

STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION IN RECONSTRUCTION PROGRAMMES: THE “LAKEVIEW MODEL”

Isabelle Thomas-Maret, Université de Montréal
email: isabelle.thomas.maret@umontreal.ca

Summary

The success of rebuilding after a disaster depends primarily on the organisation and coordination of a variety of different efforts and programmes at all levels of government and society in general. Extremes of response vary from heightened bureaucratic processes to direct civilian intervention, however, in all cases, cities need to find the right mix so as to maximize efficiency to effect a timely recovery. The case of New Orleans post-Katrina exemplifies this critical issue.

Three years after this massive disaster, the costliest in the nation's history, there is still no overarching structure to coordinate the multiple recovery strategies in place or pending: responses originate from individual neighbourhood associations or the city recovery team, and include non profit organisations mobilized for particular projects or programs. The sustainable rebuilding of a city post-disaster involves the coordination of stakeholders at all level of governance, but within a well organized structure, that to date, is lacking in New Orleans.

If 80% of the city flooded in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans' neighbourhoods had a different status in September 2005. Hence, some communities like Gentilly, East New Orleans, Broadmoor, Lakeview were badly damaged while others like the Garden District, the French Quarter, Uptown had less destruction (Maret I., 2008).

The rebuilding status in those heavily flooded neighbourhoods is truly different in 2008. While some areas present clear forms of recovery, others are still struggling, presenting patchy signs of life. Within the same city, successful or inconsistent recoveries can be scrutinized. It raises the need of an understanding of these different recovery outcomes.

The literature on disaster recovery brings different sets of explanation regarding resiliency and successful recovery. While some authors explain the importance of structural differences between neighbourhoods (Hass, 1977), others focus on the structure and implementation of rebuilding strategies within the neighbourhoods and the strength of successful resident driven recovery efforts (Bolin, 1998). The importance of collaborative planning as well as close-knit social networks also seems to be a key element (Knox, 2007).

In the planning of District 5 (Lakeview district), the rate of return, one criteria of recovery, was 58% in 2008 (New Orleans Index). In some subareas, like Lakewood, the recovery seems to be higher reaching 80% (Survey). Some strategies that were developed and used in Lakewood are already being exported and replicated in other neighbourhoods of the city (Gentilly, Ninth Ward) as well as in other states (Iowa). Hence, the organizational structures, as well as the techniques used in this community, enable us to understand the process of its revival and its possible diffusion. It raises the question of coordination between a neighbourhood's successful strategies and a city's plan.

