

Friday, Jan. 13

Frontline, "The Quake" <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/haiti/view/>

Describe some of the problems and consequences of the relief efforts in Haiti. What could aid agencies have done differently?

Haiti relief efforts had several flaws that caused many unnecessary deaths. Relief was slow if at all present, lacking organization, priorities, medical supplies, food supplies, and communication. The severity of the disaster caused many initial damages and injuries but the time following the disaster increased the impact of the event on the people. Many people needed aid that wasn't available.

The injured were simply left to suffer with their unattended wounds. Many aspects of society we take for granted were no longer running. Stores were not employed or stocked. Navigation was heavily based on landmarks which were now destroyed.

Each issue with the relief efforts seems to be due to the lack of planning. Agencies could have done many processes differently but there was no set plan to follow and their actions resembled a full out scramble amongst both the organizations and the citizens. A relief plan seemed nonexistent in Haiti. Relief plans should be in place for the various disasters possible for a specific area before they occur.

After viewing the video and not having experienced being a part of disaster relief organizations I would like to imagine that, at the time, everyone was doing what they thought was best. Perhaps with alternative preemptive actions, such as better plan to follow, the relief process would have gone smoother. I feel the lack of communication, due to physical damage to equipment and buildings, was one of the largest contributors to many of the problem even though it was not heavily mentioned throughout the video.

Neil Smith, "There's No Such Thing as a Natural Disaster" <http://understandingkatrina.ssrc.org/Smith/>

What does Smith mean when he writes that "disaster reconstruction invariably cuts deeper the ruts and grooves of social oppression and exploitation"? Do you agree, and do you think the aftermath of the earthquake in Haiti is an example of this?

Smith uses this terminology to describe the increasing imbalance between social classes caused by reconstruction after a disaster. The reconstruction, in the areas affected by Katrina, was aimed at having a higher class setting, therefore making it harder for lower class people to even return to due to their losses and the new cost of living in the area. I agree with this as it also occurs in just about every other aspect of social class ranks, involving disasters as well as not.

The Haiti aftermath was similar in some ways such as lack of relief and organization but there were also some differences in terms of what this article was discussing with reconstruction. Having only the information provided by the Frontline video and the article, the social exploitation that occurred in the U.S. was an 'internal' issue while Haiti's exploitation was 'external', both influenced by the U.S however. Haiti's reconstruction however was mostly done to just have some sort of shelter without any precautions of a possible future quake occurring. I did not pick up on the reconstruction itself causing any social oppression or exploitation.

Wednesday, Jan. 18

McPhee, J. The Control of Nature, ch. 1: "Atchafalaya" (p. 3-92)

How has construction of levees around the lower Mississippi River changed the area's physical vulnerability to flooding?

How has social vulnerability changed since the construction of levees?

Friday, Jan. 20

Cutter, S. L., J. T. Mitchell, and M. S. Scott. 2000. Revealing the Vulnerability of People and Places: A Case Study of Georgetown County, South Carolina. Annals of the Association of American Geographers 90 (4):713-737.

How do the authors define "place vulnerability"? What factors do they analyze to determine the place vulnerability of Georgetown County?

Cutter, et al, define "place vulnerability" as a combination of the more common biophysical vulnerability with the more recently heightened social vulnerability of an area. These two are combined and then compared with the originating hazard risk and mitigation factors to formulate Place Vulnerability.

With the aid of various GIS, Georgetown County's vulnerability is assessed based on analyzing past hazards to determine possible magnitude and expected frequencies of biophysical dangers throughout the diverse landscape of the county. Events were analyzed from Transportation related accidents to Hurricane wind and storm surge threats. With the generated potential hazard zone maps overlapped they were able to generate a final Hazard Vulnerability map to represent the biophysical vulnerability of the county.

Social Vulnerability consists of various factors that would cause certain groups of people to be affected by an event more or less than others. Similar maps were generated using GIS of these areas based on things such as resources, political power, as well as the strength of the buildings and people. Areas with fewer resources or political power would have a higher vulnerability for example. The same goes with areas with older buildings and people. These generated maps were also combined to create an overall social vulnerability map.

Integrating the two vulnerability maps generated an assessment of Georgetown County's "Place Vulnerability" representing which areas would have higher losses due to hazards. This new understanding of the potential losses creates a starting position for coming up with a hazard relief plan for the county. The plan should be designed to be able to provide appropriate aid coverage, especially for areas assessed as having a high "Place Vulnerability".

Frazier, T., N. Wood, B. Yarnal, and D. H. Bauer. 2010. Influence of potential sea level rise on societal vulnerability to hurricane storm-surge hazards, Sarasota County, Florida. Applied Geography 30 (4):490-505.

How will climate change influence the vulnerability of Sarasota County, Florida? How has the pattern of growth and development in the county shaped its vulnerability?

Sarasota County has already been assessed for current vulnerability to hurricanes and consequent storm surges but Climate change suggests expected storm intensities are on the rise. Hazard planners had to reincorporate these expected increases in a new vulnerability assessment of Sarasota County. Stronger storms bring higher intensity storm surges, which affect higher elevations, more land, than previous storms. Rising sea level also plays quite a role in the vulnerability change for this area as with any coastal zone.

In addition to the rise in biophysical vulnerability, social vulnerability is also increasing due to current patterns of growth and development within the county. Current and Proposed land use was a major factor here as well as the increasing interest in coastal living. With more people moving to the area, this brings a higher vulnerability with the higher populations.

Both of these areas were looked at when planning for future development and new disaster relief plans. With modified possible storm surge maps for these expected higher intensity storms planners modified previous plans of improving the current evacuation route with proposing an entirely new route. The new route would be further inland to avoid the costly mishaps of investing in a possible threat. With the newly analyzed data, Sarasota county has developed a new "place vulnerability" that includes possible hazards that have yet to come.

Monday, Jan. 23

Frontline, "The Storm" <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/storm/view/>

What factors influenced the vulnerability of New Orleans to hurricanes, in terms of 1) exposure (physical vulnerability), 2) sensitivity, and 3) adaptive capacity. List at least 5 factors for each component. Please bring a copy of your response to class.

Wednesday, Jan. 25

Colten, C. E., and A. R. Sumpter. 2009. Social memory and resilience in New Orleans. Natural hazards 48 (3):355–364.

Name and briefly describe two 'forgotten lessons' from Hurricane Betsy that were not implemented in response to Hurricane Katrina.

There were two main lessons that were not implemented into New Orleans' hazard management plans since the occurrence of Hurricane Betsey. The first forgotten lesson was noting the areas with the highest flooding vulnerability. These areas included eastern New Orleans, the lakefront, and the downstream parishes. The city allowed for rapid development in these areas instead of directing them to safer areas. The city, its developers and its citizens had become dependent on the levies to combat Mother Nature.

The second forgotten lesson was considering the risks of developing inside a levied off section of land. These preventative measures also retain water afterwards. With enough rain during the storm these levies could end up causing a flood due to their intention of keeping water on one side of them. Over time the inner part of these levies sank to or below sea level due to forcing the water to drain through the lowest part of the area.

The combination of these two main, previously witnessed and seemingly forgotten, issues contributed to the severity of Hurricane Katrina's damages, and ultimately New Orleans' overlooked hazard vulnerability.

Monday, Jan. 30

Kasperson, R. E., and J. X. Kasperson. 1996. The social amplification and attenuation of risk. Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 545:95-105.

What hazard event affected Goiânia, Brazil in September, 1987, and how was the event socially amplified or attenuated?

In September 13th of 1987(The day I was born), Goiânia, Brazil experienced the worst radioactive accident to occur in the Western Hemisphere. The hazard was caused by two citizens trying to salvage abandoned equipment for some needed funds. Once scrapped, the radioactive material was then spread around to friends and family for its peculiar characteristics. They were unaware of its radioactive properties and exposing themselves to its unknown harm. The worst part fell shortly after the event was socially amplified. Once the news got out about this people started to worry about more than what was actually a problem. People feared for the health for just being around the area contaminated. The food production industry suffered from consumers being afraid to purchase and consume locally grown crops. The effects were also seen in the housing market in the area with nobody wanting to live there anymore. The surrounding areas, hours away, also saw declines in tourism sales.

Name and describe how two risks in the U.S. today are being socially amplified or attenuated.

A current risk in the U.S. today, as mentioned in the article, is the risk of AIDS. These risks associated with AIDS were known about in the 80s but it wasn't as big of a deal as it is now due to the amplification of its consequences through the various forms of media available today. I would imagine any teenager or older today is aware of what AIDS is due to this amplification. The issue shouldn't be overlooked but it is far worse in other parts of the world which are not as frequently mentioned.

Another risk that I am aware of is the consequence associated with online piracy. Online warfare as it is often referred to as has been occurring since the invention of the internet. While there are many aspects to online warfare, piracy is only one of them, and has also been going on for longer than most people know. More specifically is the recent attempt to pass the SOPA bill which would attempt to stop online piracy but at the expense to everyone who uses a site due to only a few abusers. It wasn't until a few well known sites mocked what would happen back on January 18th that people realized what this bill would do to the internet. It caused many voters to either switch from approval or uncertainty to completely be against the proposition.

Wednesday, Feb. 1

2010 Centre County Hazard Mitigation Plan chs. 1-3. <http://www.co.centre.pa.us/ems/hazard.asp>

Do you think all relevant stakeholders were included in the public and stakeholder participation part of the planning process? Would you suggest any changes for future hazard mitigation plans in Centre County?

As with any collaboration through representatives it is hard to include everyone that is technically vital to the planning process. Without the article detailing exactly who was there and who they were representing also makes it hard to judge who else should be there. If someone from the university wasn't there then I believe there should be. The only other suggestion I would make towards future hazard mitigation plans would be having a specific plan for certain days depending on the population at the time. The plan in place for a summer day in State College should differ from that of a home football game day. The large change population certainly effects how

Region: Asia

Fire in Uttar Pradesh forest

Dates: 1/30/2012 - 1/31/2012¹

Areas affected: Uttar Pradesh, India¹

Hazard type: Fire¹

Casualties: 0 deaths¹

Property damage: two hectares¹

Summary:

A fire broke out Monday near the Bear Rescue Centre in Uttar Pradesh's Keitham forest. The center is the world's largest sloth bear facility and the forest is known to house thousands of migratory birds. Investigators suggest a cigarette started the fire.¹

Images:



Sources:

- (1) <http://www.hindustantimes.com/India-news/UttarPradesh/Fire-in-Uttar-Pradesh-forest-no-casualties/Article1-804466.aspx>
- (2) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:India_Uttar_Pradesh_locator_map.svg

Thailand Floods

Dates: December 2011 - present¹

Areas affected: Cambodia's Tônlé Sab (Tonle Sap) and Thailand's Chao Phraya River¹

Hazard type: Flood¹

Casualties: 815 deaths² (1.5 mil affected)¹

Property damage: 1,425 billion baht (US\$45.7 Bn)²

Summary:

As the flood waters recede, relief continues in the area. The floods were the worst in over a decade affecting nearly 1.5 million people. Some areas were under more than 3 feet of water.¹

Additionally I know this is where they produce a main component of Typical Computer Hard Drives. Prices of the Hard drives have nearly tripled (when comparing a Hard Drive I purchased 3 years ago to last month). Prices are starting to come back down and more and more hard drives are showing up in Sales on site such as a newegg.com.³

Images:



January 9th, 2012



December 1st, 2012



January 8th, 2012



January 3rd, 2011

Sources:

- (1) <http://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/NaturalHazards/view.php?id=76913>
- (2) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2011_Thailand_floods
- (3) personal knowledge
- (4) <http://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/NaturalHazards/view.php?id=76932>