

Chapter Two

Theory

Learning Objectives

- Provide an overview of the major conceptual and theoretical perspectives used in disaster recovery research.
- Apply concepts and theories to understand how disaster recovery could be approached.
- Use concepts and theories to identify potential barriers to recovery.
- Demonstrate an understanding of key principles to promote a sustainable recovery.

Key Terms

- Disaster Resilience
- Dominant Paradigm
- Economic Vitality
- Emergent Norm Theory
- Environmental Quality
- Equity
- Feminist Theory
- Holistic Recovery
- Mitigation
 - Non-structural Mitigation
 - Structural Mitigation
- Participatory Recovery
- Quality of life
- Resilience
- Socio-political Ecology Theory
- Sustainability
- Systems Theory
- Vulnerability Theory

Case Study: Haiti Earthquake, 2010

- 7.0 magnitude on the Richter scale
- Capitol city, Port-au-Prince, sustains major damage
- An estimated 316,000 deaths and 300,000 injuries (many severe)
- Loss of 100,000 homes
- 1.5 million people in 1,354 relief areas
- Disaster Recovery challenges
 - Port and airport damage; hospitals destroyed; schools closed; elected and appointed officials killed; community resources devastated; roads inaccessible; violence against women and children; job losses; cholera outbreak.

Causes of Haiti's Earthquake Damage

- Not just the seismic shake
- Colonized by Spain and France with a history of slavery
- Instability in the country
- Natural resources undermined
- Poorly managed infrastructure and utilities
- Emergency response meager
- Minimal building codes, not enforced
- High mortality rates
- Repetitive disasters

Why Theory?

- To provide insights
- To increase explanation
- “multi- and interdisciplinary approaches are needed to understand and effectively deal with the complex problems of our day” in disasters and humanitarian crises (McEntire 2007, p. 3)

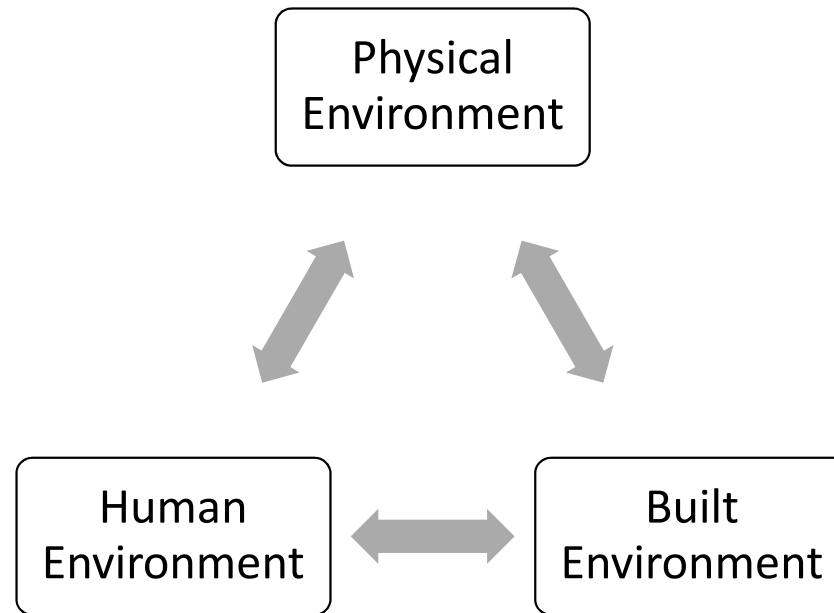


Figure 2.2 Systems Theory
(Based on Mileti 1999)

A misfit between the three systems (physical, human, and built) can result in a disaster that damages some or all of the systems.

Systems Theory

- Physical systems – include the weather, such as when an ice storm creates a state of emergency
- Built environment – includes ports, roads, bridges, which can be affected by physical systems like a flood that covers a road
- Human systems – when physical systems affect people and the places where they live
- A disaster occurs when there is a misfit between these systems such as allowing people to build near a river that floods annually.

Vulnerability Theory (VT)

- In contrast to the dominant system where the physical system “causes” the disaster and the cause is engineered, like a levee used to prevent flooding.
- VT focuses on the human systems
 - Disasters are not equal opportunity events, some people are affected more than others like low income families or countries
 - VT also says that we overlook the resources and resilience capacities of those most at risk, and often fail to include them like not inviting people with disabilities to the recovery planning table

Socio-political Ecology Theory

- Looks at interactions within human social systems
- People trying to re-establish normalcy after a disaster usually compete for resources, often with disparate outcomes
 - After an earthquake in Pakistan, men were more likely to obtain resources than women
- Pre-disaster inequalities usually worsen the competition
- Winners and losers appear in the competitive process
 - After a disaster, small businesses with fewer resources are more likely to fail than larger businesses with more resources

Liberal Feminism and Disaster Recovery

- Identify the practical needs of women and children throughout the disaster event and how institutional arrangements can adapt to their needs: child care, domestic violence, employment, housing access.
- Recruit and retain women staff in disaster recovery organizations, with particular attention paid to involving women from disaster-vulnerable populations and locations.
- Train and educate disaster recovery staff and volunteers in working with women of various educational, income, age and disability levels.
- Target women-owned businesses and female-dominated nonprofits in business recovery and economic development programs.

Multiracial Feminist Theory and Disaster Recovery

- Involve organizations that empower women of color to participate in the recovery planning and implementation processes and pay them for their contributions.
- Build social networks between women's groups involving women of color in recovery activities including funding initiatives and programs that pay for and/or reimburse staff and volunteer labor.
- Facilitate the active participation of women from underrepresented groups in disaster recovery planning.
- Target women leaders from diverse cultural groups for leadership positions in recovery staff and voluntary organizations.

Feminist Political Ecology and Disaster Recovery

- Involve women environmental leaders in planning mitigation activities for the full range of recovery needs in housing, environment, infrastructure, and businesses.
- Increase networking between disaster organizations and women involved in environmental justice and sustainable development organizations.
- Integrate women involved in local health and safety issues, including technological disasters and hazardous materials, for long-term research on the effects of these substances for women and children.

Feminist Development Theory

- Recovery projects may have gendered impacts and provide more opportunities for men than for women.
- Traditional development programs, and those that influence recovery times, may strengthen gender stratification.
- Woman-centric recovery schemes should be created, especially those that tap into women's economic talents.
- Within highly gender-segregated societies, woman-only recovery centers and workplaces may need to be created.

Emergent norm theory

- Because few places plan for recovery, it is often an ad hoc, emergent process
- Emergence is newly appearing behavior or activities, like a recovery group that advocates for children
- Disasters tend to disable bureaucratic structures
- Flexible, innovative approaches usually cover unmet needs or those that are not met by existing structures

Sustainable recovery – 6 principles

- consensus-building through participatory processes
 - People get a say in how a community is rebuilt
- insuring for quality of life
 - People decide what makes their community a great place to live
- economic vitality
 - A variety of businesses can return
- Social and intergenerational equity
 - Everyone has a chance to return
- environmental quality
 - Promoting the environment to be healthy over time and for future generations
- mitigating to insure disaster resilience
 - Reducing the effects of future disasters