
As the long process of recovery from the devastation of Hurricane Mitch in Central America in November 1998 gets underway, this important small book by two U.S. land use/environmental policy/planning professors provides a timely reminder of the complexity and importance of taking a long-term perspective on the recovery process “after the hurricane”. Subtitled “Linking Recovery to Sustainable Development in the Caribbean”, “After the Hurricane” is essentially an account of the authors’ research into the recovery process within the affected communities in four Caribbean islands following the highly destructive hurricanes, Gilbert in 1988 and Hugo in 1989. Their approach is based on a firm conviction that the disaster recovery process should be focussed not just on the urgent short-term relief, but especially on longer term capacity building for sustainable development. On the basis of detailed case studies and surveys of the affected populations, they attempt to answer the following questions about the post-disaster recovery phase of the disaster policy cycle:

- How can disaster recovery strategies achieve natural hazard mitigation, while at the same time promoting economic development?
- How can all people, particularly the poor, be assured fair access to the benefits of mitigation and economic development?
- How can local people meaningfully participate in formulating policies for aid distribution, disaster mitigation, and economic development?
- How can external aid organizations (government and nongovernment) support local participatory initiatives?

The authors point out that their research originated in their prior studies on natural hazard avoidance strategies through land-use planning and environmental design. Their focus in this book is on improving the theoretical understanding of collective response through planning for potentially catastrophic disasters. The book is concerned with local disaster recovery efforts, how such efforts influence prospects for enhancing sustainable development and the way that external donor organisations provide aid to developing countries.
The book has seven chapters dealing in turn with
1. Natural Disasters: a Global Problem;
2. Recovery and Sustainable Development;
3. Jamaica: Influences of Institutional Response on Household Recovery;
4. Montserrat: Recovery after Devastation;
6. Antigua: Recovery without Development;

Chapter 1 provides only a brief overview of the global problem of natural disasters with most of the chapter focussing on the authors’ interpretation of the concept of sustainable development and their concern with
- the exclusion of natural hazards from sustainable development policy making; and
- the exclusion of sustainable development from the humanitarian aid delivery system.

The authors outline the data base used for their research and briefly describe their case study investigations for Antigua, Montserrat and St. Kitts and Nevis in the eastern Caribbean and an extensive household survey conducted in Jamaica fifteen months after Hurricane Gilbert.

Chapter 2 describes the authors conceptual framework for analysing the post-disaster recovery process in the context of sustainable development in more detail. They focus on seven “design principles” for recovery and sustainable development dealing with
- interorganisational coordination;
- monitoring;
- enforcement;
- the recognition of rights;
- leadership;
- linkage;
- resources.

The following Chapters 3–6 apply the authors’ methodology in turn to an analysis of the recovery process in the three island states in the eastern Caribbean following Hurricane Hugo and the on-site survey of households in Jamaica after Hurricane Gilbert. Each chapter begins with a brief description of the affected countries and communities, provides a wide ranging review of the distinctive features of the recovery process in terms of the model provided in Chapter 2 and concludes with a summary of key findings with positive and negative aspects of each identified. There is a wealth of useful country-specific information in these chapters and some important insights emerge from their analyses which call into question much conventional wisdom on the disaster recovery process.

Chapter 7 attempts to draw together the lessons learned from the preceding four chapters. These focus, inter alia, on