



Post-disaster planning issues: lessons from five recent disasters

Stephen Platt
Email: steve.platt@carltd.com

Keywords: *risk, safety, relocation, livelihoods,*

Abstract text (max. 500 words)

This paper reports planning lessons from five recent earthquakes: L'Aquila (2009), Maule (2010), Tohoku (2011), Christchurch (2011/12) and Van (2011). The aim of the paper is to report the urban planning context and key reconstruction strategies adopted in each country.

The author visited cities, towns and settlements in each of the five places affected and interviewed decision-makers, planners, stakeholders and residents. There are huge differences in who has responsibility and authority for planning decisions and in the ways planners responded in each country. Reconstruction planning in the case study countries will be analysed in terms of:

- 1 Relocation or not: taking land out of use and designating new land for development
- 2 Speed or deliberation and the timeliness of master planning
- 3 Governance, authority and the level of community involvement in decision-making
- 4 Reactivating local economies and balancing market forces with judicious state intervention.

Findings

L'Aquila, Italy (2009)

Local architects and engineers had devised a master plan for the city, including a development strategy that focused on future growth. But Central Government rehousing projects were badly planned, the Regional, Provincial and Municipal authorities refused to collaborate and reconstruction and economic regeneration have stalled. The priorities of residents are: repair and reconstruction of their homes, reconstruction of the historic centre and re-establishing employment.

Maule ,Chile (2010)

Recent changes to planning law simplify and relax requirements and regulations to speed reconstruction. The question is will these changes increase future risk. The Master Planning of the 18 coastal settlements affected by the disaster was completed within 10 months by a team of architects and planners seconded from the University of Bio-Bio. Local communities were actively involved in planning decisions and their priorities included re-establishing economic activity, moving key public services and building tsunami resistant housing in risk prone.

Tohoku, Japan (2011)

The Japanese government's top priorities are economic revival and safety. But these two aims can be at odds and delay in rehousing people and businesses is having serious consequences for recovery. The central government hoped that improved transportation links and promoting urban regeneration projects would have a positive impact on economic prospects. But the main focus has been on relocating housing to higher ground and on constructing high levees and evacuation towers, rather than strengthen the local economy.



Christchurch, New Zealand (2011)

In New Zealand new legislation gave the Canterbury Earthquake Authority (CERA) responsibility for coordinating recovery and, despite tensions, CERA and the municipal authorities managed to cooperate. But city centre businesses have relocated to the periphery. Over half of the CBD has been demolished, many historic buildings have been lost and the future centre will be unrecognisable. Extensive areas of residential land have been taken out of use. Most noteworthy was how well insurance claims were managed, yet what a debilitating effect this had.

Van, Turkey (2011)

There was little or no planning or urban design in Ergis or Van. The government agency, TOKI, built 20,000 apartments in less than 12 months. This rate of reconstruction is unprecedented. But planning decisions were made by geologists on the basis of distance from a known fault and whether the land was government-owned and there was no public consultation of any kind. And despite talk of rebuilding a better Van it has been almost impossible for the urban planners to produce plans to improve the city centres of Van or Erciş because of land ownership issues.

Roundtable theme

- Supporting urban risk reduction through reconstruction
- Relocation from hazardous areas

Author's Biography



Stephen Platt is a social scientist with higher degrees in engineering and architecture. His research experience is in urban planning, community engagement, housing, energy use and disaster reconstruction and recovery. He has been a director of Cambridge Architectural Research since 1990 and its Chairman since 2001.

He has studied disaster management and post disaster recovery in Pakistan, Thailand, New Zealand, Chile, China, Italy, Turkey, Japan, Iran and the USA. Most recently, as part of the EU SENSUM project, he designed and conducted two-day disaster scenario planning exercises with disaster management personnel in Kyrgyzstan/ Tajikistan and in Izmir, Turkey with AFAD.