in *Retreat | Rebuild Colloquium*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, (2017).

[2] Humanitarian Policy Group, *Time to let go: Remaking Humanitarian Action for the Modern Era*, (April 2016), p.6.

[3] Kaika, Maria. "'Don't call me resilient again!': the New Urban Agenda as immunology... or... what happens when communities refuse to be vaccinated with 'smart cities' and indicators." *Environment and Urbanization* (2017).

[4] Humanitarian Policy Group, *Time to let go*.

[5] *Ibid.* p. 75

[6] *Ibid.* p. 6

[7] Keenan, Jesse M, "Rebuild".

Guillermo M. Luz

NATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS COUNCIL OF THE PHILIPPINES

The Philippines is a nation of over 100 million people scattered across 7100 islands. It is visited frequently by storms and typhoons and is vulnerable to a number of natural hazards. In any given year, the country may be hit by 20–25 typhoons. There used to be a seasonality and predictability to the storms – usually entering the country at the central east coast (i.e., Bicol region)

between June/July and October. However, in recent years, as a result of climate change and ocean warming, storms have become more spread out both in terms of time of year and geography. The so-called typhoon belt has widened so that storms have been known to hit further south in Mindanao. Most, if not all, sweep in a southeast-to-northeast path across the country and exit the country out of its northwest coast.

Aside from being affected by typhoons, the country also lies in the Pacific Ring of Fire and has active earthquake faults and volcanoes. The largest natural catastrophes in recent years have been the Baguio earthquake (1990), Mt. Pinatubo eruption (1991), Storm Ketsana in Manila (2009), the Bohol earthquake (2013), and Supertyphoon Haiyan (2013), the largest typhoon to make landfall in the recorded history of storms. Mt. Pinatubo's eruption affected around 1.25 million people while Storm Ketsana affected 4.9 million, mainly because it hit high-density Metro Manila's eastern section. Typhoon Haiyan affected 14 million people, on top of the 6,300 known casualties, mainly because it swept through such a large area of land and crossed a number of large islands.

I work for a private sector organization known as the Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation (PDRF). It was formed after Storm Ketsana in 2009 but we have all been involved in disaster response since at least the Baguio earthquake of 1990. We were all originally involved in relief and response operations (mostly food, water, medicine, and clothing) but have since been called to get involved in recovery and rehabilitation efforts, including rebuilding operations.

After Haiyan, when we got engaged on large-scale in recovery and rehabilitation with the then-Office of the Presidential Assistant for Rehabilitation and Recovery (OPARR), the Philippines private sector eventually provided assistance in 21 of the 24 areas identified for assistance. Companies invested and participated in the rebuilding of school buildings, clinics, hospitals, evacua-

tion centers, and houses. Because the extent of the damage – and therefore the investment – was so large, we began to ask ourselves whether we should be re-thinking our approach to disaster risk reduction management.

- Should we be thinking more of preparedness, mitigation, prevention, and overall resilience?
- Where do we rebuild?
- And is there really such a thing as Build Back Better when the truth is Build Anything Fast is really what it is all about in an emergency response situation?
- And can we really declare No Build Zones? Are people prepared to move?

The answer to the first question was pretty straightforward and quick for us. It was a resounding yes and in 2014 we made a strategic shift from Recovery to Resilience in our organization. The answers for the next three questions were much more difficult. We still continue to struggle with these issues today. In the case of Mt. Pinatubo, Mother Nature made that answer moot and academic. Many areas simply could not be rebuilt upon for years so people had no choice but to move. But that hasn't been the case with Baguio, Metro Manila, Bohol, or Leyte. For a host of reasons, people will not so readily move away from their homes, even if calamity has struck or even if it appears they will continue to be at risk in the future.

What can we do? I confess I don't have all the answers but here are some of our ideas or some we have seen. It is difficult to persuade (or force) people to move permanently when there is no apparent imminent danger. Is it possible then to rebuild or retrofit homes and buildings using new designs and better materials? Affordability will be an issue, so this process will take time. There may also need to be incentives put in place, such as lower property tax rates or better financing or lower insurance rates for those who rebuild to higher specifications. In the Philippines, many homes and businesses—par-

ticularly among lower income classes and micro and small-scale enterprise—appear to be underinsured, if they are insured at all. We saw plenty of cases like this during Haiyan. Many families and small businesses were unable to rebuild or re-start their businesses because they had no insurance cover to lean on. In our discussions with micro-insurance providers, the premiums are quite low. We are trying to understand why more people do not take it up. After Ketsana, after many cars were heavily flood-damaged, insurance coverage for Acts of Nature spiked upwards and today is a regular item for new car owners.

If people opt to rebuild, will they at least temporarily evacuate in the face of immediate danger? This is increasingly becoming an effective response tool in the Philippines. Former Governor Joey Salceda of Albay province, which is frequently hit by typhoons, has done this several times and the casualty rate in recent years is near-zero. However, no other governor does this with any regularity and I am wondering why when it seems to be such an effective response measure.

The question of Retreat vs Rebuild will continue to be a difficult one for us to answer. In the meantime, there is no question in our mind that measures for prevention, preparedness, and mitigation will build up overall resilience and perhaps reduce the dilemma which Retreat vs Rebuild places upon people. There are no easy answers but in the Philippines today, these are questions which are being asked more often.

Brett Moore

UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

The paper details a nuanced analysis of the concepts of resilience and adaptation, and the limitations and contradictions of such usage for humanitarian actors

to develop approaches that can frame the preparedness, planning and response to disasters. In essence, the paper notes a greater need for data, analytical capacity and assessment modalities that can take into account pathways for building resilience throughout an emergency response, and processes by which the institutional emphasis of resilience has been too narrow, linear and ultimately self-defeating.

Within these observations it has been mentioned, but it should also be examined, that resilience can be critiqued as another externally applied ontological system that fails to gain bottom-up strength through local ownership. In order to operationalise resilience across traditional 'sector' constructs within a donor/agency/program hierarchy, it has frequently been reduced to a 'buzz word' that is loosely applied and lacks internal logic to localised situations, social systems and existing coping mechanisms that are the strength of many communities in the face of disaster. Too often, in the chaos of emergency response, reductive concepts of resilience lack careful community engagement and ownership, and often result in poor quality programming, exacerbation of conflict, subsequent spatial miscalculations, wasted resources and further marginalisation of the most vulnerable who continue to be spatially and socially excluded from power systems and political re-configuration of landscapes.¹ Even with post World Humanitarian Summit and Habitat III agendas further highlighting localised approaches, building on now commonly accepted understandings of participatory approaches as consistently achieving better recovery outcomes, humanitarian actors are challenged by the complexity of the humanitarian landscape and multiple agendas with a proliferation of actors contributing without necessarily learning.²

On the other end of the spectrum, over-emphasis on data, assessment and analysis can waste resources and prevent effective and timely emergency responses, undermine potential for customary approaches and further exacerbate the speed vs quality impasse. Addition-

ally, humanitarian organisations and host governments increasingly fund post-disaster recovery programs through grants, with proportionally little funding available before disaster for mitigation and risk reduction approaches. Institutional arrangements are more corporatized, preoccupied with cost recovery and outsourced or subcontracted implementation arrangements, further distancing the goal of recasting institutional capacities or a possibility of shared outcomes or mutuality. Specific challenges exist in complex disasters and conflict contexts, where predictability or a teleological approach to recovery is rarely possible, and even partial adaptability is more realistic than resilient outcomes for fractured, displaced and wounded communities.

The high-functioning governance, transparency and accountability assumptions required to realise the potential of resilience and adaptation concepts, and imagined cohesiveness and homogeneity of communities, mostly fail to exist and are even prevented from emerging where justice and security are absent. When relocation is successful, it requires extensive planning, resources and cohesion, invariably absent in conflict and refugee contexts. Recovery discourses tend to ignore the intransigent conditions of conflict contexts, and in a rapidly changing, integrated, multi-polar world, reliable governance structures are increasingly fleeting, and less likely to provide enabling frameworks required to achieve resilient outcomes. Neoliberal planning orthodoxy and further commodification of the built environment have led to undermining of tenure security and localised, traditional resilience mechanisms. Emphasis on scale and comprehension of primary interventions that maximise benefits over different geographies and temporal scales need to be embedded for more effective and collaborative rebuilding approaches.

[1] Lawrence Vale (ed), *Resilient Cities: Clarifying Concept or Catch-all Cliché?* In "The Resilient City: How Modern Cities Recover From Disaster", Vale and Campanella, Oxford University Press (2005): 618-628.

[2] Esther Charlesworth and Iftekhar Ahmed, "Sustainable Housing Reconstruction: Designing Resilient Housing After Natural Disasters", Routledge (2015), xii-xiii.

Case

Ghorka Earthquake Nepal

On the 25th of April 2015, northwest of the Capitol in Kathmandu Valley, a major 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck the densely populated central region of Nepal affecting over 8 million people across more than half the country; hocks rocked the region for weeks, including one measuring 7.3 magnitude on the 12th of May 2015.¹ Situated along the base of the Himalayas where the Indian Plate underthrusts the Eurasian Plate, Nepal has a long history of recurring seismic activity. The first recorded earthquake dates to 1255 AD, where nearly one-in-three residents in Kathmandu were killed. The Ghorka Earthquake was the most powerful natural disaster to strike Nepal since the 1934 Bihar Earthquake.

Nearly 9,000 people were killed, 22,000 others injured and 3.5 million, more than 10% of the population, rendered instantly homeless. The scale of the physical destruction was equally catastrophic: 400 health facilities, 9,000 classrooms and more than 800,000 homes damaged or destroyed—constituting a total loss of approximately ten billion dollars (USD), equivalent to 50% of Nepal's GDP.¹ In some districts, the devastation was total—first responders to Sindupalchowk, one of the 14 most-affected districts, reported coming upon entire villages, where not a single structure was left standing. Spanning far beyond the area of major shaking, the earthquake destabilized the land, triggering avalanches and landslides to further devastating effect.

In a valley to the north, the earthquake triggered a massive ice and rockslide completely burying the village of Langtang, instantly killing its more than 200 residents.² Compounded by the ongoing aftershocks, the combined effects of the shaking has fundamentally altered the earth's structure, destabilizing hills and mountainsides across the country and increasing the prevalence of landslides far beyond historically recorded precedent.³ Mountainous terrain and limited infrastructure hindered rescue, relief, and response operations and continues to impact the ongoing reconstruction. To better handle the overwhelming scale and extent of the natural disaster, Nepal requested assistance from inter-

national aid agencies and foreign governments on the 26th of April, 2015, assistance that remains in place today.

Pre-existing economic vulnerability and political instability has further contributed to the post-quake humanitarian crisis that endures. A September 2015 border blockade at the south-central border restricted essential commodities for months, severely impacting every sector of the Nepal economy as well as humanitarian response.⁴ The recent migration of men, in particular from rural villages to cities both within and outside Nepal, has deprived the country of an important labor source for reconstruction.⁵ Meanwhile, frequent changes in political leadership, both at the national level but also departmental such as the National Reconstruction Authority, have prolonged uncertainty and inaction.⁶ Aid distribution and reconstruction has been slow in all cases and essentially non-existent in others, particularly for the most remote and marginalized communities.

The complexity of the response in Nepal, with political uncertainty, social and demographic change, and shifting landscapes, poses challenges for humanitarian responders, while also opening up opportunities for new ideas and approaches.¹

1 "Post Disaster Needs Assessment," June 20, 2015, 1–20; Unni Krishnan and Kartikay Mehrotra, "Nepal Says Earthquake Rebuilding Cost to Exceed \$10 Billion," Bloomberg, April 28, 2015.

2 Anna Callaghan and Rabi Thapa, "An Oral History of Langtang, the Valley Destroyed by the Nepal Earthquake," Outside, September 28, 2015.

3 Jane Qiu, "Listening for Landslides," *Nature* 532 (April 22, 2016): 428–31.

4 Justin Henceroth and Ashley Thompson, "Innovation Lab," February 10, 2016.

5 Prahlad Rijal, "'Lack of Workforce a Challenge' Post-Quake Reconstruction," Kathmandu Post, January 9, 2016.

6 "Gyewali Sacked to Pick Govinda Raj Pokharel as NRA CEO," *The Himalayan Times*, January 11, 2017.

Case

Typhoon Haiyan Philippines

The Philippines consistently ranks as one of the top five countries in the world at greatest risk from disasters.¹ Disruption of life in the Philippines due to natural disasters is a common experience for the approximately 100 million inhabitants of the archipelago. Annual and powerful typhoons and earthquakes cause widespread destruction while frequent localized events, such as flooding and landslides, exacerbate developmental setbacks. Poverty and inequality compound disaster risk and confound long-term development—more than 20 percent of the population lives below the national poverty level and large segments of marginalized communities live in informal settlements within hazard-prone areas.²

Beginning the morning of November 8th, 2013, the ‘super typhoon’ Haiyan, locally known as Typhoon Yolanda and the strongest typhoon in recorded history, made landfall five times as it crossed the Visayas islands,³ hitting some of the poorest provinces in the country, including the islands of Samar and Leyte. With wind-speeds of more than 300 kilometers per hour and storm surges of over four meters,⁴ it claimed more than 6,300 lives,⁵ displaced more than 4 million people (920,000 families), damaged 1.1 million homes, and affected an estimated 14 million people, constituting 14 percent of the national population.⁶ Severe economic effects included more than USD 10 billion in damage and losses,¹ and widespread destruction of crops that raised food prices.⁷ Tacloban City, the regional capital of Leyte where nearly 90 percent of the city’s infrastructure was damaged, bore the most concentrated storm effects.⁸

The aftermath of the storm saw significant housing and land tenure security challenges. Viewing storm-induced displacement as an opportunity, the government attempted to enact no build zones to reduce future risk, particularly in exposed areas along the coast. However, the transparency, legitimacy and fairness of the relocation process was called into question as affected populations felt that land-use laws, no build zones, and water codes were targeting specific demographics to

prevent their return. Even after the no build zones were enacted, over 98 percent of those with damaged homes planned to continue living on their original land.⁹ To try and address these challenges, the government recently announced a PHP 50 Billion (USD 990 million) investment to provide over 200,000 Haiyan survivors with a free house and lot.¹⁰

With global climate change resulting in shifting weather patterns, Typhoon Haiyan is indicative of what to expect as a result of climate change—stronger, more unpredictable, typhoons that magnify existing hazards.¹¹ The Philippines government takes disaster risk seriously and has devoted significant resources at both national and local levels to build disaster response capacity and to reduce population exposure and vulnerability. Yet, while demonstrating a commitment to rehabilitation, the response in the Philippines highlights the challenges of a ‘one size fits all approach’ that aims to apply solutions at scale. With its climate-related disaster risk compounded by high poverty, and inequality, the Philippines is an important case study for understanding the challenges and opportunities in disaster risk reduction and resilience.

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