MILANO THE NEW SCHOOL. FOR MANAGEMENT AND URBAN POLICY

Urban Conversations

Cities at Risk:
Catastrophe, Recovery and Renewal in New York and New Orleans

Edited by Andrew White and Peter Eisinger

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FORWARD

In the wake of catastrophic events like September 11 and Hurricane Katrina, choosing a topic for Milano's 2006 Urban Conversations program was not difficult. There are no more vivid examples in our recent history that connect the pillars of what we teach at Milano than these two events.

Both events represent the intersection of politics and policy. Both events require the engagement of government at all levels—federal, state and local.

Hurricane Katrina—the event itself, the preparation for it, the aftermath and the issues it leaves behind—lays bare some of the greatest challenges of urban policy. And because the destruction of the hurricane was so thorough, and the displacement of the region's residents so far and wide, the rebuilding of New Orleans and the surrounding area could result in an entirely different landscape. It provides multiple angles for examination—from the conduct of the various governmental agencies before, during and after a disaster to the multi-layered question of how to put an entire city back together again. How do we address what went wrong, reconstruct and at the same time preserve the character of a city rich in history and tradition, and revitalize a region whose population has been scattered to states far and wide?

I visited New Orleans seven months after Hurricane Katrina and it was far too early to properly assess what the city will become. What struck me most at the time was the emptiness. Seven thousand teachers had left the city and 85 percent of the schools weren't open. Hospitals were struggling to get back to full service with too few doctors available to care for the sick. Buildings, once filled with the vitality of work and commerce, sat unoccupied. But what has also been left in the wake of this disaster is a very high level of civic engagement that will likely be one of the biggest factors in shaping the city's future. Political leaders are carefully scrutinized and interest in the April 2006 mayoral election was extremely high. The city will need to maintain that level of engagement in order to succeed, because as we know all too well, the TV cameras will leave and it will be the responsibility of the people in the Gulf Coast region to map their destiny.

New York City in the wake of the terrorist attack on September 11, 2001—though different in many ways—still provides a remarkably analogous basis for examination and lessons learned. In the post 9/11 story, we again see the tableau of monumental catastrophe, followed by an analysis of how we could have prevented the disaster, followed by an extraordinarily complex political path to rebuilding. Efforts to rebuild at Ground Zero provide us with a vivid illustration of the difficulties of the "putting it back together again" phase.

Many of us have seen Ground Zero move from smoking ruins to the beginnings of a construction site—but little further in the five years since the destruction of the World Trade Center. Fighting continues to this day over whose vision is the best vision, who will assume financial responsibility for the site, who will build the buildings and who will occupy them.

History has shown that paths to reconstruction can be long and winding. As Paul Goldberger, former dean of Parsons The New School of Design, wrote in *The New Yorker*, "In the lives of cities, boldness and vision rarely follow catastrophe." He cited Chicago's rebuilding after the fire of 1871: it was sturdy and utilitarian. It wasn't until 38 years later that Chicago's reputation as a great architectural city was born. Similarly, San Francisco leaders after the earthquake of 1906 also thought small, putting aside a larger, grander reconstruction plan and instead focusing on rebuilding the damaged core. A grander vision took nearly two decades to unfold.[1]

Will history repeat itself at Ground Zero and in New Orleans?

One of the participants in Urban Conversations this year, Lawrence Vale, co-edited a book called *The Resilient City* which played a significant role in shaping the discussion and planning of the April 2006 conference. In their introduction, Vale and his colleague Thomas Campanella write that generally speaking,

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[1] Paul Goldberger, "A New Beginning: Why we should build apartments at Ground Zero," *The New Yorker*, May 30, 2005.

the period following a disaster reveals the strong will of urban populations and the hardiness of urban governments. Even when a city is all but wiped out, people and governments quickly begin to rebuild. While the process of rebuilding is always fraught with debate and controversy, the process itself invariably moves forward. And in the end, in some way, the revived city usually comes to reflect or recall the old, pre-disaster history and fabric of the city itself.[2]

In planning for our conference, I reflected on a recent trip I took to Dresden, Germany, a city destroyed during World War II. The cathedral in Dresden was rebuilt using many of the original stones, still black from the firebombs, as a reminder of the time and its history. Germany rebuilt its cities; it made them modern but also linked them with the past, which is something we are struggling to do in New Orleans and New York City today.

Against the political backdrop in New York and New Orleans, there are real issues beyond the immediate questions of rebuilding that cannot be ignored. Much of urban America has long coped with uneven or declining tax revenues, concentrated poverty, rising municipal labor and health costs and other economic stresses. Even economically powerful cities such as New York must reconcile finite resources with the need to prepare for the dangers of future terrorist attacks and natural disasters, while still managing the day-to-day operations of its education, criminal justice, social services, sanitation, pension and other systems. Such complexities are easily forgotten in the recriminations and intense scrutiny that follow a disaster.

Exploring these complexities is what we always hope to do with our Urban Conversations series. We also seek to learn lessons about innovation in urban government across cities and states, to cross-fertilize ideas and solutions and to generate constructive dialogue among elected officials, analysts and an informed public. This is really what Milano is all about.

Milano's philosophy is anchored by our two great strengths, management and policy—specifically urban policy. The importance of the cross-sectoral approach at Milano is vividly illustrated in the subject matter presented here. The interdependence of management, policy and politics in navigating urban catastrophes is a delicate but important balancing act. This is an ethic we hope to instill in our students—as a way not only to be better citizens and to understand one another, but to help build better cities.

Fred P. Hochberg, Dean
Milano The New School for Management and Urban Policy

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[2] Lawrence J. Vale and Thomas J. Campanella, editors, *The Resilient City: How Modern Cities Recover from Disaster* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

URBAN CONVERSATIONS SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Milano is pleased to announce that it has inaugurated a new Urban Conversations Scholarship Fund to enhance its student body by attracting more candidates from various regions across the U.S. To honor Baltimore Mayor Martin O'Malley and Louisiana Governor Kathleen Babineaux Blanco for speaking at the 2006 Urban Conversations: Cities at Risk conference, preference will be given to students from Baltimore and from Louisiana Gulf Coast areas affected by Hurricane Katrina when the first scholarships are awarded for the 2006-2007 academic year.

The Urban Conversations Scholarship Fund is made possible by generous donations from: the Howard Gilman Foundation; the Altria Group; Allen & Company, LLC; Lillian Vernon; James A. Torrey; the May and Samuel Rudin Family Foundation; Mary Boies; Bill and Sheila Lambert; George S. Loening; Select Equity; Thomas I. Acosta; Bolton-St. Johns; Tondra and Jeffrey Lynford; Anne H. Hess and Craig Kaplan; James Lee Witt; and the Rubin Foundation.

Propective students interested in applying should call the Milano admissions office at 877 MILANO1 or email milanoadmissions@newschool.edu.

INTRODUCTION

CATASTROPHE, RECOVERY, RENEWAL…
AND THE FUTURE OF URBAN AMERICA
BY ANDREW WHITE

The inspiration for this collection of essays came during the planning of the 2006 Milano Urban Conversations conference, Cities at Risk. Our overarching interest was in renewal: how do cities reconfigure and recreate themselves following a catastrophe? And what could we learn from two extreme examples in recent experience, the destruction wrought by the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001, in Lower Manhattan and the devastation inflicted upon New Orleans by Hurricane Katrina in 2005?

The essays in this book—and the selective transcript from the conference that we've included—deal with the recovery from these two very intense moments of devastation, as well as the need to prepare for similar events in the future. The conference itself covered this ground with several current and former key public officials. Louisiana Governor Kathleen Babineaux Blanco spoke eloquently about the need for greater clarity and equity in the redevelopment of what was (and will again be) her state's largest city. She also spoke about the shared interests of New York and New Orleans, two of the nation's largest ports, and two of the cities that are magnets for the nation's creative energy. "Our challenge is to rebuild in a way that provides our people with a real ladder out of poverty," she told the audience. "That means neighborhoods with quality schools, twenty-four hour healthcare clinics, recreational opportunity and strong businesses that provide good quality jobs for our people."

Governor Blanco participated in a panel that addressed many of the themes explored in this book: how might New Orleans develop more mixed-income communities? Who truly holds the power of decision making in renewal efforts, wherever they take place? What are the ethical, moral and practical routes to planning for the future?

The lessons drawn in this book are larger in their scope and relevance than the immediate needs and experience of New Orleans and Lower Manhattan. War, famine, natural disaster and terror have crushed the vitality of urban centers throughout world history. In post-World War II America, the most common destructive urban forces, however, were the economic, cultural and political pressures behind suburbanization and urban disinvestment—and the consequential, monumental collapse of city communities mired in crime, poverty and endemic joblessness.

There have been modest rebirths of many American cities in recent years, and a remarkable resurgence in some, including New York, which began in the early 1990s and continues through this day. Massive public and private investment in urban community and economic development, huge immigration flows from every part of the world, along with an urbanist cultural fascination among the first generations of Americans born and raised in modern suburbia, have combined to renew urban economies and give neighborhoods new life.

Regardless of whether the damage to a metropolis is instantaneous or drawn out over decades, recovery is guided at least in part by the policies and decisions of public leaders and by the political environments in which they operate. Public investment, for example, was fundamental to New York City's economic recovery in the 1990s, thanks to a $5 billion housing reinvestment fund begun by then-Mayor Ed Koch and ushered through its realization by his successors. Each administration made politically vital decisions about the use of public funds to leverage private investment, to employ young people, to spark entrepreneurship in disinvested communities and to help community organizations preserve thousands of units of affordable housing in changing communities for low income families. They didn't stop gentrification, but rather they helped many households keep their homes in a changing city.

Through mayoral administrations both Democratic and Republican, these policies of equitable use of public capital in redevelopment have reflected values dear to New Yorkers.

As we learn in several of the essays in this book, policy decisions by public actors in New Orleans since Hurricane Katrina have not always been about values of equity. In the few dramatic months between the 2005 hurricane season and the spring elections of 2006, political power realigned in that city and its future became dependent on the decisions of federal and state officials. Huey Perry writes of the new racial dynamics at play in the politics of post-Katrina New Orleans, and of their roots. Peter Burns and his colleagues describe the city's long-disorganized governance structure, the post-Katrina competition for control of the rebuilding effort, and the disturbing lack of any coherent long-term plan for the future.

New Orleans, in contrast to New York, has neither a large and diverse sector of civic advocates and nonprofit organizations nor a strong economy. Worse, it hasn't much time to determine its future. Posing different visions for a more equitable, stable and livable Gulf Coast and New Orleans, David Kallick, Peter Eisinger and John Norquist each offer prescriptions for recovery and renewal. Kallick contrasts the early stages of post-Katrina recovery in New Orleans with that of Lower Manhattan in the months and years following 9/11, and finds significant foresight in some of the strategies of public investment and employment in New York City—largely because of the civic sector's active role in planning, politicking and driving change. James Krauskopf describes a direct transfer of experience from New York after 9/11 to New Orleans after Katrina, in the creation of a human services collaborative focused on disaster relief.

Practical lessons in preparedness and response (which very clearly have an ethical edge as well) make up the first segment of this book and were also the centerpiece of the most compelling dialogue at Milano's 2006 conference. The day's first panel, broadcast from The New School on WNYC, New York Public Radio, was remarkable for its panelists' candor about the failure of the nation to prepare its cities, years after 9/11, for preventing and handling extreme crises. The participants, including former federal executives in charge of emergency preparedness and response, offered a handful of conclusions with great urgency:

- Federal, state and local emergency responders lack the resources and planning for effective joint training in crisis response. "If you don't plan together, train together and exercise together," asked former FEMA Director James Lee Witt, "how in the world are you going to respond?"
- Communications systems that can tie together teams from different agencies and levels of government do not exist. In fact, Baltimore Mayor Martin O'Malley charged, federal grants to support interoperable communications have been slashed.
- The Congress and the press have failed in their role as watchdogs of the current administration, said New School President Bob Kerrey. They have accepted weak planning efforts and allowed themselves to be blinded by politics and diverted by false promises.
- There is a lack of clarity and specificity from the top echelons of government in terms of the necessary objectives of planning for prevention and early response.

In her essay included in this collection, Louise Comfort explores exactly what is required of an effective communications system that can ensure communities' ability to respond intelligently and quickly in times of emergency. Donald Kettl describes the hurdles imposed by our federalist structure of government—and offers a compelling illustration of how these hurdles can be overcome by a well-planned series of cross-agency joint training exercises.

The picture offered here of our nation's preparedness and response five years after 9/11 and one year after Katrina is not comforting. "The fact of the matter is that many years after September 11th, we have been seeing a declining investment in the capacity of our cities to protect themselves," concluded Mayor O'Malley at the April conference. "We do not see this sort of progress on interoperable communications, on bio-surveillance systems, on personal protective equipment, on vulnerability assessments, investments in drills and exercises. These are the facts. This is not a question of whether you like the president or you don't like the president. This is about whether or not we have made the investments to protect and improve the security and preparedness of our major cities. And clearly, we have not."

At the same time, however, the essays here offer some valuable, and hopeful, reflections on the values that have energized some renewal efforts—and the political environments in which efforts at reform and equitable reconstruction will have to operate. ◆

Andrew White is Director of the Center for New York City Affairs at The New School.

URBAN CONVERSATIONS: CITIES AT RISK
FRIDAY, APRIL 7, 2006

PLANNING FOR CATASTROPHE: THE BENEFIT OF HINDSIGHT

WHO'S WHO

Moderator:
Brian Lehrer, Host, *The Brian Lehrer Show*,
WNYC, New York Public Radio

Panelists:
Michael Brown, former Director, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

Clark Kent Ervin, Director,
Homeland Security Initiative, The Aspen Institute

Bob Kerrey, President, The New School

Mayor Martin O'Malley, Baltimore

James Lee Witt, Chairman and CEO,
James Lee Witt Associates, LLC; former Director,
Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

PARTICIPANT BIOGRAPHIES

Michael Brown served as director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) from 2003 to 2005. He was appointed general counsel of FEMA by President George W. Bush in 2001 and made deputy director after the terrorist attacks of 9/11.

Clark Kent Ervin joined The Aspen Institute in January 2005 to create a homeland security initiative. Prior to this, he served as the first inspector general of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Previously, he was inspector general of the U.S. Department of State.

Bob Kerrey is president of The New School, and was a U.S. Senator from Nebraska for 12 years. Prior to that he served as that state's governor for four years.

Brian Lehrer hosts WNYC Radio's highly-acclaimed daily talk and call-in show, *The Brian Lehrer Show*, which airs weekdays from 10:00 am to noon on WNYC 93.9 FM / AM 820 and on the web at www.wnyc.org.

Martin O' Malley is currently in his second term as mayor of Baltimore and is a candidate in the 2006 election for governor of Maryland.

James Lee Witt was appointed director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) by President Bill Clinton in 1993. He is currently chairman and CEO of James Lee Witt Associates, LLC, which provides disaster recovery and mitigation management services.

When it came to planning for and responding to the September 11 attacks and Hurricane Katrina, local, state and federal government did some things remarkably well—and failed badly at others. Looking back, what critical pieces of information did officials in New York and New Orleans lack that could have helped mitigate the effects of the catastrophes? Did these cities have their disaster planning priorities in order? From intelligence gathering to communications needs to emergency medical services and shelter, what concrete lessons can we take away from these and other past experiences to help public officials at all levels prepare for and respond to future catastrophes in American cities?

On Friday, April 7, 2006, Milano The New School for Management and Urban Policy convened elected officials, academics, journalists and other experts from across the United States for a day-long series of discussions about disaster readiness, response and renewal. The conference, Urban Conversations: Cities at Risk, was held in the John L. Tishman Auditorium at 66 West 12th Street in New York City. It began with a panel entitled "Planning for Catastrophe: The Benefit of Hindsight." Participants included several current and former public officials with first-hand experience of disaster planning and response. The panel was moderated by Brian Lehrer of WNYC, New York Public Radio, and was broadcast to listeners throughout the region.

TRANSCRIPT EXCERPTS

IS FEMA BROKEN?

Brian Lehrer: Just last night, as it happens, President Bush nominated the acting head of FEMA, R. David Paulison, as the permanent head. This came after many other people who were approached turned down the job. As *The New York Times* put it this week, "Unconvinced that the administration is serious about fixing the Federal Emergency Management Agency or that there is enough time to get it done before President Bush's second term ends, seven of these candidates for director or another top FEMA job said in interviews that they had pulled themselves out of the running."

So, Mr. Witt, let me start with you and ask you how difficult it would be for Mr. Paulison to make the necessary changes, after being approved under these conditions.

James Lee Witt: Thank you. Let me just say that Dave Paulison is an exceptionally good person. He has the background and experience, had been a former fire chief of Miami/Dade in Florida and went through Hurricane Andrew. But the position they have put him in, by going out and searching

over the world trying to find someone to take that position, has weakened that position. If I'd been Mr. Paulison, I'd have said, "You can take it and put it somewhere."

Brian Lehrer: Really? You would not have taken the job if you were him?

James Lee Witt: No. The reason I wouldn't have is simply he's in a position that will put him in a position of failure. And unless they pull FEMA out of the Department of Homeland Security, put it back as an independent agency *[applause]*, make it cabinet level, then he's asking for failure.

Brian Lehrer: Mr. Brown, same question.

Michael Brown: Oh, absolutely. Look, Dave [Paulison] came on board in the first Bush administration, when we brought him on as the U.S. Fire Administrator. And Dave is a very smart guy. But the current structure of FEMA is not going to let anyone succeed. It just cannot be done.

Brian Lehrer: What is the current structure of FEMA?

Michael Brown: Well, they started off by separating preparedness out of response. And without those two things being tied together, you cannot do a good job. Because you fight as you train, train as you fight. With those two things separated, you cannot succeed.

Brian Lehrer: Let me go up and down the panel and ask you each if you think with all that has happened and all that has been exposed since the hurricane, are we better off today, better prepared today, than we were a year ago for the next emergency?

Mr. Ervin?

Clark Kent Ervin: I think, regrettably, the answer to that is no. We are actually less well-prepared today than we were then. Part of the reason for that is, inexplicably, when Secretary Chertoff took office one of the things he proposed, and has since been implemented, is to disconnect preparedness from response and recovery. I'm not sure, metaphysically, how you can do that. *[laughter]*

But even if you could do it, it is certainly not a good idea. The two are obviously so inextricably linked. It's impossible to do it, as a matter of fact. That, in and of itself, seems to have weakened FEMA considerably.

Brian Lehrer: How else? Other ways?

Clark Kent Ervin: Well, it seems to me another reason is that FEMA has been under-funded. The department, as a whole, has been under-funded from the beginning. Essentially, the budget of the Department of Homeland Security was simply the budget of all the 22 components put together plus $125 million, which in Washington is not even a rounding error.

FEMA, in particular, has been under-funded from the beginning. That's a key part of its lack of ability to do the job. So I think those two things together have had a tremendously disadvantageous effect.

Brian Lehrer: Senator Kerrey, same question. Are we better prepared for the next emergency than we were a year ago?

Bob Kerrey: No.

Brian Lehrer: Why not?

Bob Kerrey: My first experience with FEMA occurred in 1975. A tornado hit Omaha, Nebraska, and we had a business that had been open about 18 months. And large swaths of Omaha were destroyed that afternoon. A federal emergency declaration occurred the next day. FEMA was in there, on the spot, working with the National Guard, working with the governor. So I know how well they can work and how life-saving they can work.

In that particular case, as disastrous as it was, even 9/11 as disastrous as it was, was not as large as Katrina and Rita taken together. By any stretch, it's a disaster of unimaginable proportions. But, on the other hand, like a tornado, hurricanes reoccur. And I would say organizationally, with FEMA stuck in Homeland Security—and I do agree it's a terrible mistake and it's produced obvious disastrous consequence—I think the preparation is not as good as it used to be. I think the communication is not as good as it needs to be. And I think we've put such an emphasis in cutting taxes in Washington, D.C., that we no longer have the resources necessary to do this kind of a job and many other jobs as well.

Brian Lehrer: Mayor O'Malley, how does this look from the position of mayor of Baltimore?

Martin O'Malley: I would agree with the comments that certainly the federal government is probably less prepared now than we were before. You can't cut dollars every single year for local law enforcement block grants, for the fire grants, you cannot cut preparedness dollars and those sorts of emergency response dollars every year and expect that is going to have the effect of improving your security and your ability to respond to emergencies.

I will say this though, at the local level, in some states and certainly in many big cities, because we feel so utterly alone and unsupported by our federal government, there are some innovative things that are happening and I think that cities are taking more responsibility rather than less, as we look at the sort of meltdown that happened after Katrina. For example, many cities, even as we speak, are probably formulating and redrafting their evacuation plans. Are probably buying larger stocks of water and meal replacements. Are probably taking a look at their city budgets and seeing how we can start on our own to create more inter-operable communications, knowing that the federal government is not going to be much help to us for a good, long time.

Brian Lehrer: Mr. Witt, you've been here before. You were credited with turning FEMA around in the 1990s, after its failure around Hurricane Andrew in 1992. And at that time, it was seen as a patronage mill, which is one of the criticisms leveled at it recently. How similar was that moment to this moment?

James Lee Witt: When I became director of FEMA and met with [Senator Fritz Hollings], he told me FEMA was the only federal agency that can mess up a two-car parade. *[laughter]*

And then he said it was the worst bunch of political jackasses he had ever seen appointed there. And it was a political turkey dumping ground. And those were his comments. And everybody loved to hate FEMA when I came in 1993.

But let me just say this: today we are not as prepared as we need to be from the local, state and national level. … FEMA moved in under the Department of Homeland Security, minimized their capabilities and their effectiveness. FEMA, when I was there, we responded to the Murrah Building bombing [in Oklahoma City]. First time in our history we had a presidential disaster declaration and a crime scene. And we worked very closely, because the Department of Justice did crisis management. We did the consequence management. We provided the resources and support for all of law enforcement and brought in [the Department of Defense] and all of [its] assets.

FEMA responded extremely well in 9/11 in New York, as well as the Pentagon. But FEMA was still intact. What has happened across the country, because the Department of Homeland Security…. The funding focus is on law enforcement and fire, which is needed. Don't get me wrong. But what has happened…it has cut funding for emergency management. Emergency management at the local, state and national level does the planning, does the training, does the exercising for all of public safety.

Now then, if you don't plan together, train together and exercise together, how in the world are you going to respond? And if you don't build those relationships and those partnerships from the national to the local, and if you don't know who you are responding with, you don't want to swap business cards on the scene. *[laughter]*

And that's what we are doing. And so the [Emergency Management Performance Grant] program, the funding that pays for 50 percent of the emergency management salaries at the local level, has just been proposed to be cut in 2007, by this administration, again.

And the mayor can tell you and Mike Brown can tell you, we are at the point in our nation where emergency management has been minimized so much that it's an afterthought today.

WE ARE NOT PREPARED

Brian Lehrer: Last week, New Yorkers heard the 911 operators from September 11th on tapes released under court order. This was another heart-wrenching revisiting of that day for so many of us. And it reminded us of the 9/11 Commission report that found that 911 operators did not have the right information to tell so many people. They told them to stay put, even though the FDNY had ordered both towers evacuated. We can only wonder how many more people may have survived.

Do you think this city has learned the lessons of that communications failure and taken the necessary steps to avoid a repeat of something like that?

Bob Kerrey: I would say yes. It has learned the lessons. As for taking the necessary steps, I think they are taking as many of the necessary steps as they possibly can. But we are not there yet. My understanding is it's going to be a couple of years before the 911 system itself is completely inter-operable. And nationally, we've not done what the 9/11 Commission recommended, in terms of building a seamless communication system nationwide.

And it gets back to what James said in the earlier question about how is this possible. Well, from the experience of the 9/11 Commission, as well as 12 years in the Senate, I tell citizens there are two kinds of oversight. And both of them are very weak today. Very weak. And it's the answer to your question, "How can this go on and the American people don't know about it?" Because we find out about things through these two pieces of oversight.

The first is the press and frankly, the press are increasingly easy to fool. If I'm holding a press conference today, if I was still in politics today, I can sort of count on you guys forgetting what I said yesterday. So I could say something completely different today and you'd write it all down and write the damn story.

The second is that in Congress there is also oversight. And as to Homeland Security, it's gotten much, much more difficult because you still have 88 different committees that Homeland Security has to report to, but they report to en masse. FEMA doesn't have a Fritz Hollings to hold hearings and examine it and consider itself to be a real partner for FEMA.

In addition … maybe you don't remember, but during 9/11 Commission deliberation, the 9/11 Commission was given, as is every committee of Congress, subpoena power. And we used that subpoena power. We issued the subpoenas on a couple of occasions, we threatened to issue subpoenas on a couple of occasions. And what that produced is, the executive branch delivered the documents and delivered the witnesses. And absent that willingness to issue the subpoenas … and the only committee in the past five years that has done that is John McCain's Indian Affairs Committee and that produced the Abramoff information. So remember that if Congress

threatens to issue subpoenas, you will get vastly better oversight.

But even if it does, as long as you've got this monstrous agency, Homeland Security, with the same committees trying to do its oversight, it's possible therefore for the executive branch, based on what I said in the beginning, to basically say whatever they want. And the press will write it down. "Hey, we are in much better shape than we were two years ago. We've done the following things. Come on, I'll show you the bells and whistles. Blah, blah, blah." And you don't know what the heck to say in your story the next day.

Brian Lehrer: We will pick up on that with Mr. Ervin in a minute, for the national level. But staying local for a second, Senator Kerrey, the city is still not prepared with a 911 system. And of course, there are other problems of communications inter-operability, like the police radios and fire radios not being able to talk to each other.

Do you think that the city is similarly unaccountable and similarly irresponsible?

Bob Kerrey: No, I don't think it's similar. I think that the mayor and the fire chief and the police chief … it's a completely different world than it was prior to 9/11. I think they are doing all they can but I think they have not closed the gap.

I will say it again, the 911 communication itself is not where it needs to be. We do not have the kind of seamless communication system we need.

The feds are still requiring us to beg for more money than we should. We ship a buck twenty-four to Washington, D.C., for every dollar we get back and we have to request money on the same basis as East Puckerbrush, Idaho? Come on. We've been attacked twice with three additional attempts on the city of New York that were explicitly interrupted. We're the media capital of the world. We're the financial capital of the world. We have, in this city, some of the most significant symbols of freedom in the entire country. If this country gets attacked again, the likelihood is it's going to get attacked in New York City. And my view is, until the New York City area is a line in the defense budget, we are always going to be short. Because the taxpayers of this city are already shouldering a disproportionate share of the burden for national security.

OVERSHADOWED BY TERRORISM

Brian Lehrer: Mr. Ervin, do you think we are actually less safe with the Department of Homeland Security than we would have been had it never been created and the government just focused on the tasks of improving security, rather than the bureaucracy of it, after 9/11?

Clark Kent Ervin: I think that's a very good question and I'm afraid I have to give you a complicated answer.

On the one hand, to be fair, I think we must say that there have been marginal improvements in every aspect of security: aviation security, improvements even in emergency preparedness, which is what we are here to talk about today. But having said that, I think it's also fair to say that we are less secure to this extent, because a number of people think that really the only thing you need to do is to either create a new governmental structure or to reorganize, in order to solve what is essentially a fundamental political problem…a lack of will to attack it. And I think the fact, as I said, we have a Department of Homeland Security that has led people to believe that we are safer than we are.

The Department of Homeland Security needs effective leadership, it needs more money and it needs accountability. If it has those things, it can work. If it lacks those things, it won't work and America will be less safe as a result.

Brian Lehrer: Mr. Brown, same question.

Michael Brown: Oh, let me tell you, in 2003, I wrote a memo to Secretary Ridge that said, "If you continue down this path of separating preparedness from response, you will have another Hurricane Andrew and the president will have to send somebody in to clean it up."

In 2004, I sent a memo that said, "Look, FEMA's budget is teetering on disaster. I have 500 slots that I can't fill. I'm putting acting people into leadership positions because I can't get people to come in the organization. And you're continuing to strip out the training and exercise dollars." I asked for $100 million to do catastrophic disaster planning. My argument was to use New Orleans as the first place that I wanted to do catastrophe planning, because it was the perfect scenario of what could happen if everything went wrong.

That money was given to me to start the planning. And we did a tabletop exercise and then the money was cut and we were never able to implement what we learned from that tabletop exercise. So the department's structure itself has lent to this marginalization of FEMA to where those predictions I made in 2003 and 2004 and then again to Chertoff in 2005, that it would ultimately fail, to be true. I just didn't want it to occur on my watch.

Brian Lehrer: Do you think that FEMA can do its job on non-terrorism emergencies as part of the homeland security department at all? Or do you think—and I think you may have suggested this in the past—that its non-terrorism functions are getting too swallowed up by everyone's obsession with terrorism preparedness?

Michael Brown: It has been totally swallowed up. Look, I was at FEMA in 2001 when we responded to 9/11. And I think, as James Lee would agree, we did an excellent job in that disaster. And we did an excellent job in the some 500 disasters since then. But what has happened is, there's been such a focus on terrorism to the detriment of emergency management that that's what is causing the failure. We have to do both.

"You cannot cut … emergency response dollars every year and expect that it is going to have the effect of improving your security and your ability to respond to emergencies."

— Baltimore Mayor Martin O'Malley

Brian Lehrer: Mr. Witt, same question.

James Lee Witt: I am going to answer two different ways. One, first of all, I think Secretary Chertoff is a very smart and a fine man. But I don't care if it's Secretary Chertoff or anyone who's following him and I don't care how smart they are or how outrageous they might be. I just want to say this: as long as the Department of Homeland Security has 22 federal agencies, 180,000 employees, it's going to be impossible to make it function. Impossible! And the communications that the Senator was talking about….

Right now, the Department of Homeland Security is spending $40 billion a year. I think they sent out $6 billion to fire and police for communications and equipment. Now then, you've got fire departments, police departments, emergency management, EMTs, paramedics—all have their own radio systems, whether it's 700 megahertz, 800 megahertz or whatever it may be. And here you've got people that cannot talk to each other. I had one police chief and a sheriff tell me, "How do your deputies communicate?" And they said, "We agree to meet in a parking lot and roll our window down." This is a serious problem in our country, because when they responded to 9/11 here in New York and at the Pentagon, you had Maryland, Virginia, D.C., everybody responding. And guess what? Not anyone could talk to each other.

Now, I told them, I said, "Here's what I would do. I would bring in the private sector and I would say, 'We have a problem of inoperability. We need the private sector to help us fix this.'" And we are spending all these billions and yet, guess what? We have no national standards of what it should be—or what we should be buying towards. It just doesn't make sense.

MICHAEL BROWN'S HINDSIGHT

Brian Lehrer: Is there anything that you would do differently, had you had Hurricane Katrina to do over?

Michael Brown: Absolutely. I think one thing I would have done, and it actually crossed my mind, was quitting about three days after Hurricane Katrina made landfall and making a big to do publicly about how things were not working.

Brian Lehrer: You were about the resign anyway at that time, were you not?

Michael Brown: Yes, I had planned to resign in July. Don't ask my wife about this, because she will shoot me. But I had planned to resign in July, because I was not able to get the solutions in place that I wanted to get. But for a whole host of reasons, I had to put that meeting off at the White House until Labor Day. Great timing, right? At the end of the day, we have to recognize that the only thing that we could do in this country as a citizen is speak up when it comes time to speak up and tell the truth.

What I would have done differently is I would have asked for the army sooner. Rather than just saying to [New Orleans Mayor Ray] Nagin and [Louisiana Governor Kathleen] Blanco, "Please do the mandatory evacuations earlier," I would have just turned to Secretary [of Defense Donald] Rumsfeld and said, "They are not going to do it. I need you and I need the Department of Transportation to go in and do it for them." And just force that upon them.

I think the other thing I would have done is I would have been much more honest and open with the American public about how cataclysmic this disaster was. I think the Senator and I know James … all the people here can talk about the talking points we get in Washington when you stand in front of an audience. And what I should have done was said, "Time out. The governor and I are having a difficult time making this work. This disaster covers 90,000 square miles. It's not working at the local level, it's not working too well at the state level. We can't get a unified command structure put in place because it is so widespread. You are going to have to bear with us while we do the lifesaving efforts."

That would have taken the focus off everything and put the focus on what the National Guard was doing, what the urban search and rescue teams were doing—what they were doing to save people that could not or would not get out of New Orleans. It would have changed the focus entirely, because we would have gotten away from all the spin and just gotten to the blasted truth about what was going on.

ASSIGNING RESPONSIBILITY

Brian Lehrer: Senator Kerrey, you look very pensive. What are you thinking?

Bob Kerrey: Well, I was actually thinking about what I was going to be doing for lunch. *[laughter]*

Brian Lehrer: Finally, an honest politician. *[laughter]*

Bob Kerrey: I think, first of all, Michael Brown messed up a lot of our lives because when we could blame you it was a hell of a lot easier. And then he comes back and gives us all this complicated stuff. I wish you had just gone off and let us continue to blame you. *[laughter]*

I think the person that you have to think about in all this is the President of the United States. *[applause and cheers]*

In two moments that the people of the United States of America remember in the last four or five years, the president didn't respond to the facts. The 9/11 report, in Chapter 8, five Republicans and five Democrats said this: "In the summer of 2001, in spite of repeated warnings that Al Qaeda was going to attack inside the United States of America, including the famous August sixth presidential daily briefing that had the headline, 'Bin Laden determined to attack inside the United States'—not historical, delivered by two Central Intelligence Agency analysts who were terrified that it was going to happen any day soon—the government of the United States of America did nothing." Period. That's the sentence.

Did they warn local law enforcement? No. Did they tighten airport security? No. Did they round up the FBI and the FAA and say, "We've got to do something"? No. Did nothing, period.

In Katrina, we now know when the president came to the American people at a press conference and said, as he did, "Nobody could have forecasted that airplanes were going to crash into the buildings." We now know that people were forecasting that. He said, "Nobody could have predicted that these levees were going to be breached." *[laughter]*

And we now see him being told that the levees were going to be breached.

Michael Brown: By me.

Bob Kerrey: By you. *[laughter]*

And when you are facing a disaster of this size, of this proportion, the only person who can rally the considerable resources of the government, regardless of what the structure is or what the budget is or any other thing, is the commander in chief. And in two big events, in the past five years, he did nothing. *[applause]*

Brian Lehrer: Mayor O'Malley, you have been known to say, "When citizens dial 911, it's a local call. The phone call doesn't go to Congress or the White House." That's a positive act of taking responsibility. But has Katrina or 9/11, the New York experience or the New Orleans experience, helped to clarify anything for you in all the discussion afterwards about what really is the city's job, what really is the state's job and

what really is Washington's job? Because there's been so much blame shifting and back and forth on that.

Martin O'Malley: A lot of us have been thinking, talking about that … how we make federalism work to fulfill these responsibilities and these new needs that we have. After Katrina and after September 11th, I think every American city looked at their own emergency plans, looked at what they were doing and asked themselves, "How can we do this better?" And some of us … I will never forget the day after September 11th, I couldn't get any sort of return call or get a call into anyone in Washington. And a friend of mine, a former U.S. Senator, a colleague of yours, Gary Hart from Colorado, was who I finally got on the phone. And he said, "Why on earth are you calling Washington for answers?" *[laughter]*

And he said, "They will be 30 to 40 years catching up with this reality. You need to get the smartest people you can in your city to form your own, in essence, Baltimore security cabinet, and start moving. Because your people are depending on you to do this."

I think the basic responsibility for these…. There are no federal firefighters, as such. It's the local police and the local first responders. It's the mayors. It's the leaders of the big metro economies that are the targets in this new type of war, that are the ones who can rally together that local response. And really, only they can do it. But I do think the state needs to set standards and support local coordination and local government. But there is a fundamental responsibility in our Constitution assigned to our federal government, and it is the call to provide for the common defense. And we cannot do this well if the federal government is not willing to invest more rather than less in providing for the common defense.

Brian Lehrer: Do you want to see the military deployed more quickly and easily? Mr. Chertoff seems to have indicated he might want to see that.

Martin O'Malley: Oh, I sure do. If my city were wiped out, if I had no ability to communicate, if the civil authorities couldn't even stay in touch with their fire and police, you bet you, I want the federal government to come in and save lives in my city.

THE INTELLIGENT INVESTMENT

Brian Lehrer: Former Homeland Security Department Inspector General Clark Kent Ervin has a new book coming out, called *Open Target: Where America is Vulnerable to Attack.* And Mr. Ervin, let me ask you something about what I understand will be in that book. And that is that you will recommend things like further securing the ports, airlines, soft targets such as stadiums, and critical infrastructure like mass transit and water supplies. That is a lot of priorities and we could spend the entire national treasury on each, I'm sure.

So how do we prioritize when there are so many different ways that a determined terrorist could attack us?

Clark Kent Ervin: Well, it all comes down, at the end of the day, it seems to me, to intelligence. You are quite right that we can't do everything. So we have to get better at figuring out exactly what the threats are. The problem there is, like I explained in the book, is that the Department of Homeland Security, believe it or not, is but a bit player at best in the intelligence community. There is a unit in the Department of Homeland Security that ostensibly is its intelligence center, called Information Analysis. But inexplicably, months after the department was created, the administration created two competing organizations: one called the Terrorist Screening Center, led by the FBI, to consolidate the different terrorist watch lists, and the other led by the CIA, called first the Terrorist Threat Integration Center and now the National Counter-Terrorism Center, that serves as the synthesis for all Homeland Security-related intelligence.

The upshot now is that really the only intelligence role Homeland Security plays is serving as a funnel from the rest of the federal intelligence community to state and local officials as to what the threats are.

We know from the summer of last year here in New York that even that doesn't work very well. You will recall that intelligence was passed on by Homeland Security to Mayor Bloomberg and Commissioner Kelly about a subway threat. Iraqi agents, apparently. Which turned out to be a hoax.

The problem is, though, that at the same time the administration and the department was passing on this information, the department was pooh-poohing it and criticizing Mayor Bloomberg and Commissioner Kelly for acting on it. You can't have it both ways. Either it's good enough intelligence to pass on—in which case the local officials need to act on it—or it shouldn't be passed on at all.

Brian Lehrer: But how do we prioritize? Mayor O'Malley, how do you prioritize?

Martin O'Malley: I think what you would do first … the various things that you rattled off: the water infrastructure, the interoperable communications, all these various things—you've got to start with where they intersect with the most likely threats. We know with New York having been attacked several times, we know with the nation's capital, we know that the largest top ten cities in America make up the largest part of our economy. And it's where our population is. So it's always so easy in these Senate appropriations hearings … you go on forever talking about the priorities and the things that we haven't done to even make progress on each of them. And all it takes is for one senator, usually from Alaska, to say, "We can't possibly protect every square inch of American soil. It's a vast continent and it would drain the national treasury." Well, why don't we start with trying to protect New York, Washington, Chicago and Los Angeles? *[applause]*

Brian Lehrer: But I'm going to press you on this. Protect them from what?

Martin O'Malley: You have to protect the various … we are the proverbial boy closing the barn door once the horse is out. We've made an investment. We've made progress on airline security. Are we waiting for a container bomb to come through our ports before we realize, "Golly, only five percent is all we are inspecting. Maybe we should be doing better than five percent." *[applause]*

You have to look at the threats. Everyone knows what they are. The 9/11 Commission made recommendations. You lay them out, you look at where it intersects with the greatest population, the most likely targets from the intelligence and the past. And you start making the investments. You do it every year. You establish national goals. And you roll. And there are some ways to do this. You can put a fee on every container. And that might mean that, yes, Wal-Mart might have to pay a little more for each container with the stuff that they import. But we will be a safer nation because of it.

Brian Lehrer: That means we all will have to pay for it eventually.

Martin O'Malley: Yes, we will. And you know what, I don't think we are so devoid of civic responsibility and love of country that we are not willing to pay a little more to protect New York and Los Angeles and Washington and Baltimore.

BUSH BASHING?

Martin O'Malley: I have been chairing the Task Force on Homeland Security for the Conference of Mayors. I have a Republican co-chair. We have issued report after report after report with recommendations not unlike the recommendations out of the 9/11 Commission and the rest of the things. The fact of the matter is that many years after September 11th, we have been seeing a declining investment in the capacity of our cities to protect themselves. We do not see this sort of progress on inter-operable communications, on bio-surveillance systems, on personal protective equipment, on vulnerability assessments, investments in drills and exercises.

These are the facts. This is not a question of whether you like the president or you don't like the president. This is about whether or not we have made the investments to protect and improve the security and preparedness of our major cities. And clearly, we have not. And I think all Republicans and Democrats agree that we have not made the progress that we are capable of making. And we need to not be intimidated by the easy retort, "Aren't you bashing the president? Why do you hate America? Don't you understand we're at war?" ut instead point out the fact that we are not investing in America's security.

And until we do that, we are not going to be a lot safer. ◆

PART ONE: RESPONSE

POLITICAL STORM: THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL PUZZLE OF HURRICANE KATRINA

BY DONALD F. KETTL

When Hurricane Katrina plowed through the Gulf Coast, government officials at all levels were simply overwhelmed. Louisiana Governor Kathleen Babineaux Blanco, in her first phone call to the president, asked for "all federal firepower." She continued, "I meant everything. Just send it. Give me planes, give me boats …"[1] In New Orleans, Mayor Ray Nagin was blunt. "I need everything," he said. When help did not arrive quickly, he condemned federal officials. He said, "They're thinking small, man. And this is a major, major, major deal. And I can't emphasize it enough, man. This is crazy." Federal officials told him that help was on the way. Nagin countered, "They're not here." Frustrated, he added, "Now get off your asses and do something, and let's fix the biggest goddamn crisis in the history of this country."[2] FEMA officials countered that they were in fact speeding help to the Gulf and insisted that the delays were the fault of state and local officials who failed to submit proper and clear requests.

Those days were chaotic, but from the clouds of the storm two things became clear. One is that, after having promised the American public that government would learn the lessons so painfully taught on September 11, government at all levels flunked its first big test. The federal government created the Department of Homeland Security. Billions of federal dollars flowed to the states to improve their readiness, and state and local governments launched their own plans. But when the new system confronted one of the very problems it was designed to solve—with advance notice, in fact, that the storm was on the way—it failed. This failure unquestionably cost the lives of some Americans. Stranded New Orleanians at the Superdome suffered for lack of food, water and health care, while others throughout the Gulf drowned when the water rose.

The sheer scale of the disaster, combined with the unprecedented media coverage, made this a classic blame-game story. The failure was clear and inescapable. Who was responsible?

From this basic question comes a stark conclusion. The pattern of failure was so broad that the only possible conclusion is that the system itself failed. When in 1986 the space shuttle Challenger exploded on takeoff, investigators isolated the problem to a small rubber seal on one of the solid rocket motors. They concluded, however, that NASA itself was troubled and needed a fundamental fix. When in 2003 the Columbia disintegrated on its return to Florida, investigators traced the problem to a small hole in the shuttle's wing—and to the fact that NASA's fix had not held. The 9/11 Commission concluded that the terrorist attacks that day stemmed from "a failure of imagination."[3] But none of these problems, each of which shook the very core of American society, rivals the scale of Katrina's devastation or the breadth of government's failure to respond to it. Quite simply, the government's bungled response to Katrina was the biggest administrative failure in American history.

If 9/11 was the product of "a failure of imagination," the House Select Committee investigating the government's response to Katrina concluded, the post-hurricane breakdown was "a failure of initiative." Moreover, the committee's report argued, "Our investigation revealed that Katrina was a national failure, an abdication of the most solemn obligation to provide for the common welfare. At every level—individual, corporate, philanthropic, and governmental—we failed to meet the challenge that was Katrina. In this cautionary tale, all the little pigs built houses of straw."[4] The Senate Homeland Security Committee's report was equally devastating. Entitled *A Nation Still Unprepared*, the report concluded that the problem flowed from "the failure of government at all levels to plan, prepare for and respond aggressively to the storm."[5] Even the White House's own report admitted that the nation's governments "were put to the ultimate test, and came up short."[6]

The story of system failure highlights the soft underbelly of American federalism. Katrina's damage was so widespread and its destruction so powerful that no single organization, level of government or sector of society could possibly respond effectively. Responsibility was broad, stretching from the Red Cross to the Salvation Army, from federal officials in FEMA to emergency response experts in the Coast Guard,

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[1]   CNN, "American Morning," September 2, 2005, at http://transcripts.cnn.com/transcripts/0509/02/ltm.03.html. (Accessed January 19, 2006.)

[2]   U.S. House of Representatives Select Bipartisan Committee to Investigate the Preparation for and Response to Hurricane Katrina, *A Failure of Initiative*, 109th Congress, February 15, 2006.

[3]   National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report*, July 22, 2004, p. 336.

[4]   U.S. House of Representatives, *A Failure of Initiative*.

[5]   U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, *A Nation Still Unprepared*, May 2006.

[6]   The White House, *The Federal Response to Hurricane Katrina: Lessons Learned*, February 2006, p. 1.

from federal experts to state and local officials on the front lines. Response demanded coordinated action. But analysts across the spectrum who examined the response to Katrina pointed to weak—or non-existent—command and control. Who is in charge if everyone is in charge? If everyone is in charge, is anyone in charge? If no one is in charge, is effective response to Katrina-like events—not to mention other emergencies ranging from avian flu to a major terrorist attack—possible? In short, is American government capable of providing for the common welfare in a world of 21st century problems?

THE POLITICS OF BLAME

The storm grew out of unusual conditions that conspired to maximize the damage. So, too, did the political storm: a beleaguered mayor, marooned in a hotel without electric power, reduced to pleading for help on CNN; a governor, calling for "everything," wondering what part of "everything" federal officials did not understand; FEMA, refocused from a strategy of responding to all disasters, natural and man-made, to a focus on responding to terrorist events and finding itself flatfooted; and a broader network of organizations in civil society who were simply—sometimes literally—swamped by the disaster. Nothing fit anyone's routines, everyone had to do extraordinary things, no one could respond completely and people inevitably suffered. It was a perfect political storm.

In a survey conducted just days after Katrina struck, the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press asked Americans how they viewed government's response to the storm. When asked whether President Bush did all he could, 53 percent of Republicans agreed. However, 85 percent of Democrats and 71 percent of independents believed he could have done more. Thus, at the national level, the public response broke sharply along partisan lines. From Bush's point of view, the response was dangerous, for it separated him from the moderates on whom he had relied for political capital.

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However, when Americans were asked about the response of state and local governments, there was little partisan difference in the answers. Among Republicans, 54 percent rated the response of state and local governments "fair" or "poor." For Democrats, the figure was 51 percent, and for independents, 52 percent.

This variation in perception dramatically shaped the blame game. For Bush administration officials, the winning political hand was to blame state and local officials for bungling the response. Most Americans agreed with this perspective. The White House calculated that this strategy could prevent the president from being pulled into a partisan cleavage. After all, any focus on the federal response promised to raise much tougher political challenges for the Bush administration. Thus the president and his senior staffers worked hard to fight off a 9/11-style commission investigating the roles of FEMA and the Department of Homeland Security. Nonetheless, the House and Senate each launched their own separate investigations. The White House wrote its own report. The Government Accountability Office produced a growing blizzard of studies. And state and local governments produced their own after-action reports to assess what worked right and what went wrong.

The administration's aggressive fight to avoid a single national investigation thus produced an ongoing series of investigations, which mirrored the initial confusing response to the storm. Analysis of the response fragmented among the various players just as the initial response splintered along organizational and political boundaries. The welter of investigations produced a richer stream of information than would have been the case with a single study. On the other hand, the proliferation of analyses meant that no clear consensus emerged on just what went wrong—or what ought to happen to prevent the problems from recurring.

The 9/11 Commission had demonstrated just how useful a single, powerful investigative voice could be. With Katrina, there was no such voice. So not only did the intergovernmental system diffuse responsibility for results, it also vastly complicated the process of apportioning responsibility and devising new, more effective strategies. That, in turn, increased the risk that the lessons Katrina so painfully taught would not be learned in time to prevent a similarly flawed response in the future.

STRATEGIES FOR RESPONSE

Americans love the rich traditions of their federal system. After all, we invented the modern approach to federalism in order to address the tough issues that threatened to shred the new union before it even had a chance to get started. It has served the nation remarkably well, especially by providing multiple venues in which citizens can press for solutions to their problems. It has often allowed the nation to bend without breaking under the cross-pressure of a remarkably diverse citizenry.

Nothing fit anyone's routines, everyone had to do extraordinary things, no one could respond completely and people inevitably suffered. It was a perfect political storm.

Its manifest virtues, however, do not include the capacity to respond, effectively and decisively, to crises like Katrina. To be sure, Katrina would surely have swamped the capacity of any system of any kind. But it is equally clear that different parts of the system tripped over themselves in the days after Katrina struck. A system designed in the 18th century to accommodate cross-cutting political pressures is, not surprisingly, a poor match for the most complex and difficult of 21st century problems. We are a nation swarming with political and administrative boundaries, yet we are struggling to cope with problems that defy boundaries. And we have no easy, natural system to use as a backup.

The situation is certainly not hopeless, however. Of all the painful lessons learned on 9/11, one tremendous success has gone largely undiscovered. The emergency response at the Pentagon was a remarkably effective, well-coordinated effort, involving all levels of government and resulting in many saved lives. In fact, just two days before American Airlines flight 77 exploded against the Pentagon, the region's first responders had worked through a disaster simulation, although their Sunday scenario was not the same as what actually occurred the following Tuesday. For the key players—the local fire, police and emergency medical services; federal agencies including the FBI; and the state governments of Virginia and Maryland—the attack allowed them to put into action the work they had been doing for years. Intergovernmental, interagency coordination happened, easily and with little fanfare, because it was the way these key local officials already thought about things; it was the way they had practiced for crises and it proved to be the way they responded when a crisis arrived. Compared with so many post-disaster investigations filled with so much bad news, the Arlington County after-action report on 9/11 makes for remarkably happy reading.[7]

Katrina and the 9/11 emergency response to the Pentagon attack teach two complementary lessons. The first is that America's system of federalism unquestionably complicates

7   Arlington County, *After-Action Report on the Response to the September 11 Terrorist Attack on the Pentagon*, Arlington, VA, 2002.

the nation's ability to respond to large, important events that demand strong, coordinated solutions. As the world becomes more interconnected and parts of the nation more interdependent, these complications carry far greater risk to the common weal. The boundaries created as the nation grew do not always match 21st century problems. Americans, quite rightly, need to reckon the substantial costs of federalism as well as its benefits.

There are numerous disincentives for collaboration. They begin with the "not my problem" response, and given the complexity of American federalism it is always easy for any official to point the finger of responsibility at someone else. Add to that the difficulties of ensuring effective coordination and the technical difficulties of responding to any complicated situation. In such a high-stakes, cross-cutting environment, effective action is hard and the political risks for sticking one's neck out can be enormous. These factors conspire to create a natural instinct for all players to keep their heads down, which fundamentally reduces the chances for effective boundary-spanning action.

THE LEADERSHIP SOLUTION

The other lesson is that skillful leaders can master these complexities to provide effective leadership. As officials from local, state and federal agencies proved in Arlington County on the morning of September 11, the complex organizational fabric can also provide interlocking strength. For generations, they knew that the national capital would be the target of any major attack by foreign powers. They drilled for that possibility during World War II, and they redoubled their efforts afterwards when the threat of nuclear weapons made a surprise attack with large casualties a genuine threat.

Few regions of the nation have such a complex jurisdictional arrangement, with separate police forces for the three branches of government and several executive branch agencies, plus additional federal law enforcement organizations like the FBI and Secret Service. Add to that

America's system of federalism unquestionably complicates the nation's ability to respond to large, important events that demand strong, coordinated solutions.

the state and local governments of Maryland and Virginia and the peculiar run of the Potomac, which slices through the region and multiplies the jurisdictional problems. The Arlington County response proved a model on 9/11 because officials had long anticipated—and planned for—an attack; because all officials realized that only concerted action could possibly hope to provide an effective response; and because they had long practiced their response in drills and simulations. They taught the most important lessons of emergency response: there is no time to build partnerships in the middle of a crisis, and crisis management works far better on the foundation of longstanding, well-practiced relationships.

In the case of Arlington County, a shared sense of common problems coupled with an equally clear commitment to solve them helped overcome the system's natural lethargy. The same forces, in most communities, have provided the foundation for the 911 emergency response system. While local governments often have a difficult time cooperating on many issues, no one wants to allow a house to burn down at the intersection of two adjoining communities or to risk the death of an accident victim unlucky enough to be struck down at a "not my problem" boundary. The incentive that works best to fuel needed collaboration is the mutual understanding of important problems that must be solved, and a mutual recognition that only by working together can solutions occur. This approach—in Arlington County, in 911 systems and in other forms of inter-jurisdictional, inter-organizational collaboration—helps fuel the leadership required to solve the problems that federalism's complexity cannot effectively address.

The steps required to produce such collaborative strength require uncommon acts by officials, both elected and in the bureaucracy. Collaboration requires thinking broadly, taking steps that are often risky in the normal political climate and investing energy in processes like the intergovernmental drills that occupied officials in Arlington County on a weekend, just two days before an actual terrorist attack. It requires, in short, understanding the fact that only shared responsibility can ensure that citizens' needs do not slip through intergovernmental cracks.

If the federal system itself is not an obstacle to effective action, then the question is how best to strengthen incentives for doing what is hard but which, nevertheless, must be done if we are to avoid suffering needlessly from more Katrina-

The most important lessons of emergency response: there is no time to build partnerships in the middle of a crisis, and crisis management works far better on the foundation of longstanding, well-practiced relationships.

like crises. What drove officials in Arlington was a focus on accountability within their own jurisdictions and agencies, but also an obsession with the need to work collaboratively on the mission they shared, beyond the boundaries of their jurisdictions and agencies. They did not replace one system of accountability with another. They broadened their notion of accountability to include performance of their mission as well as compliance with rules and procedures.

That is a hard process within American federalism, for which there are few incentives and an enormous collection of disincentives (from "not my problem" to "I'm too busy with my job") in normal times. It is often only in crises like Katrina that we discover just how important such behavior truly is. But if we wait until a crisis to begin planning for it, it will be too late. That is the central lesson of governmental responsibility that Katrina, so painfully, has taught. ◆

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COMMUNICATIONS AND CATASTROPHE: BUILDING RESILIENT COMMUNITIES FOR DISASTER RESPONSE

BY LOUISE K. COMFORT

The centrality of communications to effective mitigation of and response to natural disasters has long been recognized by practicing emergency managers and experienced hazards researchers (California Office of Emergency Services, 1994; Mileti, 1999; Comfort, 1999; Waugh, 2000). Yet the fragility of communications infrastructure in practice determines the level of inter-organizational performance in actual disaster operations.

Nowhere was this premise more evident than in the halting intergovernmental response to Hurricane Katrina, beginning on August 23, 2005, when Katrina was first identified as a tropical storm forming in the Caribbean, to its final disintegration over Quebec and New Brunswick, Canada on August 31, 2005. The course of the storm over those eight days crossed the jurisdictional boundaries of at least nine states, three federal regions and international borders within the Caribbean and with Mexico and Canada.[1] The socio-technical communications infrastructure needed to support inter-organizational coordination across this large, complex region exceeded the capacity of the existing patchwork of communications infrastructure largely managed by private companies.

In the aftermath of this devastating event, the challenge to managers and researchers is to acknowledge communications as a primary requirement for collective action and to build a communications infrastructure that enables personnel at different levels of authority to adapt their actions reciprocally in accordance with rapidly changing conditions. Building capacity for collective action for broad regions frequently exposed to threats, such as the Gulf Coast hit by Hurricane Katrina, requires both technical investment and social organization.

COMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE IN DISASTER RESPONSE

The need for interoperable communications systems in disaster response is well-known. It has long been identified as a primary requirement for successful performance among first-response agencies (Comfort, 2005). Given the costly breakdown in communications between the New York City Police and Fire Departments in response to the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001, interoperability is now included as a priority in the National Incident Management System (FEMA, 2004). Yet the task of mobilizing a coherent, coordinated warning and response system for Hurricane Katrina was massively complex. Such a coordinated system was regrettably absent among the range of local, state and federal organizations responding to this catastrophic storm.

The persistent difficulty of designing and implementing communications infrastructure to support the timely exchange of information among multiple jurisdictions and organizations in rapidly escalating disaster operations is caused by both technical and organizational constraints. Technically, there is a scarcity of bandwidth for radio communications and concern for the security of critical information that unauthorized persons may access over airwaves. Organizationally, first response organizations are reluctant to share scarce bandwidth with personnel outside their immediate range of operations. This reluctance intensifies across jurisdictional boundaries, when local organizations need to communicate secure information with state or federal organizations. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, this situation was compounded by the extraordinary destruction the storm wreaked on the physical communications infrastructure itself.

Building capacity for collective action for broad regions frequently exposed to threats, such as the Gulf Coast hit by Hurricane Katrina, requires both technical investment and social organization.

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[1] The National Hurricane Center reported the course of the storm as passing through Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Tennessee and Georgia, and moving through the eastern Great Lakes region of Illinois, Michigan and Ohio before finally breaking up over the province of Quebec. R. Knabb, J. Rhome and D. Brown, *Tropical Cyclone Report, Hurricane Katrina, August 23–30, 2005,* National Hurricane Center, December 20, 2005.

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In New Orleans, for example, ordinary telephone service was cut by the hurricane-force winds and rising water. Electrical transmission lines were down, and no electronic communications were functioning. Cellular phone base stations were flooded, rendering cell phones inoperable. Satellite phones were nonfunctional during and immediately after the storm. In the first three days following Katrina's landfall, there was essentially no reliable means of communication among local, state and federal organizations seeking to coordinate their actions from different jurisdictional levels of authority. Valiant efforts were made to establish communications but the units were either too large—such as the FEMA mobile communications trailer that could not be moved over damaged roadways into the flooded city of New Orleans—or too dependent on specific operating conditions—such as satellite phones—to function under the severe devastation created by the disaster. In its review of disaster operations, the New Orleans Police Department confirmed that it "did not have any real communication system within the city." (*The Times-Picayune*, September 12, 2005).

Only on September 4, 2005, when federal troops arrived under the authority of the Department of Defense, were effective communications units established in the disaster-affected region. Prior to that time, organizations were seriously limited by their inability to communicate vital information. Emergency responders sent messages by boat, courier or whatever means were available to exchange information. Coast Guard helicopters had to land in order to communicate with rescue personnel on the scene. A large proportion of the inter-organizational collapse was due to the lack of a "common operating picture" that could only have been developed with effective, timely communications.

Such communications require that a sociotechnical infrastructure be established and workable prior to a hazardous event, with alternate routing and back-up plans to support innovative strategies contingent upon the specific conditions of the disaster.

DISCREPANCIES BETWEEN PLANS AND PRACTICE

The sobering contrast between carefully written and rehearsed disaster operations plans and the actual performance of multi-organizational response systems under the stress of a catastrophic event like Hurricane Katrina demonstrates the limits of human capacity to absorb new information—especially dissonant information—as well as the need to review the technical and organizational requirements for supporting disaster operations in large-scale events.

Hurricane Katrina provided the first major test of the newly established Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the revised National Response Plan and National Incident Management System (FEMA, 2004), which were intended to make the nation safer and more secure. DHS, hastily assembled following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, had kept its focus on terrorism. Consequently, the personnel selected for leadership positions in the new department had little experience in natural disasters and even less scientific knowledge of the conditions that contribute to their formation and escalation. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), which had been an independent agency with cabinet status during the 1990s, was folded into the larger DHS under the Homeland Security Act of 2002, along with 21 other federal agencies. The act was passed by both houses of Congress and signed into law by President George W. Bush on November 25, 2002, as a bulwark for the nation against further terrorist attacks. Many experienced disaster managers left FEMA after this shift because they were reluctant to participate in dismantling the disaster mitigation programs—which were aimed at reducing risk *before* disaster occurs—that they had built.

In this climate of organizational redefinition and change, FEMA's capacity as coordinator of resources and response to communities at risk was seriously eroded through funding cuts for mitigation, management and training for natural disasters. Although DHS formally adopted an all-hazards approach to planning for disaster response, the capacity to implement those plans was not developed.

At least five major discrepancies between policy and practice were apparent in the intergovernmental response system that evolved following Hurricane Katrina. None of these discrepancies is new. All have been acknowledged and documented many times before (Mileti, 1999; Holland, 1995; Comfort, 1999; Comfort, Hauskrecht and Lin, 2005). These five discrepancies include:

- the gap between the intellectual capacity to recognize complex interactions among the physical environment of cities, their built infrastructure and the social and economic vulnerabilities that generate risk and the organizational capacity to reduce that risk;

- the gap between the construction of effective infrastructure systems that integrate lifeline systems of electrical power, communications, transportation, gas, water and sewage distribution and the investment and resources needed to maintain these technical systems;

- the gap between organizational design for risk reduction and response and the investment in resources and training to enable personnel to carry out those intended functions;

- the gap between public perception of risk and the capacity to take actions to reduce risk at multiple levels, including the household, the workplace, the community and governmental authorities; and

- the gap between the diversity of actors and varied components in an emergency response system and the capacity to integrate their skills and knowledge into a coherent, effective emergency response system.

In the language of complexity theorists, Hurricane Katrina was a "symmetry-shattering event" (Prigogine and Stengers, 1984). That is, some events are so powerful that they shatter existing conceptions of social and political organization and create an opportunity for rearranging the components of society in a new way. Recognition that Katrina precipitated known vulnerabilities in the geography, infrastructure and capacity of the Gulf Coast cities which, unattended, led to extraordinary losses in lives and property[2] compels a re-examination of the conditions that led to this outcome. Such an inquiry is even more critical to a nation such as the United States, which commands the technical capacity, organizational skills and resources to reduce disaster risk. The consequences of this storm have been so massive, the costs so high, the flaws in public preparedness and management of risk so blatant, that no one can claim change is not needed. The difficult task is determining what that change should be and how it can address the known gaps in disaster risk management.

In order to do so, it is useful to document the kinds of actions that policymakers and emergency response agencies took in reference to Katrina, and when and under what conditions coordination failed. Looking for a daily record of actions undertaken to cope with this event, we conducted a content analysis of news reported in *The Times–Picayune*, the

Some events are so powerful that they shatter existing conceptions of social and political organization and create an opportunity for rearranging the components of society in a new way.

major New Orleans newspaper that continued publishing throughout the disaster, albeit from Baton Rouge. We identified organizations that participated in the response to Hurricane Katrina and the interactions among them. We used these data to characterize the response network and to analyze the relationships among the organizations, using the software program UCINET. This analysis, reported in an earlier article, may serve as a guide to redrawing strategies for protecting urban environments.

BUILDING RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

Four observations are significant from this analysis. First, the findings reveal a striking pattern of asymmetry in the communication process among the organizations participating in response operations. Despite the explicit intent to build collaborative relationships across jurisdictional levels, as stated in FEMA's National Response Plan and National Incident Management System (FEMA, 2004), the network of actors identified for the Katrina response system showed only modest levels of interaction across all four jurisdictional levels. The news reports document a higher degree of action at the local level, with federal agencies providing assistance directly to local agencies without coordinating their actions through state agencies. This pattern of performance makes it extremely difficult to develop the "common operating picture" of needs and resources that is so essential to effective emergency management.

Second, the severity of disruption in the communications infrastructure seriously hampered the responsible organizations' capacity to anticipate the level of destruction and to mobilize appropriate evacuation and sheltering activities. This failure illustrates the need to plan for alternative communications capacity that can be mobilized to support organizations engaged in disaster response. For

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[2] These losses have been cited elsewhere, but it is important to cite the figures again to note the scale of this disaster. The losses include: over 1300 dead; over 1.5 million displaced from their homes; over 60,000 homes destroyed; an estimated $300 billion to repair the infrastructure, rebuild homes and provide social assistance to those displaced from their homes, jobs and communities. *The New York Times*, August 26 – September 19, 2005.

example, the Telematics Research Laboratory at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, Canada, directed by Peter Anderson, has designed a compact, mobile emergency communications van that can be driven or airlifted into virtually any location. The van has a generator and back-up power supply, and can link via satellite to any global location. It is used in remote areas of Canada as well as urban environments under extreme conditions of weather and temperature.

Third, the information infrastructure needed to support organizational performance in a rapidly changing environment must be established prior to the disaster. The information needs for managing a disaster over a large regional scale escalate proportionally to the number of communities and the size of the communities exposed to risk. Creating a regional knowledge base for areas exposed to the same risk, such as hurricanes for the five states that ring the Gulf Coast, is fundamental to achieving coordination when disaster strikes. It is a long-term effort that requires a continuing commitment to update and upgrade the capacity of managers to function in their specific areas of responsibility while simultaneously adjusting their performance to the constraints and resources available in neighboring jurisdictions. Without current knowledge of both risks and resources, actual performance under the stress of a disaster is almost certain to fall flat.

Finally, given the complexity and cost of managing catastrophic disasters, it is critical to strengthen the capacity for self-organization at every level of management and operations. One can envision communication processes occurring more effectively along a diagonal that crosses jurisdictional and sectoral lines than in a standard hierarchical format. A well-designed communications and information infrastructure would contribute substantially to achieving the goal of self-organization in a national response system. Enabling communities to manage their own risk more efficiently and effectively needs to be established as a primary goal of disaster risk reduction. ◆

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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SOCIAL SERVICES IN A POST-DISASTER ZONE: CREATING A COORDINATING COLLABORATIVE OF NONPROFIT AGENCIES

BY JACK KRAUSKOPF

Organizations involved in disaster recovery have faced major and unanticipated challenges in responding to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and to Hurricane Katrina and the other Gulf Coast hurricanes in the late summer of 2005. These events were extraordinary, both because of their scale and because public and private disaster recovery organizations were initially unprepared to respond. Although Hurricane Katrina should not have been a surprise in the way that September 11 was, response mechanisms were overwhelmed by the needs created in both situations. What we have seen in the aftermath of these events is a process of adaptation—some of it productive, some dysfunctional—to attempt to meet the many and varied needs of people affected by disasters.

This paper focuses on the recovery phase—the period when mid- and longer-term needs emerge and human services organizations, in particular, attempt to respond to them. Since the major effect of Katrina was to disperse people who lost their homes, livelihoods and essential services, many of these needs are manifest in cities outside the Gulf region. To look at one microcosm of the human services response, the mechanisms created after September 11 in New York City formed part of the framework for assisting the approximately 2,500 hurricane victims who came to the area following Katrina.

Housing, jobs and assistance in dealing with the Federal Emergency Management Association (FEMA) and other government organizations were core needs that New York human services agencies—public and private—provided to evacuees from the Gulf. Many of these human services and government agencies had been involved in providing assistance to people affected by the World Trade Center attack.

How recovery agencies work together to identify needs, determine which organizations are responding to them and endeavor to fill service gaps shapes how well and quickly people are helped. Coordinating mechanisms established after September 11 in New York had mixed results in helping Katrina evacuees. The differences are worth describing and analyzing, since they may have relevance not only for past events but for future emergencies.

THE 9/11 UNITED SERVICES GROUP

The 9/11 United Services Group (USG) was created as a new nonprofit coordinating agency a few months after September 11, when it was clear that a system was needed to ensure that large numbers of human services agencies involved in disaster recovery in New York City and the region were working effectively with each other. State Attorney General Eliot Spitzer was highly critical of the initial response by the American Red Cross and other agencies, and leaders of the city's social services community saw the need to form a special organization to address the situation.

The USG functioned for approximately three years, from December 2001 to July 2004, when it became "dormant," retaining its board as a remobilization contingency but otherwise terminating operations. The Human Services Council of New York City (HSC), an umbrella organization representing 170 human services agencies, assumed the preparedness planning functions of USG, and the executive committee of the former USG board has functioned as the preparedness committee of HSC.

During its tenure, the USG coordinated the work of 40 human services agencies that were assisting people affected by the attack on the World Trade Center. Its board was comprised of executive directors and chief executives of New York's umbrella social services federations and large direct service providers, including the Red Cross, the Salvation Army and a group new to disaster response, Safe Horizon, a victim services agency that responded to needs generated by 9/11. Representatives of victims' families also served on the USG Board. Beyond the major religious and ethnic federations—Catholic Charities, UJA-Federation, Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies, Asian American Federation, Hispanic Federation, Black Agency Executives and United Neighborhood Houses—the network of member

> *Although Hurricane Katrina should not have been a surprise in the way that September 11 was, response mechanisms were overwhelmed by the needs created in both situations.*

agencies grew to include many smaller, community-based organizations that reached immigrants and other people with particular language and service needs.

The USG's methods of coordination included regular "case management" meetings of senior staff of the agencies providing services, facilitation of inter-agency information-sharing, identification of service gaps, planning and implementation of staff training, development of advocacy strategies and overall consensus decision making.

The heart of the operation was built around approximately 200 "service coordinators" who worked for the 40 organizations as frontline case managers. Many of the coordinators were supported by grants from the September 11 Fund, a pool created by the United Way and the New York Community Trust which ultimately spent more than $500 million in donated funds to assist 9/11 victims. They were trained jointly on a frequent basis during the recovery period to keep up with the ever-changing array of available benefits and services, techniques for working effectively with clients and identifying mental and emotional stress—and to develop a sense of shared commitment and problem-solving in jobs that were themselves highly stressful.

The service coordinators were also supported by a confidential database of client information developed with USG by IBM and vetted by attorneys for the participating organizations. This unprecedented sharing of information among service agencies after a disaster reduced the amount of multiple questions and documentation requirements imposed on people needing help in the immediate aftermath of September 11. It also provided staff with knowledge of what benefits clients had received and what else they might be eligible for. Separate online systems kept service coordinators updated about benefits, training opportunities and other information helpful to their work, and functioned as a guide to services available from a wide range of government and private organizations.

As USG phased out its operations, it addressed future preparedness by developing a memorandum of understanding with the New York City Office of Emergency Management to ensure that a network of human services agencies would be committed to responding to case management needs by working with city government to open and staff disaster assistance centers when needed, by an ongoing commitment to sharing client information on a confidential basis and by providing the means to disseminate resource and benefit information. Some of these preparedness mechanisms have been tested with the assistance agencies provided to Katrina victims who came to New York, with mixed results.

NEW YORK'S LESSONS LEARNED AND APPLIED

Some strategies have worked well. A disaster assistance center was opened quickly in the aftermath of Katrina by the New York City Office of Emergency Management in

How recovery agencies work together to identify needs, determine which organizations are responding to them and endeavor to fill service gaps shapes how well and quickly people are helped.

conjunction with other government agencies and key human services organizations, such as the Red Cross, the Salvation Army and Catholic Charities. It operated for several months at a location near the City College of New York campus in upper Manhattan, directing people to hotels and other housing, healthcare and social services, and was closed when the number of new Katrina-affected households coming to New York declined. The city's Department of Homeless Services (DHS) provided a network of emergency hotel placements, supported by FEMA funds and with DHS contractors providing services.

A network of agencies responding to Gulf region evacuees grew as time went on. The Human Services Council of New York, which had succeeded USG as the lead agency for preparedness planning, convened regular meetings of participating agencies. Many staff who had worked together after September 11 quickly formed productive working relationships in the post-Katrina period. A means to refer people to case managers was eventually developed and staffed by Catholic Charities, similar to the hotline operated by Safe Horizon after September 11. Outreach to Katrina evacuees living in New York also began in 2006.

Links have been made to the national Coordinated Assistance Network (CAN) that was created more than two years ago to promote information sharing and case management on a national basis in response to large-scale disasters. CAN is managed through the American Red Cross in Washington under the direction of a steering committee representing the Red Cross, the national Salvation Army, United Way of America, National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster, Alliance of Information and Referral Services, Safe Horizon and USG. Funding has been provided by the Lilly and Ford Foundations to enable CAN to develop information-sharing systems for agencies responding to disasters such as western wildfires, the 2004 Florida hurricanes and Hurricane Katrina. New York is one of six CAN pilot cities—the others being Washington, New

Orleans, Oklahoma City, San Francisco and Seattle—to enhance preparedness for future disasters.

In New York, where an estimated 2,500 people came from the Gulf region after Katrina, the capacity of human services and public agencies has been sufficient to meet the immediate needs of the evacuees, but there has not been the kind of dedicated funding to meet long-term housing, employment and mental health needs that many of these victims need. The services agencies met together regularly in coordinating group and case management meetings, and two well-attended training sessions were held for case managers in the network. A resource directory of services in New York was developed about six months after the hurricane and disseminated widely to the agencies.

But some preparedness strategies have not worked as well as desired. The city's disaster assistance center was meant to be staffed by designated volunteers from a group of 300 employees of social services agencies who had been trained as intake specialists in 2003 and 2004 by USG, the Red Cross, the Salvation Army and Safe Horizon. However, the updating and recall system for these volunteers failed to work after Katrina, and the staffing for the disaster center came instead from other government and nonprofit agency sources, including New York Cares, an organization that maintains lists of volunteers.

Although the national CAN information sharing system, which was based on the system USG developed for New York after 9/11, was available for agencies serving Katrina evacuees, it has been used only sporadically by New York human services agencies. CAN includes approximately two million active client records from throughout the country from the Red Cross, shelter providers, FEMA and other agency sources committed to protecting confidentiality and ensuring responsive services to clients. It is used by the national and local human services agencies in responding to the needs generated by Katrina. Nationally, the Katrina Aid Today program has been created with funds donated by international sources through FEMA to the United Methodist Committee on Relief, which in turn has made grants through nine national religious and disaster response organizations to support affiliated recovery and grassroots organizations in providing case management throughout the country. Katrina Aid Today and CAN are coordinating their efforts to provide client information and case management assistance. The CAN data system will continue to prove to be a useful resource as the Katrina recovery goes on, especially as people move back to the Gulf or to other locations and the new agencies that serve them need to know their demographic and services history.

The network of New York agencies was quick to form after Katrina evacuees began arriving in the city, but the network was somewhat ad hoc and has not included some key services, particularly in the areas of housing, mental health and employment. The key role played by the Department of Homeless Services in New York has been important for provision of short-term housing, but that agency's services are not geared to the longer-term housing needs that have emerged among Katrina evacuees. No dedicated source of funding has been provided for case management and other key services for Katrina victims in New York City, as it was after September 11.

The USG agency network was formed incrementally, but grew as needed over time, adding key resources and outreach capability with support from the September 11th Fund and other private and public sources. Although a similar building process has occurred for the local Katrina network, dedicated private resources are not available, and these longer-term needs must compete with other human services needs in the city.

Because of the vast scale of case management activities after September 11 and the interest of funder organizations, a quality assurance system was created to enable agencies to gauge the effectiveness of their services. No such quality assurance mechanism has developed in the post-Katrina period, except in an informal way through the case management meetings led by HSC. And, although there was initial publicity about the disaster assistance center for hurricane victims, ongoing outreach to people in need came many months after families and individuals came to New York.

An unresolved problem left over from the September 11 period is whether and how the network of nonprofit human service agencies will share client information with government agencies that are also providing services or seeking access to client information. The USG system was set up to be separate and secure from government to protect undocumented immigrants and respond to other confidentiality concerns. Friction has surfaced in the post-Katrina period between government agencies providing services and nonprofit organizations that have denied government workers access to client information. Although this is also a national issue for CAN, it arose in New York when city agencies leading the creation of the disaster

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The value of collaborations among disaster response and human services organizations for improving assistance to people affected by disasters is clear.

assistance center and providing emergency housing could not get access to the client records maintained by the nonprofit human services organizations. Nationally, CAN has received requests from public health agencies, government social services departments and law enforcement authorities. Currently, CAN, like USG after September 11, requires agencies to sign confidentiality agreements and asks clients to sign releases that allow their information to be shared among nonprofit human services agencies. How to deal with the issues involved in government agency participation remains an unresolved issue in New York City and nationally. The reverse side of the question is also still being addressed—how to include relevant FEMA client assistance information in the CAN system in a timely way.

THE VALUE OF COORDINATION

The value of collaborations among disaster response and human services organizations for improving assistance to people affected by disasters is clear. The networks created after September 11 and Hurricane Katrina have enabled these organizations to reduce repetitive questioning of victims when obtaining demographic and impact information, better identify and meet needs, advocate for services to fill gaps, train frontline workers more broadly and realize other

benefits from working as part of an overall system of service delivery and case management. While many data systems issues remain to be resolved, the functionality of shared, confidential client information has been demonstrated.

It is also clear that such operational networks require active management, such as that provided by the United Services Group after September 11 and by Katrina Aid Today and the national Coordinated Assistance Network after Katrina and other disasters. An organization with broad governance by service organizations and a staff dedicated to collaborative functions is essential.

Despite the experiences of the past five years and the models that have been created, important issues remain to be resolved. Major elements of the coordinated response mechanism were slow to develop in New York and elsewhere after Katrina, however, including timely compilation of services and resource information for electronic dissemination; comprehensive use and updating of the shared client database; and establishment of local governance mechanisms. Questions remain about how to include pertinent government information and whether to share client data with public agencies. And achieving the appropriate mix of private and public financing for services and coordinating mechanisms remains an *ad hoc* process that will continue to need resolution as disasters occur in the future.

Much has been learned about organizing the long-term recovery services that are required by large-scale disasters on the scale of September 11 and Katrina. Some of those lessons have been directly applied from one situation to the other and implemented effectively. But overall, ensuring effective inter-agency collaboration and comprehensive services to those affected by such disasters remains a work in progress. ◆

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PART TWO: RECOVERY

INTERESTS, ISSUES AND ACTORS: THE POLITICS OF DECISION MAKING IN POST-KATRINA NEW ORLEANS

BY PETER F. BURNS, EDWARD F. RENWICK AND MATTHEW O. THOMAS

Prior to Hurricane Katrina, disorganized and varied interests governed New Orleans, partly because the city lacked a long-lasting set of actors that made and carried out policy decisions.[1] During the pre-Katrina period, different partnerships coalesced temporarily to make these decisions—which usually benefited those most directly involved—and then dissolved once they completed their work. For example, separate coalitions undertook the building of the New Orleans Arena and Harrah's Casino on the edge of the French Quarter and broke up upon completion of these projects. Hurricane Katrina exacerbated chaotic governance because the city could not coordinate actions among those that came together to prepare for and respond to the storm.

This disordered nature of governance continues one year after Katrina as large parts of the city remain devastated and look as they did just after the hurricane struck in late August of 2005. Federal, state and local governments and citizens' groups have significant interests in reviving New Orleans, but no one fully understands who will rule the recovery process. The absence of a clear line of authority creates significant ambiguity, and the debates over who will dictate the rebuilding of New Orleans and how the city will look and operate in the future have widened existing divisions among federal, state and local officials, white and African American city residents and business interests and neighborhoods, among others.

This essay explains the politics of New Orleans' recovery in order to highlight the chaos that continues to surround the city's governance, to illustrate the divisiveness generated by the rebuilding process and to provide insight into how much influence displaced and current residents exert over the recovery.

Competing and divergent interests abound in post-Katrina New Orleans. Politicians look to make their mark, concerned about their own reputations. Other cities, such as Houston, Atlanta and Baton Rouge—radically changed with the addition of New Orleans evacuees—want to see New

Orleans rebuild and reclaim its displaced residents. Some engineers stake their professional reputations on the repairs of the city's levee system, while others criticize the progress that has been made to this point. Architects debate the utility and feasibility of the modernist approach to rebuilding versus new urbanism. Meanwhile, the prime concern of citizens is a return to normalcy. These various and often conflicting interests represent some of the stakes at risk in the decision-making process that guides the recovery and rebuilding of New Orleans.

ISSUES AND DECISIONS: NEW ORLEANS' FUTURE?

Hurricane Katrina intensified existing problems and created new dilemmas in New Orleans. The public schools, police department and other city agencies suffered from poor reputations before Katrina, and the storm created new pressures within these policy areas. All of the New Orleans public schools closed as a result of the storm; nine months later only about 20 percent of the system's 65,000 students had returned.[2] The state controls 21 of the 25 city schools that have reopened, and it plans to establish several charter schools in New Orleans in the fall of 2006.[3] In addition, only eight of the previous 22 hospitals in the city have reopened, leaving many residents without critical health care.

The New Orleans Police Department (NOPD), with its history of corruption and significant number of desertions during Katrina, continues to face serious challenges. Approximately three hundred fewer officers are on the streets, the budget decreased by millions of dollars and critical equipment and vehicles have yet to be replaced.[4] The NOPD lost such items as ballistic shields, ammunition and vehicles,

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[1] Peter F. Burns and Matthew O. Thomas, "The Failure of the Nonregime: How Katrina Exposed New Orleans as a Regimeless City," *Urban Affairs Review* 41 (2006): 4, 517-527.

[2] Scott Stephens, "Storm Erodes Structure of New Orleans Schools," *The Plain Dealer*, June 14, 2006, p. A1.

[3] Scott Stephens, "Storm Erodes Structure of New Orleans Schools," and Rob Nelson, "Charter Schools Await One Last OK: 4 More Would Open Next Academic Year," *The Times-Picayune*, June 14, 2006, p.1.

[4] Christopher Drew, "Police Struggles in New Orleans Raise Old Fears," *The New York Times*, June 13, 2006, p. A1.

Federal, state and local governments and citizens' groups have significant interests in reviving New Orleans, but no one fully understands who will rule the recovery process.

in addition to a reduction in veteran officers due to post-Katrina retirement.

Over the weekend of June 17, 2006, six murders occurred in the city. In response, Mayor C. Ray Nagin asked Governor Kathleen Babineaux Blanco to deploy 300 National Guardsmen and 60 state police officers. Blanco sent 100 National Guardsmen and 60 state police officers to New Orleans on June 20. She also committed 200 additional troops in the future.

Despite these pre-existing problems, displaced residents and those who live in New Orleans worry most immediately about levees and housing. Levee construction continues to move forward, but residents question whether completed work will survive future hurricanes. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers controls the levee reconstruction and repair process. Rebuilding levees requires technical expertise, which decreases the likelihood of non-expert input and makes for less democracy. Current construction restores levees to pre-Katrina strength, but important improvements such as soil sampling and levee armoring are scheduled for 2007, well beyond the 2006 hurricane season.[5] The funding for soil sampling and levee armoring depends on congressional allocations, so no guarantees exist for long-term improvements.

Levee reconstruction attracts some debate, but housing remains the most contentious issue even in the midst of the 2006 hurricane season. Residents want to know whether they can rebuild their homes or purchase new ones and who regulates the recovery process. Those who choose to rebuild must also consider whether the rest of a particular neighborhood will come back and have adequate city services.

New Orleans residents also continue to experience great difficulty in obtaining insurance payments for their damaged or ruined property. While insurance companies assert that they have settled 90 percent of the Katrina claims, few

residents received anywhere near the total of their policies.[6] "Insurance modeling firm ISO estimates Louisiana had $24.3 billion in insured losses, but the state department of insurance says only $12.5 billion had been paid out as of the end of April, the last month for which figures were available," according to ABC News.[7] A key debate between insurance companies and the insured revolves around whether hurricane insurance covers flooding.

Governmental payment for damaged homes constitutes another major problem for residents. Under Louisiana's Road Home program, the state will utilize federal funds in order to allocate $150,000 minus insurance payments to property owners, who can use these funds to repair or sell their homes or relocate within the state.[8] This amount hardly covers the $340,208 average sale price of a home in New Orleans as of January 2006.[9]

To deal with the recovery, local and state governments set up separate commissions that emphasize schisms present prior to Hurricane Katrina. On September 30, 2005, New Orleans Mayor Nagin named the 17-member Bring New Orleans Back Commission to help him create a blueprint for recovery.[10] According to the mayor's office, "The fundamental goal of the commission is to advise, assist, plan and help the City of New Orleans develop recommendations on all aspects of rebuilding."[11] The commission broke into several committees—urban planning, education, cultural, infrastructure, government effectiveness, health and social services and economic development—each of which presented a final report to Mayor Nagin.

Prior to Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans' corporate community, which had diminished significantly over time, played an inconsistent and oftentimes limited role in the city's governance.[12] With this in mind, Nagin included an overrepresentation of the private sector on the Bring New Orleans Back Commission. Chief executive officers, presidents of companies, the president of Tulane University and the owner and operator of several McDonald's franchises,

5 Joby Warrick, "Levee Fixes Falling Short, Experts Warn," *Washington Post*, March 6, 2006, p. 1.

6 Rukmini Callimachi, "Insurance Limbo Delays Gulf Rebuilding: Advocates Criticize Industry" ABC News, June 11, 2006. At http://abcnews.go.com/Business/wireStory?id=2064501. (Accessed June 14, 2006.)

7 Callimachi, "Insurance Limbo Delays Gulf Rebuilding."

8 Bruce Alpert, "Cash for La. Levees, Housing 1 Step Away from Approval: House Votes 351-67; Senate Gets Bill Today," *The Times-Picayune*, June 14, 2006, p. 5.

9 Bruce Katz, Matt Fellowes and Mia Mabanta, *Katrina Index: Tracking Variables of Post-Katrina Reconstruction*, Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution's Metropolitan Policy Program, 3 May 2006.

10 Mayor's Office of Communications, City of New Orleans, "Mayor Calls on Citizens to Help Bring New Orleans Back," September 30, 2005.

11 Ibid.

12 Peter F. Burns and Matthew O. Thomas, "State Government and the Development Regime in New Orleans," *Urban Affairs Review* 39 (2004): 6, 791-812.

who also serves as Nagin's top advisor, were 10 of the commission's 17 members.

The City Council and planning commission felt overlooked by Nagin's panel, which included only the president of the City Council and no planners. In response, the council created an advisory committee on hurricane recovery. Formed months after Katrina, this committee released a report as well, but it failed to attract the same attention as reports from the mayor's commission and the governor's recovery panel.

Governor Blanco established the Louisiana Recovery Authority (LRA) on October 17, 2005. A 26-member board oversees the LRA, and Executive Director Andy Kopplin, Governor Blanco's chief of staff prior to Katrina, directs the day-to-day operations. Educators, attorneys and several gas and oil executives serve on the LRA. Many members come from states other than Louisiana and some maintain strong ties to the national Republican Party.

Which of these groups will make the ultimate decisions about how New Orleans rebuilds? The answer remains uncertain. In November 2005, the president of the City Council asserted that any of the mayor's rebuilding plans must be approved by the City Council and planning commission[13]—a fact that took Nagin months to finally acknowledge.[14]

Meanwhile, the executive director of the LRA said that while the City of New Orleans maintains the authority to make land use decisions, any rebuilding plans must follow LRA's planning principles.[15] These principles at the state level include infrastructure reconstruction with eventual Category 5 hurricane protection, economic redevelopment, improved public service delivery, policies that promote the health and well being of residents, and smart growth strategies, such as mixed-use housing and historic preservation. The LRA also established specific goals for the various regions affected by Katrina. The planning principles for Orleans Parish, for example, include a call for unity of voice among various commissions, charter changes in the city, mass transit improvements and consolidation of public services.[16]

In the fall of 2005, Mayor Nagin stated that the Bring New Orleans Back Commission and the LRA "have the same objectives," suggesting a level of harmony.[17] But that rhetoric gave way to the reality of political conflict as disagreements

To deal with the recovery, local and state governments set up separate commissions that emphasize schisms present prior to Hurricane Katrina.

arose about which level of government should disburse housing funds.[18]

Even though the state and city created procedures to determine New Orleans' future, the flow of recovery dollars suggests that a top-down model of governance will apply to rebuilding decisions. President George W. Bush and the Congress will appropriate billions for the recovery and, consequently, they will shape much of the debate and policy about how the city rebuilds. The federal reconstruction czar, Donald Powell, will also play a role in determining financing and priorities. Because those federal dollars must filter through Louisiana's state government, the governor, the LRA, the state legislature or some combination of these entities will influence the rebuilding. The mayor, the City Council, the planning commission, neighborhood councils and New Orleans residents sit at the bottom of this pyramid. Residents wonder where they fit into the larger picture. Decisions regarding their homes may occur far from their neighborhoods, leaving them without a voice.

The uncertain decision-making process illustrates how personal and institutional interests compete in post-Katrina New Orleans. Because President Bush, Governor Blanco and Mayor Nagin want to improve images of their leadership ability in the wake of Katrina, they compete to shape and champion recovery efforts. Each wants to control the dollars and patronage that flow from these funds. Clearly, the federal government wants to protect the billions it will invest in rebuilding New Orleans.

Within Louisiana, personal animosity and institutional rivalry have pitted Blanco and Nagin against each other, and they also divide New Orleans' mayor and City Council. Because Nagin endorsed Randy Ewing, and not Governor Blanco, in the 2003 gubernatorial race, he and the governor maintain an adversarial relationship. In his first term (2002-2006), Nagin never controlled a majority of votes on the City Council, and consequently, he and the City Council rarely agreed.

[13] Martha Carr, "Rebuilding Should Begin on High Ground, Group Says," *The Times-Picayune*, November 19, 2005, p. 1.
[14] Bruce Eggler, "Nagin Offers Council, Planners a Voice; But Divide Remains Over N.O. Rebuilding," *The Times-Picayune*, February 8, 2006, p. 1.
[15] Carr, "Rebuilding Should Begin on High Ground, Group Says."
[16] Louisiana Recovery Authority, *Starting Point: Report From the Louisiana Recovery and Rebuilding Conference*. At http://lrrc.aia. org/lrrc_home. (Accessed March 13, 2006.)
[17] Laura Maggi, "Recovery Groups Take First Steps," *The Times-Picayune*, October 27, 2005, p. 5.

[18] Laura Maggi, "Blanco: Put State in Charge of Buyouts; But Nagin's Panel wants City Control," *The Times-Picayune*, February 9, 2006, p. 1.

Even though the state and city created procedures to determine New Orleans' future, the flow of recovery dollars suggests that a top-down model of governance will apply to rebuilding decisions.

As for other conflicts, New Orleans' corporate community aims to make the city a better place to conduct business, while residents believe they maintain the right to return to their homes and determine how to rebuild their neighborhoods. Many residents fear that neither the federal government, the business-dominated Bring New Orleans Back Commission, nor Louisiana's governor will afford them this opportunity.

HOW SHALL NEW ORLEANS REBUILD?

Another important and divisive issue in the recovery focuses upon which parts of New Orleans will be rebuilt and which will not. The Bring New Orleans Back Commission's urban planning committee recommended that the city convert certain areas into parks, other forms of green space or flood barriers. It based its decisions on two primary criteria: future risk of damage from a hurricane and whether enough people would return to certain areas to make those neighborhoods viable for the investment of city infrastructure and services. Through its recommendations, the committee sought to prevent the so-called jack-o-lantern effect—uneven development in which blight surrounds rebuilt homes throughout the city.[19]

In a survey conducted in early 2006, New Orleanians tended to agree that the rebuilding process required government to make difficult decisions that would make some people unhappy (see table one).[20] In regard to the particulars of recovery, however, residents differed on whether government

should demolish homes, prohibit residents from rebuilding or compensate property owners if the city decides to raze certain areas (see tables two to four). More than four months after this survey, furthermore, a *New York Times* editorial agreed that the city's renewal involved painstaking decisions, and called on Nagin "to speak difficult truths—like telling the residents of a vulnerable block that they will have to rebuild on safer ground."[21]

Fifteen minutes before the Bring New Orleans Back Commission unveiled its report, four city councilors denounced the plan, which one member called a "blatant violation of private property rights."[22] The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Louisiana Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) and neighborhood groups and small business organizations also opposed parts of the plan, but further divisions existed among the opponents.[23] On one hand, many complained that the commission's call for a four-month planning process to determine neighborhood viability was much too long.[24] On the other, ACORN regarded four months as an inadequate amount of time to receive proper feedback from residents.[25]

The plan to shrink New Orleans' footprint greatly divides African American and white residents partly because it calls on the city to avoid rebuilding or reinvesting in many neighborhoods that were majority African American prior to the storm. African American and white residents hold vastly different perceptions about the rebuilding process. For instance, the early 2006 survey showed that 60 percent of African Americans did not think government should demolish abandoned homes, whereas only 34 percent of whites held this opinion (see table two). African Americans were less likely than whites to believe that government should have the right to prohibit rebuilding in areas that lack adequate flood protection (see table three). Likewise, whites were much more likely than African Americans to support a candidate who prevents an individual from rebuilding but supports a plan to buy that person's property (see table four).

Some African Americans suspect that the Bring New Orleans Back Commission made recommendations to shrink the size of the city so that displaced residents, many of whom are African American, would not return. The president of the City Council, who is African American, said, "A lot of people have this conspiracy theory—that [the Bring New Orleans Back Commission] doesn't want anybody that's not here now

[19] Bret Schulte, "Turf Wars in the Delta: Plotting a Future for the New New Orleans Isn't Just about Urban Design: Try Money–and Politics," *U.S. News and World Report*, February 27, 2006. At http://www.usnews.com/usnews/news/articles/060227/27future.htm.
[20] The poll, conducted between January 26 and February 13, 2006, by Edward Renwick, surveyed 400 registered voters in New Orleans of which 58 percent were white/Latino and the other 42 percent were African American.

[21] Editorial, "The New Orleans Muddle," *The New York Times*, June 20, 2006, p. 16.
[22] Joe Gyan, Jr, "N.O. Panel's Report Criticized: Moratorium Urged on Some Permits," *The [Baton Rouge] Advocate*, January 12, 2006, p. 4.
[23] Gordon Russell and Frank Donze, "Officials Tiptoe Around Footprint Issue: But Buyouts, Flood Maps May Decide Matter," *The Times-Picayune*, January 8, 2006, p. 1.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.

to come back."[26] Other African American leaders, including former state representative Sherman Copelin and former mayor Marc Morial, opposed plans to condense the city. In a speech before a Catholic Church in New Orleans, Morial, who serves as the president of the National Urban League, noted that he didn't "understand the premise of a reduced footprint. If it's that some can't be protected from flooding, that's a false premise. With Category 5 protection, every neighborhood can be rebuilt."[27] Throughout the post-Katrina period, however, some claim that the cost of Category 5 protection is exorbitant, and that New Orleans can only be safeguarded against Category 3 hurricanes.

In response to concerns of African Americans that a rebuilt New Orleans would exclude racial minorities, on Martin Luther King Day 2006, Mayor Nagin claimed that the city will be majority African American in the future. In what became known as the "Chocolate City" speech, Nagin said, "We ask black people: it's time. It's time for us to come together. It's time for us to rebuild a New Orleans, the one that should be a chocolate New Orleans. And I don't care what people are saying Uptown or wherever they are. This city will be chocolate at the end of the day. This city will be a majority African American city. It's the way God wants it to be. You can't have New Orleans no other way; it wouldn't be New Orleans."[28] Nagin's remarks infuriated many who questioned why the mayor would attempt to further widen racial gaps and animosity.

Some African American leaders also feared that the Bring New Orleans Back Commission opposed rebuilding certain neighborhoods so that businesses could eventually acquire and develop this property. Perhaps the most important and influential member of the mayor's commission is multimillionaire developer Joseph C. Canizaro, a friend of President Bush and chair of the commission's urban planning committee. Some people booed Canizaro at the public unveiling of the planning committee's report, and one African American resident of New Orleans East yelled, "Mr. Joe Canizaro, I don't know you, but I hate you. I'm ready to rebuild. I'm not letting you take it (my property). I'm ready to fight."[29]

These reactions are based upon feelings that Canizaro and other developers will ultimately redevelop formerly flooded neighborhoods. Canizaro denied this notion and asserted that the neighborhood planning process with its representative cross-section of city residents will be fair.[30]

The plan to shrink New Orleans' footprint greatly divides African American and white residents partly because it calls on the city to avoid rebuilding or reinvesting in many neighborhoods that were majority African American prior to the storm.

The planning process and the extent to which city residents will influence the future of New Orleans remain fluid and unclear. At first, the Bring New Orleans Back Commission proposed a four-month (February to May, 2006) neighborhood planning process to initiate, organize and prioritize recovery efforts. This proposal never materialized because it failed to receive financial support from FEMA. In the meantime, some neighborhoods began an informal planning process, which led to uneven amounts of planning throughout the city. Residents in Broadmoor, the Holy Cross neighborhood and other areas in the Lower Ninth Ward, Lakeview, Gentilly and the French Quarter quickly organized, collected resident surveys and held frequent meetings.[31]

MOVING FORWARD

New Orleans must present a coherent recovery plan to the LRA before the release of certain types of federal money. Funding for individual homeowners presents one set of constraints for neighborhood rebuilding, but the planning process focuses on two other types of federal funding— community development block grants and hazard mitigation grants—both of which may prove critical to the eventual rebuilding of any neighborhood. These two sources of federal funding provide resources to construct and rehabilitate the infrastructure critical to the city. Thus, the stalled planning process affects the ability to move forward in rebuilding.

Recently, the Rockefeller Foundation pledged $3.5 million to facilitate the planning process. The Greater New Orleans

[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid.
[28] *The Times-Picayune*, "Transcript of Nagin's Speech: New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin Gave this Speech Monday During a Program at City Hall Commemorating Martin Luther King Jr.," January 17, 2006. At http://www.nola.com/news/t-p/frontpage/index.ssf?/news/t-p/stories/011706_nagin_transcript.html. (Accessed March 16, 2006.)
[29] Gyan, "N.O. Panel's Report Criticized."
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.

Foundation (GNOF) administers this grant money, making it yet another important actor in the recovery. The planning process is supposed to start at the neighborhood level, with plans then moving to the larger planning districts and then amalgamated at the city level. The "who" in all of this planning remains unclear, however. Who will conduct the neighborhood planning? Who will take the neighborhood plans and fit them into the planning districts? Who will have final responsibility for the formation of the citywide plan? Answers to all of these critically important questions remained uncertain during the summer of 2006, and there is no official date for completion of the project.

On Sunday June 18, 2006, *The New York Times* and *The Times-Picayune* lamented that New Orleans lacked a plan to redevelop the city. In *The New York Times*, one member of the LRA stated, "Let's just admit something straight out: we're late."[32] Later in the story, the president of the City Council criticized Mayor Nagin's handling of the recovery. He said, "We do need to have a clear vision from the mayor. Tell us what you're for, or not for. We don't know exactly what neighborhoods he's committed to, kind of committed to and not committed to. We don't know specifically what the roles of the neighborhoods are going to be in the new New Orleans. Can people build anywhere? Can they live anywhere? Are they going to be funded? We don't know that."[33]

On the same day, a *Times-Picayune* editorial criticized the lack of a rebuilding effort and the dearth of leadership in the city. It began by explaining that the "effort to plan New Orleans' post-Katrina reconstruction has been stuck in neutral … [and] New Orleans isn't much closer to having an official reconstruction plan than it was last fall."[34] The editorial also blamed Nagin, noting, "Other communities affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita were far quicker to come up with official reconstruction plans than New Orleans has been. That's partly because of the scale and complexity of the destruction in the city. But it also has been the result of a lack of leadership and coordination in the city."[35] *The Times-Picayune* encouraged Nagin to take action because it feared that others, namely insurance companies, will dictate the terms of the recovery.

Three days after the *Times-Picayune* editorial, *The New York Times* ran one of its own, in which it complained that no redevelopment plan existed even though the city was set to receive billions in federal aid.[36] It also implored Mayor Nagin to take action and questioned the city's ability to govern itself.[37]

[32] Adam Nossiter, "In New Orleans, Money Is Ready but a Plan Isn't," *The New York Times*, June 18, 2006, p. A1.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Editorial, "Not Coming Together," *The Times-Picayune*, June 18, 2006, p. 6.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Editorial, "The New Orleans Muddle."
[37] Ibid.

Mayoral candidates became quite vague about how they would rebuild the city because they understood that specific plans would probably cost them votes.

Still, residents who want to shape the rebuilding process generally have little recourse. Neighborhood residents organize themselves and engage in planning exercises, but all that work may be meaningless if the LRA, which will distribute and administer federal recovery funds, overlooks these concerns.

The mayoral primary on April 22, 2006, and the subsequent run-off election on May 20, provided opportunities for New Orleanians to voice their opinions, but displaced residents needed to vote through absentee ballot or in satellite polling places set up in Louisiana's 10 largest parishes. Prior to the primary, the Justice Department approved the voting plans while a federal court denied claims that this election disenfranchised voters. Displaced residents took no legal action prior to the run-off, in which African Americans made up 56 percent of the voters and whites 39 percent.

Mayoral candidates listened to voters' concerns during the campaigns. In response to citizen disapproval of the proposed smaller footprint, mayoral candidates stressed that they would allow rebuilding in all areas and that neighborhoods would have significant input on the revival of the city. Second, candidates became quite vague about how they would rebuild the city because they understood that specific plans would probably cost them votes.

In the end, Nagin defeated Lieutenant Governor Mitch Landrieu, son of a former mayor, Moon Landrieu, in the run-off election. Nagin garnered 80 percent of the African American vote and 20 percent of the white vote, whereas Landrieu received 80 percent of the white vote and 20 percent of the African American vote. The City Council added four new members, as two incumbents lost and another was defeated in her bid to win one of the two at-large seats. This gives the mayor a chance to cultivate new relationships with the council in his second term.

In his victory speech, Nagin thanked President Bush for delivering billions of federal dollars to New Orleans, and he thanked the governor "for what she's getting ready to do," a clear reference to the power Blanco exerts over the distribution of federal funds. The following week, Blanco met with Nagin and, while she always found the mayor to be

1 Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with the following statement: "Rebuilding New Orleans will require difficult decisions that will leave some residents unhappy."

	Registered Voters	African Americans	Whites
Strongly Agree	61%	48%	70%
Agree	33%	41%	26%
Disagree	5%	8%	3%
Strongly Disagree	1%	3%	0%
Don't Know	1%	1%	2%

2 If a homeowner does not repair or rebuild their home in the next 12 months, do you think the city should have a right to demolish the home?

	Registered Voters	African Americans	Whites
Yes	40%	32%	45%
No	45%	60%	34%
Don't Know	16%	9%	21%

3 Should the government have the right to prohibit property owners from rebuilding in areas lacking adequate flood protection?

	Registered Voters	African Americans	Whites
Yes	38%	29%	44%
No	54%	64%	47%
Don't Know	9%	7%	10%

4 If your neighborhood flooded over four feet, would you vote for a candidate who would not recommend rebuilding your neighborhood, but who supported a plan that would buy your property?

	Registered Voters	African Americans	Whites
Yes	45%	35%	52%
No	31%	44%	22%
It Depends	16%	8%	10%
Don't Know	9%	8%	10%

Source: Edward F. Renwick

contrite, she admitted that past disagreements made this conversation "a little difficult."[38] Nagin called for unification of the city, but the day after his re-election, he angered business leaders by stating, "Business people are predators, and if the economic opportunities are here, they're going to stay. If not, they're going to leave. God bless them. I hope they stay, but if they don't, I'll send them a postcard."[39]

Various entities unveiled major plans in the two weeks following Nagin's re-election. The parent company of the Hyatt corporation announced a $715 million project to revitalize the area near the Hyatt and the Superdome.[40] Since the storm, that area has become largely desolate as the shopping mall connected to the Superdome went out of business. The plan calls for a National Jazz Center and park and the construction of a new city hall.[41] On June 14, 2006, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) announced its plans to replace 5,000 public housing units with mixed income homes.[42]

THE UNCERTAIN FUTURE

Nearly a year after Hurricane Katrina, ambiguity surrounds New Orleans' future. Federal, state and local leaders have failed to lay out a clear recovery plan, and who will make final decisions about the city's recovery remains unclear. Leadership has been absent at all levels of government, as no actor or set of interests has assumed responsibility for the rebuilding process. The lack of coordination that plagued preparation for and response to Hurricane Katrina continues to harm New Orleans in the post-Katrina era.

Residents do not know whether they can move back to their neighborhoods and are uncertain about which levels of government will actually make decisions about levee reconstruction, housing and future development. Personal and institutional interests compete over these issues. The extent to which citizens will influence rebuilding decisions and who will ultimately benefit from the recovery remains a question mark.

As much as Hurricane Katrina damaged New Orleans, chaotic governance has hampered the city's resurgence. ◆

[38] Laura Maggi and Frank Donze, "Blanco, Nagin Meet to Bury the Hatchet: Both Promise Unity to Rebuild the City," *The Times-Picayune*, May 24, 2006, p. 1.
[39] Associated Press, "Nagin Looks To New Orleans' Future: Re-Elected Mayor Begins Mending Ties, Bolstering Reconstruction Effort," May 21, 2006.
[40] Rebecca Mowbray, Michelle Krupa and Greg Thomas, "New City Hall, Jazz Park Planned Near Superdome: Hyatt Owner Commits Financing, Leadership," *The Times-Picayune*, May 31, 2006, p. 1.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Susan Saulny, "5,000 Public Housing Units in New Orleans Are to be Razed," *The New York Times*, June 15, 2006, p. 16.

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REBUILDING A HIGH ROAD ECONOMY: WHAT WORKS FOR WORKERS?

BY DAVID DYSSEGAARD KALLICK

The U.S. has been through two major disasters in recent years: 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina. Have we learned anything about how to rebuild the urban economy so that it is stronger and more responsive to workers than before?

New York City after the World Trade Center attacks was in an economic freefall. The job chart looked like a patient in intensive care, already in decline in early 2001 as a recession took hold and afflicted by a dangerous downward spike in September. More than 200,000 jobs were lost in the wake of 9/11, about half of them specifically due to the terrorist attack, according to officials. Job loss was across the economic spectrum: high-wage earners in finance, middle-wage earners in some airport-related jobs and mostly low-wage earners in hotels and restaurants. A majority of the job loss citywide was in occupations paying an average of less than $11 an hour. Chinatown alone saw a shocking 25 percent drop in employment after 9/11.

In post-9/11 New York, everyone, it seemed, wanted to be part of deciding how to rebuild. The myriad of normally fragmented civic groups in the city quickly came together into a few big networks that developed close working relationships.[1] Much of the action necessarily focused on architectural designs for reconstructing the World Trade Center site. But the civic groups also insisted that government pay attention to jobs. In the short run, people wanted jobs to counter the huge employment downturn. And in the long run, they wanted solid, middle-class jobs in a diversified economy—not the polarized pre-9/11 job market, in which a handful of Wall Street brokers made millions while restaurant, copy shop, and retail employees were stuck in low-wage, dead-end positions.

In New Orleans, the post-disaster situation was quite different. Most of the city was devastated, not just a section. The majority of the population was gone, with poor and black communities sustaining by far the worst impact of the flooding. As of April 2006, employment was down 31 percent (191,000 jobs) in the seven-parish New Orleans

Metropolitan Statistical Area, compared to a year before.[2] Yet, if you could find a place to live in New Orleans, you probably could find a job—not because there were more jobs, but because there were so few people. Families had a very hard time coming back; besides the extraordinary damage to houses, kids had nowhere to go to school and basics such as drinking water and electricity were scarce. As a result, the most immediate public outcry was for housing and rebuilding the levees, though as time goes on there is increasing attention to the question of jobs.

In New Orleans, it's been more difficult for civic groups to gain a seat at the table than it was in New York, and indeed it has often been difficult even to know where the table is, with the city, state and federal government moving in different directions.

There are important lessons to be drawn about how to create and retain good jobs, based on what was done right and what was done wrong in New York and New Orleans. Neither city did as much as it could have to put people back to work while steering toward a more sustainable, equitable and productive "high road" economy. Still, the steps and missteps in these two cases can point the way toward future approaches that local government could use to better handle any future large-scale rebuilding effort.

SET THE TONE DURING THE CLEANUP

In a disaster zone, among the first workers hired after the immediate rescue effort will be cleanup crews. The wages, benefits and working conditions of these workers send an important message about priorities and ground rules for rebuilding the economy. Are employees union or non-union? Is emphasis placed on hiring local workers, or are people brought in from outside? Are jobs open to women and people of color? What happens to these workers when the cleanup is complete?

In New York, the cleanup was a staggering challenge: the remains of the downed buildings burned for months and there were huge steel beams that needed to be moved—each time dangerously shifting the rubble. "There was no manual of how to handle this unprecedented, uncontrolled demolition," said John Spavins, a spokesperson for the New York City Department of Design and Construction. "In

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[1] The primary civic coalitions besides 9/11 family members were the Labor Community Advocacy Network to Rebuild New York—a group I coordinated—the Civic Alliance to Rebuild Downtown, New York New Visions, Rebuild Downtown Our Town, and the Rebuild Coalition with a Spotlight on the Poor, as well as Imagine New York, which led a direct public outreach effort. Ron Shiffman of the Pratt Institute Center for Community Environmental Development played an important role in linking all these groups together.

[2] Loren Scott, *Advancing in the Aftermath II: Tracking the Recovery from Katrina and Rita* (Baton Rouge, LA: Loren C. Scott & Associates, Inc., June 2006). A report sponsored by Capital One N.A.

There are important lessons to be drawn about how to create and retain good jobs, based on what was done right and what was done wrong in New York and New Orleans.

addition to the fact that there were the bodies and the body parts, for weeks, the firefighters were still fighting fires."

The city divided the disaster site into four sectors, and hired a different private construction firm for each sector. Each company's workforce was fully unionized and there was also a significant presence of unionized public-sector technical employees on site. Because these were emergency, no-bid contracts, the city hired independent auditors and put in place substantial cross-checks to guard against corruption. For the construction workers, these were good jobs, paying solid middle-class wages—a fact that added to efficiency, savings and health and safety benefits since workers were confident, well trained, professional and worked in close coordination to get the job right the first time around. Proof of the benefit of hiring experienced workers at fair wages was in the result: the cleanup of Ground Zero was completed by June 2002, at a lower cost and faster pace than anyone imagined and with very few broken bones, hurt backs or other immediate worksite injuries.[3]

(Unfortunately, as Dave Newman of the New York Committee for Occupational Safety and Health points out, the risk of exposure to environmental toxics was downplayed by the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Occupational Health and Safety Administration failed to enforce its respiratory standards, so today thousands of workers are seriously and unnecessarily ill.)

The cleanup in the area immediately surrounding Ground Zero, by contrast, was done largely with non-union day laborers, paid lower wages and given no training or protection whatsoever.

In New Orleans, however, it wasn't just some areas where health and wage standards were ignored. The Bush Administration sent a clear tone for cleanup when it

unilaterally suspended the Davis-Bacon Act, which requires any construction projects done with federal funds to pay the prevailing local wage. By suspending Davis-Bacon, the Bush Administration paved the way for government-financed construction on a low-road model with low pay, less experienced workers and less union involvement. It is far from clear that the government would save money by paying lower wages. This is clear enough from the experience in New York. It should have been glaringly obvious in New Orleans, where billions of dollars of damage was caused by cutting corners in the construction of the city's levees.

The Bush Administration ultimately was beaten into retreat on Davis-Bacon by a huge outcry from labor unions, community groups, and the national media and within months the prevailing wage law was reinstated. But in the meantime, a clear signal had been sent: the federal government was interested in keeping wages down, not in expanding the middle class by pushing already low wages upward.

The cleanup effort is one of the first, most visible signs of a city getting back on its feet. But construction will be an expanded part of a post-disaster economy for years to come. Setting good standards for wages, benefits, and training is a win-win solution. It can increase efficiency and add confidence that the job will be done right; and it can provide good jobs and career opportunities for a significant number of displaced workers and residents.

MAINTAIN GOVERNMENT STABILITY AND CREATE AN ECONOMIC STIMULUS

In New York, a combination of borrowing and tax increases made it possible for both the city and state to minimize the extreme impact of cutbacks in local services, despite the loss of billions of dollars in tax revenues. In addition, federal and state "automatic stabilizers" kicked in to aid displaced workers and their families, including unemployment insurance, emergency Medicaid and FEMA's mortgage and rental assistance program (which was cancelled between 9/11 and Katrina). While it is too early to get complete statistics on New Orleans, in New York, it is worth noting that private charities were a small fraction of the total aid given, making up just 7 percent of the total benefits, with government contributing 42 percent and insurance 51 percent.[4]

In New Orleans, the absence of federal compensation for lost tax revenues forced the city government to cut fully half of its workforce at exactly the wrong moment, in October 2005. Government layoffs did double-damage to employment: 3,000 city workers were suddenly out of a job; and without basic government services, the population could not return to live in the city, rebuild their homes and go to work. "If

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[3] The role of union labor in ensuring an efficient cleanup at Ground Zero is recounted in moving detail by William Langewiesche in *American Ground: Unbuilding the World Trade Center* (New York: North Point Press, 2002).

[4] Lloyd Dixon and Rachel Kaganoff Stern, *Compensation for Losses from the 9/11 Attacks* (Santa Monica California: RAND Institute for Civil Justice, 2004), p.137.

A clear signal had been sent: the federal government was interested in keeping wages down, not in expanding the middle class by pushing already low wages upward.

you're not able to keep the city operating, businesses and people might not come back at all," noted David M. Benelli, president of the Police Association of New Orleans. Even nine months after the hurricane, only 21 percent of schools in New Orleans were open, making it extremely difficult for dislocated families with children to return.[5]

In addition to the normal functioning of government, it would be logical after a disaster to make a concerted effort to allocate additional funds to stimulate the local economy. Public spending "primes the pump," as John Maynard Keynes put it; it gets the flow of earning and spending, demand and production going again. In New York, the organized civic networks formed a broad consensus around how best to prime the pumps in a way that also kept the focus on long-term rebuilding objectives such as upgrading parks, commissioning public art, establishing emergency safety plans for schools and providing training to unemployed workers.

Better late than never, about $500 million was ultimately dedicated to these types of efforts, out of the $2 billion Community Development Block Grant allocated by Congress to the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation (LMDC), a new public authority set up to guide the rebuilding process and administer the federal grant (and to operate outside the normal system of legislative checks and balances, with a board appointed by the mayor and governor).

While the spending on public goods was welcome, the greatest need for pump priming was when the job losses was greatest, early in the decade. This $500 million was earmarked in 2005 and only partially spent in 2006. For years, LMDC's funds were tied up in political wrangling, with only a small

trickle making their way out, often to projects connected with members of the corporation's board.[6]

In New Orleans, as of mid-2006 there finally have been a few small steps in the direction of economic stimulus. The 2006 Mardi Gras celebration was one. And New Orleans had its first post-Katrina convention—the American Library Association—in June, which brought 18,000 people to the city. These are the types of events that can provide a stimulus to the local economy. In economic terms, they bring visitors to the city to spend money, which in turn puts people to work in places like restaurants, stores and hotels. Those workers then have added income, which they then spend (for example, on rebuilding houses or child care), putting more people to work and circulating money in the local economy.

Yet these were both regular events for pre-Katrina New Orleans. There has been precious little in the way of conscious economic stimulus after the storm.

THE RIGHT WAY TO SUPPORT BUSINESS… AND THE WRONG WAY

In New York City, the economy continued to decline rapidly after 9/11. With people losing jobs at a frightening pace, advocates and government officials focused on saving existing jobs as much as on creating new ones.

Two contrasting strategies claimed to address job retention. The first gave temporary federal grants to local businesses to stem job losses and was largely successful, and tied financial support directly to hiring or retaining individual workers. The second strategy provided grants to businesses in the disaster zone, theoretically to attract and retain jobs, but it was in fact an indiscriminate handout to businesses designed as a pass-through to landlords, and only resulted in higher rents.

The successful, temporary grant program involved $33 million in federal funds that Congress approved for the Emergency Employment Clearinghouse, a joint project of labor unions and business leaders. Led by the Consortium for Worker Education, a union-affiliated nonprofit workforce development organization, the project aimed to stem the immediate losses many local businesses suffered after the World Trade Center disaster. Advertised through a combination of direct marketing and outreach through local partners, the program was available to any business that could demonstrate business lost due to 9/11. Many more businesses applied than could be accommodated by the program.

The clearinghouse provided 90-day grants to help companies get past the short-term disruption in their business. If outside funds could help them keep workers through the tough time after 9/11, the theory went, then companies would be more

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[5] David Benelli cited in Nicholas Ricardi and David Zucchino, "Now New Orleans is Battered by Layoffs," *Los Angeles Times*, October 5, 2005. Statistics about school closings in Amy Liu, Matt Fellowes and Mia Mabanta, *Katrina Index: Tracking Variables of Post-Katrina Recovery* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, June 2006), p. 59.

[6] For evidence of the self-dealing of some of the LMDC board members, see the *Reconstruction Watch* report, "They're in the Money, We're in the Dark" (New York: Good Jobs NY, August 2004).

likely to retain them once business picked up again. The strategy helped businesses by helping workers, providing a short-term bridge through an emergency period without opening the door to long-term corporate subsidies.

To maximize the positive impact on the labor market, these funds were steered as much as possible to "high road" employers—those that paid decent wages, had good benefits and ran sustainable enterprises.

"With the limited resources we had, we knew we weren't going to be able to help everyone; we needed to have objective, rational criteria for who got support," said Bruce Herman of the Consortium for Worker Education, who directed the clearinghouse. "One of the criteria was whether the employers provided health insurance. If they had health insurance at low or modest cost to employees, then we would put them at the front of the line, and we also would be willing to provide a greater subsidy." Another criterion was decent wages. "We were not going to use federal dollars to subsidize sweatshop jobs," Herman said.

The history of giving subsidies to companies in the hopes they will retain workers has been fraught with abuses, cleverly characterized in the title of an early 2001 report by the Center for an Urban Future as "Payoffs for Layoffs." Typically, companies receive the subsidies, then go ahead and do what they would have done anyway: hire or fire employees; commit to the area or pull out after taking government money. To avoid giving money to businesses who either didn't truly need it or who couldn't survive in the long run, the clearinghouse put safeguards in place to ensure that employers used the money to retain workers who would otherwise have been fired, and to steer the money to viable businesses. The program's managers required companies to open their books and demonstrate a clear loss due to 9/11. Staff at the clearinghouse worked closely with businesses on a sector-by-sector basis, so they became familiar with business practices in the industry and with individual companies.

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Despite all the safeguards, however, the possibility of employers gaming the system was a significant issue. "I'm not a fan of wage subsidy without real, hard, monitored outcomes," says Herman. And, he adds, "a program like this needs to be considered as a stimulus, not a long-term subsidy."[7]

The post-9/11 business support on which far more money was spent—and with far less positive impact—was Business Attraction and Retention Grants. Using federal money from a flexible Community Development Block Grant, the city and state wrote almost $500 million in checks to any business that stayed in or moved to Lower Manhattan.

If a business signed a lease in the designated "Liberty Zone," it got cash from the program; if it signed outside the zone, it didn't.

The program had three fundamental flaws. First, the grants were not targeted to enterprises that lost business because of 9/11; they were available to every business in or moving to the area. Second, what companies really needed was more people coming downtown to buy things and do business in the area. Spreading $500 million around in grants to businesses didn't do much to help the businesses; but spending $500 million could have gone a very long way on parks, public events, streetscape improvements and the kind of investments that would attract people to the area. Third, while the grants were given to business owners, they were given upon signing a lease; most of the federal cash ultimately found its way into landlords' pockets, with little benefit to the business owner. As real estate reporters quickly noted, rents went up inside the Liberty Zone by about the same amount as businesses received in grants. This was less a job-retention program than a government-financed lease-signing bonus aimed at propping up rents. Indeed, the program's most effective supporters were lobbyists from the Real Estate Board of New York. When rents are pushed up by vibrant business activity, that's usually a good sign for an area; when they're pushed up by government subsidy, that's just bad policy.

Would the companies that got the grants have left without the grants? Not if you believe American Express spokesman Tony Mitchell. After American Express took a grant of $25 million, Mitchell said: "Our decision to return downtown, which has been our home for more than 150 years, was not predicated on financial incentives." However, he added, "Once those financial incentives became available, we chose to participate, as did other companies." In other words, American Express received a huge government subsidy for doing what it would have done anyway.[8]

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7 For a review of the Emergency Employment Clearinghouse, see *Pulling Together After 9-11: The Emergency Employment Clearinghouse Program* (New York: Consortium for Worker Education, 2004).
8 For more detail on the business retention and attraction program, see "Breaking it Down: Business Assistance Programs for Lower Manhattan," *Reconstruction Watch #4*, available at www. reconstructionwatch.net. Good Jobs NY, which runs *Reconstruction*

MATCHING WORKERS TO JOBS

In New York after 9/11 there were not enough jobs for local residents; in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina there are not enough residents and jobs are going begging. The result is a kind of wild west economy. Reliable statistics are hard to find, but research so far suggests a climate of both decent wages and rampant labor abuses.

"Katrina was a housing disaster," explains Amy Liu, deputy director of the Metropolitan Policy Program at the Brookings Institution. "Infrastructure, levees and housing were the first thing officials focused on in New Orleans. What's been missing is a focus on the economy: what jobs, what quality of jobs, what industries, small businesses … all of that has been left off the table or addressed in a very small way."

In the absence of a coherent government response, community groups, business organizations and unions are on the verge of setting up programs aimed at finding an orderly way to match workers to jobs and providing the necessary training and support.

Wade Rathke, chief organizer for the New Orleans-based Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN), says bluntly: "This is no longer a low-wage city. Employers can't get anyone to work for less than $9 or $10 an hour." A significant issue, besides housing and schools, is matching displaced residents to jobs. As of August 2006, ACORN is working on plans to open a workers' center that will locate displaced residents and provide training and assistance to get them to work.

Greater New Orleans Inc., a 10-parish regional development organization, also has plans to establish a recruitment system that will reach out through churches, community colleges, social service agencies and in cities where displaced residents are living. "There will be screening, assessment and options for literacy/employability classes, or a higher-level training class at our local technical college or the possibility to go directly to employment," says Barbara Johnson, senior vice president for the group. "We are working with a network of social service agencies to provide support services—transportation, child care, housing. We are building a system that is not in place that has to be there if we are going to successfully connect people with jobs." And construction unions are on a similar path: the AFL-CIO plans to set up a Gulf Coast Workforce Development Project, to train potential workers for jobs in the construction industry.

All these efforts, however, were still in the planning process as of August 2006. In the meantime, some workers are badly exploited. "Here's the kind of situation we see," explained Jyaphia Christos-Rodgers, an urban sociologist and longtime New Orleans activist. "Fifty-two Latino workers who came to my church were about to be evicted from a hotel they'd been living in. They'd been brought here by a contractor, who paid

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them about eight dollars an hour, and paid for their hotel. When the contractor found a different group of immigrants who would work for six dollars an hour, he wanted to kick them out of the hotel room."

In this instance, Christos-Rodgers' church group was able to intervene, but in other cases workers from Central America have wound up homeless in New Orleans—even as people who want to return to their homes are held out of the city. In mid-2006, a research team of The Advancement Project of the National Immigration Law Center interviewed 700 workers in post-Katrina New Orleans and documented a shocking level of labor abuse, homelessness and harassment by police and contractors. "The treatment of workers in New Orleans constitutes a national crisis of civil and human rights," the report concluded. [9]

WILL IT BE BETTER THAN BEFORE?

A few years after a "normal" disaster—a typical hurricane, earthquake, or flood—the local economy rebounds stronger than it was before. The spending of insurance money and federal funds creates a stimulus, and what is damaged is usually replaced with newer and better than what was there before.

The jury is still out on whether this will be the case after a devastating blow like 9/11 or the flooding in New Orleans. So far, both cities are still struggling with the impact of the disasters. What's clear, however, is that in neither case was helping workers or creating an economy of high-quality jobs much on the minds of the officials in charge. ◆

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Watch, is a joint project of Fiscal Policy Institute and Good Jobs First.

[9] Judith Browne-Dianis et al, *And Injustice for All: Workers' Lives in the Reconstruction of New Orleans* (Washington, DC: The Advancement Project, 2006).

PART THREE: RENEWAL

RACE AND RECOVERY IN POST-KATRINA NEW ORLEANS

BY HUEY L. PERRY

As New Orleans braced itself for Hurricane Katrina the weekend of August 27 and 28, 2005, no one was able to fully appreciate how different the city would be in the aftermath. New Orleans was practically unscathed by Katrina itself. The devastation the city experienced was caused by a massive water surge through the city's canal structure that breached the city's inadequate and weakened levee system. Eighty percent of the city was under water and thus virtually destroyed.

It is not hyperbole to suggest that New Orleans may never be the city it once was. New Orleans is now undergoing an almost unprecedented rebuilding process, and racial dynamics are an intrinsic part of the political decision-making calculus governing the rebuilding. This paper provides a preliminary assessment of the challenges involved in rebuilding New Orleans and the role that race will—and already does—play in that process.

THE LOWER NINTH WARD

Race plays a fundamental role in every major American city, and this is especially true in New Orleans. Rebuilding the city will be the largest municipal reconstruction undertaken since the rebuilding of San Francisco following the earthquake of 1906. All major components of city life will have to be revamped. There has been intense reaction by African Americans to the initial recommendation of Mayor C. Ray Nagin's Bring New Orleans Back Commission that the lowest lying neighborhoods in the city—those disproportionately populated by African Americans—should not be rebuilt. The principal African American community that is at the forefront of this debate is the Lower Ninth Ward.

The issue of whether the Lower Ninth Ward and other predominantly black, lower lying neighborhoods should be rebuilt is so racially charged that candidates avoided making it a major campaign issue in the 2006 mayoral election, at least in their public discussions. A related issue, which is also racially charged but which managed to bubble up into the campaign, was which mayoral candidate was best able to lead the rebuilding of New Orleans.

The Lower Ninth Ward is a negative symbol of an accumulation of private and public sector decision making that assigned the working class—the backbone of the city's tourist-based service economy—to the residential areas most vulnerable to flooding from hurricanes and torrential rain. Incongruously, the Lower Ninth Ward is also a positive symbol of the historic advantages urban life provides in the form of increased economic opportunity for disadvantaged people who migrate to the city to escape the misery of rural poverty and for blacks escaping oppressive racial discrimination and prejudice. For example, the home ownership rate in the Lower Ninth Ward prior to Katrina was 59 percent for the overall population and 57 percent for blacks, higher than the black home ownership rate for all of New Orleans (43 percent), Louisiana (53 percent) and the nation (49 percent) (U.S. Census 2000).

The Lower Ninth Ward was destroyed by flooding resulting from the breach of the Industrial Canal levee during Katrina and is proving to be the most difficult area in the city to restore. It was the last area in the city to receive electricity, potable water and temporary trailers after the storm. In February 2006, the city's website reported that the Lower Ninth Ward's sewerage system was still inoperative, electrical service was available to less than 25 percent of the area's customers and gas service was available to only three percent of the households (City of New Orleans, Mayor's Office of Communications, 2006). On May 8, Mayor Nagin, after being informed that tap water in 80 percent of the Lower Ninth Ward was drinkable, announced that residents could immediately return to their homes. During the summer of

New Orleans is now undergoing an almost unprecedented rebuilding process, and racial dynamics are an intrinsic part of the political decision-making calculus governing the rebuilding.

2006, the Lower Ninth Ward and the predominantly white upscale Lakeview area were still without basic telephone service, along with about one-third of the entire city.

The physical infrastructure of the whole city has had to be rebuilt. A great majority of the city's 54,500 street lights had been restored by March 31, 2006. There are numerous leaks throughout the city's water system, which has severely compromised its efficiency—six months after the hurricane, just 20 percent of the 150 million cubic feet of water pumped each day was reaching end users.

The city's economic base was also decimated. Attendance at New Orleans's first post-Katrina Mardi Gras was an estimated 350,000 people this year, compared with the one million people who usually attend, according to the New Orleans Tourism Marketing Corporation. Consumer spending on hotel rooms, restaurants, antiques, festivities and souvenirs sharply decreased. New Orleans' sputtering economy did not generate the boost from Mardi Gras festivities that many had hoped for (Callimachi, 2006).

Mayor Nagin's plan for revitalizing the city's business sector includes a mixture of proposed ideas to boost small businesses, maritime activity and the hospitality industry. Nagin's plan in this regard is based largely on the recommendations of his Bring New Orleans Back Commission, and requires the final approval of the New Orleans City Council, the governor's Louisiana Recovery Authority and, eventually, the White House. In this way, the fate of economic revitalization in the African American business community in New Orleans, as is the case with economic revitalization in the entire city, rests, to a great extent, with decisions that will be made externally, outside New Orleans' governance apparatus.

Macro decision making by state and federal governments notwithstanding, there will be an important role for local government in rebuilding New Orleans. Individualized (micro) decisions about the reconstruction of the Lower Ninth Ward, and about the reconstruction of the city's entire infrastructure, will be made in the local political process—which has also been reshaped and reconstructed in the post-Katrina period. The re-election of Mayor Nagin has very clear implications for a strong role for local government within the parameters of the macro-level decisions that will be made by state and federal agencies. Nagin's re-election also ensures that racial dynamics will be a fundamental component of the rebuilding process.

RACE AND POLITICS IN THE CRESCENT CITY

Municipal elections were originally scheduled to be held in New Orleans on February 15, 2006. However, Louisiana Secretary of State Al Ater decided, based on the recommendation of the commissioner of elections, to postpone them—a move supported by Governor Kathleen Babineaux Blanco. The rationale for the postponement

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was that the physical infrastructure for balloting was not in place and that not enough people had returned to the city to legitimize the election. A New Orleans federal judge, in mediating a lawsuit between forces who wanted to delay the elections indefinitely and those who wanted to have the elections held as soon as possible, ruled that voting would instead be held April 22, 2006.

According to rules recommended by the Louisiana secretary of state's office and approved by the state legislature, residents of New Orleans who were registered to vote prior to Hurricane Katrina were allowed to cast absentee ballots in person April 10 through 15 at the offices of the Registrar of Voters in Caddo, Calcasieu, East Baton Rouge, Jefferson, Ouachita, Rapides, St. Tammany, Lafayette, Tangipahoa and Terrebonne Parishes—those in which substantial numbers of displaced New Orleanians now live. New Orleans-registered voters who were living in other parishes and out of state, and who had voted in previous elections, were allowed to cast absentee ballots by mail. However, state law mandates that a person voting for the first time must vote in person in the parish where he or she is registered to vote.

Given that pre-Katrina New Orleans was two-thirds African American, and that a majority of displaced New Orleanians are black, working class or poor and thus did not have the economic wherewithal to easily return to the city to vote in person, some worried the law would depress African American voter turnout.

Secretary Ater conducted a $1.5 million information campaign to inform and educate displaced voters of New Orleans about changes in the voting process in the 2006 city elections. After Katrina, the city consolidated approximately 300 polling sites into 93 large voting precincts. A giant

warehouse on Chef Menteur Highway in flood-ravaged eastern New Orleans, consisting of 50 combined precincts and 27 voting places, was the largest of the makeshift mega-voting precincts. Citizens of New Orleans who voted at the Chef Menteur Highway site cast their votes under signs bearing the names of destroyed voting places familiar to them in the Ninth Ward: 7925 Alabama Street, St. Mary's Academy, Schaumberg Elementary School, etc. (Nossiter, 2006). New Orleans had 297,000 registered voters prior to Katrina, but only 108,000 voters participated in the April 22 elections.

Nonetheless, in the Democratic Party primary runoff that followed on May 20, turnout among African Americans increased just enough to help Nagin—who is black—defeat his challenger, Lieutenant Governor Mitch Landrieu, by winning 52 percent of the vote. According to *The Times-Picayune*, 55 percent of the voters in the runoff were African American.

THE RESTORATION OF RACIAL COMPETITION

Blacks became a formal part of the governing coalition in New Orleans in 1970 when black leaders lent their support to the Maurice E. "Moon" Landrieu mayoral administration. They have systematically accumulated political power since that time. And in 1977, with the election of Ernest N. "Dutch" Morial as the first African American mayor of the city, African Americans became the dominant component of the city's governing coalition.

Whites reluctantly acceded to black political dominance in New Orleans but many never fully accepted it. Whites showed their discomfort with black governance by moving to the suburbs in increasing numbers. While New Orleans had lost whites to the suburbs prior to Morial's election in 1977, white flight accelerated in the 1980s and 1990s, as African Americans consolidated their power over city governance. Still, it is not a simple matter of racism that explains white flight from New Orleans. The inability of African American city leaders to effectively address the problems of corruption in the police department, escalating crime rates and a woefully deficient public school system also contributed to the shift.

Owing to Katrina, racial competition for the mayor's office has been fully restored in New Orleans. The first mayoral race after the horrors of the hurricane had an intriguing racial undercurrent. Since much of the city's black electorate was displaced, the central question of the election was how incumbent Mayor Nagin would fare. He faced two formidable white challengers in the field of 22 candidates: Landrieu and Audubon Nature Institute Chief Executive Officer Ron Forman. Such competition would have been highly unlikely prior to Katrina, given that the pre-hurricane population of New Orleans was nearly 70 percent black. The new rise of white candidates was not simply a result of demographic change: Nagin's lapses in preparing the city

for Katrina and his missteps in the aftermath of the storm raised questions about his leadership ability among voters of all classes and races. Nonetheless, Katrina disrupted the city's traditional electoral balance in which black candidates held a virtual monopoly on major offices, with white voters relegated to swing-vote status (Perry, 2003, 1997, 1993, 1990, 1987, 1985).

Although precise numbers are impossible to ascertain, demographers and political analysts agree that Katrina evacuees are disproportionately African American, which has resulted in New Orleans's current population being roughly half white and half African American. The new racial balance in the city means that African Americans were not able to easily dominate the 2006 mayoral election, as they had for the last 25 years.

The city's current electorate resembles the New Orleans electorate of 1977, when there were nearly equal numbers of white and black voters, though the racial dynamics of this year's election played out very differently. In 1977, Morial defeated a better-known white opponent, Joseph DiRosa, to become the city's first black mayor by overwhelmingly winning the black vote as well as white crossover support of nearly 20 percent (Bayor and Perry, 2006; Perry, 2003, 1997, 1993, 1990, 1987, 1985). After his historic victory, Morial said the results were "indicative of the kind of city New Orleans is: a city where leadership and ability count for more than race." Four years later, Morial's enthusiasm for white support of black candidates deteriorated, as many of the whites who had voted for him in 1977 supported his lesser-known white opponent, State Representative Ronald Faucheux, in the 1982 mayoral runoff election. During his second term, Morial was frustrated with white New Orleanians' unwillingness to disregard race in electoral politics (Russell and Donze, 2006).

Nagin, a former local cable television executive, was first elected mayor in 2002, defeating former police chief Richard Pennington, Jr., who is also black. His victory that year confirmed political scientist Baodong Liu's (2003) argument that running a deracialized campaign, as Nagin did in 2002, is more helpful to African American candidates in black majority cities than it is in white majority cities. Deracialization occurs when both candidates in an election are African American and one of the candidates runs a campaign that avoids or minimizes racial appeal in order to attract enough white voter support to win the election. This is precisely the strategy Nagin used in 2002 when he received 85 percent of the white vote and 40 percent of the black vote. By comparison, Pennington received 15 percent of the white vote and 60 percent of the black vote. Deracialization theory has developed to the point of including racial contexts that are majority white and majority black, as well as biracial and uniracial candidacies (Perry, 1996, 1991, 1989).

But in post-Katrina New Orleans, something very different occurred. In the April 22, 2006, mayoral primary with 22 candidates, Nagin finished first with 38 percent of the

vote, followed by Mitch Landrieu with 29 percent. The racial calculus worked in this election in a way that had not been seen since the 1970s, as white voters overwhelmingly supported white candidates and black voters divided their support between Nagin and Landrieu, with Nagin receiving 67 percent of the black vote and Landrieu 24 percent. Local analysts believed Landrieu received the 24 percent African American crossover vote largely because of his father's (Mayor "Moon" Landrieu—the city's first liberal white mayor) facilitation of black political participation in the biracial governing coalition of the early 1970s and because of black voters' dissatisfaction with Nagin.

Many black voters felt Nagin had done little to address their interests during his first term. But surprisingly, black criticisms of Nagin's failures during and immediately after Katrina were muted. Instead, African Americans chose to assign much greater blame to the failure of state and federal officials. Observers felt Nagin avoided blame in part because of racial solidarity with an African American mayor whom many felt had been unfairly criticized by the media and state officials, and whose missteps paled in comparison to those of state and federal officials.

Most surprising, however, was the fact that Nagin lost almost all of the historic white support that had helped elect him in 2002. While Nagin received almost 90 percent of the white vote in 2002, he received only 6 percent of the white vote in the first round of the 2006 election.

At the same time, he won 60 percent of African Americans, substantially surpassing the 40 percent of the black vote he received in 2002. While Nagin was able to use a deracialized political strategy to get elected in 2002, this strategy was no longer viable given the changed racial demographics in post-Katrina New Orleans. He knew that to win, he would have to behave like the traditional black politicians of an earlier generation who ran in majority black jurisdictions and districts (Perry, 1996, 1991).

Nagin ultimately defeated Landrieu in the May 20 runoff. This was a stunning victory by Nagin—a Lazarus-like recovery from almost certain political death, his incumbency notwithstanding. With the reduced political strength of blacks in the city as a result of Katrina, whites wanted to regain control of city governance. Yet blacks responded with newfound loyalty to the incumbent black mayor, giving him 85 percent of their votes. Nagin also received one-quarter of the white vote—mostly white conservatives who may have been responding to the pro-business stance of his first administration.

There are two important lessons to draw from the 2006 mayoral election. The first is that white support of African American candidates in majority black jurisdictions, while strategic, is fragile. Generally, whites prefer to vote for white candidates. Deracialization research (Austin and Middleton, 2004; Liu, 2003; Jeffries, 2000; Wright, 1999, 1997; Perry, 2003, 1996, 1991; Persons, 1993) has not given sufficient

attention to how fleeting white support of African American candidates can be.

The second major lesson is that African American voters react vociferously to attempts by whites to undermine their political achievements, even to the point of forgiving a repentant African American incumbent for ignoring their interests during his first term.

Race was, without a doubt, the fault line in this election. On the surface, the centerpiece issue was which candidate was best able to rebuild the city. The real, if unspoken, issue, however, was about which racial group would govern the city in the future. On both counts, voting broke down along racial lines. The election was a racial contest for power.

Other factors played a part in Nagin's victory. A tradition of New Orleans mayoral politics was in his favor: New Orleanians have not voted an incumbent mayor out of office in 60 years. He had very high name recognition among the voting public. And he had unexpected success raising funds for his campaign. Although he fell out of favor with many of the city's big-money contributors by the beginning of his formal campaigning, Nagin had already amassed $1.3 million before the campaign started. By the primary election in April 2006, Nagin had raised $2.1 million.

Landrieu and Forman both also raised ample campaign funds. Forman, who has longstanding ties with wealthy patrons of the Audubon Nature Institute, had raised $2.1 million by the April 2006 primary election, while Landrieu raised $1.7 million. The important point about Nagin in this discussion is that he was able to be competitive in fundraising—a fact that is rarely the case for African American candidates in biracial contests. His incumbency was undoubtedly the critical factor in this regard. However, between the first round of the election and the runoff, Landrieu substantially outdistanced Nagin in campaign fundraising, reportedly by a six-to-one margin.

A key undercurrent to the runoff campaign was the rebuilding plan crafted by Nagin's Bring New Orleans Back Commission. The plan, which was controversial largely because of its call to reduce the size of the city by prohibiting housing in the lowest lying neighborhoods, would have been the centerpiece issue of the runoff campaign had not Nagin been smart enough to oppose the commission's call for a moratorium on building permits in lower lying areas of the city. The city's African American leadership spoke out against the proposed ban on housing in low lying areas where most black neighborhoods are located.

Throughout the campaign, Nagin insisted he was not going to change his message or target a different audience than the one that had elected him four years earlier. He continued to describe his constituency in economic rather than racial terms, saying he won the 2002 election because he had broad support from middle- and upper-income New Orleanians of all races. Even if the big-money crowd abandoned him, he

insisted the rest of his economically based coalition would still support him (Russell and Donze, 2006). However, the election results did not support Nagin's prediction. While he received some middle class white support in his re-election, it came nowhere near the massive middle class white support he received in 2002.

THE ROLE OF RACE IN THE RECOVERY PROCESS

During the initial months following Hurricane Katrina, the white-dominated business elite was the key source of vision and planning on how to rebuild the city. Formally, the elite led the planning effort through their service on Nagin's Bring New Orleans Back Commission, which was officially charged with developing a rebuilding plan for the city. Nagin appointed all 17 members without ratification by the city council. The commission was racially balanced, and it included African American City Council President Oliver Thomas as well as the renowned African American jazz musician Wynton Marsalis.

The players who dominated the commission's work, however, were almost all white. They included Joseph Canizaro, a developer and former president of the Urban Land Institute—a national organization of urban developers and planners—who is widely considered the most influential member of the elite; Jim Amoss, editor of the New Orleans *Times-Picayune*; Pres Kabacoff, another wealthy developer; Donald Bollinger, a shipyard owner; James Reiss, a real estate investor and chair of the Regional Transit Authority; Alden J. McDonald Jr., CEO of Liberty Bank, one of the nation's largest black-owned banks and the lone African American among the planning elite; Janet Howard, president and CEO of the Bureau of Government Research; and Scott Cowen, president of Tulane University (Davis, 2006). The most influential members were the white committee chairs, notably Canizaro, Cowen and Howard.

James Reiss and Pres Kabacoff have suggested that New Orleans has too many poor black people and that this has impeded development and resulted in an economic profile similar to a northern urban ghetto (Davis, 2006). Before the April 2006 primary, they had supported the candidacy of Ron Forman, a powerful and successful businessman who serves as director of the Audubon Nature Institute, which includes the famous Audubon Zoo, and who was primarily responsible for the construction of the Audubon Aquarium of the Americas. *The Times-Picayune*, the city's major newspaper, endorsed Forman in the first round of the election, and both *The Times-Picayune* and Forman endorsed Landrieu in the runoff.

But in Nagin's victory speech upon winning re-election, the mayor emphatically stated for the first time that the Lower Ninth Ward will be rebuilt.

With his decisive win, Nagin is now clearly the leader of city government. The white business and economic elite, which abandoned him in the 2006 election, will have to accept his

If Nagin can succeed in bringing the city's black governmental elite back into the fold…he will have more power than any other African American mayor in the city's history.

leadership and attempt to overcome his distrust of them. Of course, most of the city's black elected leaders did not support Nagin's re-election bid either, but if they want to have influence in the rebuilding process they have no option other than to support the mayor. If Nagin can succeed in bringing the city's black governmental elite back into the fold, given the unprecedented magnitude of federal monies and private resources that will flow into New Orleans for redevelopment, he will have more power than any other African American mayor in the city's history.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Racial dynamics have been a central feature of the city's rebuilding process, and the nature of Nagin's re-election ensures that racial politics will dominate the recovery in New Orleans. The white business and economic elite will play an influential role in the city's rebuilding process, yet Mayor Nagin is now the premier leader of the governmental elite in New Orleans and an enormously powerful actor. Paradoxically, even as whites have become a larger proportion of the city's population in the post-Katrina era, African American political leadership and governance will likely achieve a level of influence in private decision making in business and economic affairs that will be unprecedented in the city's history.

New Orleans will have to undergo a period of racial healing. This will more than likely be reflected in an accommodation of interests between the largely black governmental elite and the white dominated business and economic elite. These two elite structures have never learned to work together for their mutual benefit and the overall good of the city like their counterparts in Atlanta (Stone, 1989). The national attention focused on New Orleans in the rebuilding process, however, will strongly encourage these two elite structures to work together. This will not be an easy adjustment. Mayor Nagin, whose emergence as the leader of city politics was initially facilitated by white elite support (largely as a strategy to advance their own interests), now harbors distrust of the

business and economic elite because they abandoned him in the 2006 mayoral election. The future of the rebuilding process in New Orleans will depend on the extent to which Mayor Nagin and the white business and economic elite are able to put aside their differences to establish an effective coalition of government and business capable of restoring New Orleans as a great American city. ◆

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NEW ORLEANS RISING: BUILDING A BETTER CITY
BY PETER EISINGER

Pre-Hurricane Katrina was a city that didn't work particularly well. Visitors to the tourist bubble of Bourbon Street and riders on the streetcar named Desire out to the Garden District may not have understood this, but the indicators of deep economic distress, extreme inequality and political corruption and dysfunction were all around them.

New Orleans before the hurricane was among the poorest cities in the nation. In 2004, more than 38 percent of its children lived in poverty and its median family income placed it 62nd out of 70 cities surveyed by the U.S. Census Bureau for its American Community Survey. According to a 2005 study by researchers at the Brookings Institution, the city ranked second among the nation's 50 largest cities in the degree to which its residents lived in concentrated poverty neighborhoods—that is, where 40 percent or more of the population had incomes below the federal poverty line. In such sections of New Orleans, such as the Ninth Ward, four out of five children lived in single-parent households and less than 60 percent of adults were in the labor force, compared to more than 76 percent in the rest of the city.

Although residential segregation rates have been declining in most cities in the nation, segregation actually worsened in New Orleans in the last two decades (Berube and Katz, 2005). One casualty of this environment of poverty was the public school system, which has gone through 10 superintendents in the last decade. With an overwhelmingly poor student population, the city claimed 55 of Louisiana's 78 so-called "failing schools" under federal No Child Left Behind standards.

The school district has been emblematic of government corruption in New Orleans. Just weeks before Katrina, the state of Louisiana had sent a team of auditors to resolve the district's chronic fiscal crisis. They discovered rosters of "phantom employees" drawing paychecks and $71 million in Title I funds missing, according to the National School Boards Association (www.nsba.org, June 27, 2006). Widespread political corruption has been so endemic in the city, in fact, that the typical American distrust of government reaches what Peirce Lewis has called "pathological levels" in New Orleans (Lewis, 2003).

From an urban planning perspective, abandoning most of this below-sea-level city, save for its tourist center, might seem like the most prudent and least costly course of action following the hurricane. Nine months after the disaster, debris still clogged the streets of some neighborhoods, half the population was still gone and the pace of housing reconstruction was glacial. Nevertheless, discussing the abandonment option, or more realistically, discussing ways to shape a smaller city, have not been possible politically. Because the population of the areas flooded was 80 percent black (only 55 percent of the population in dry areas was

black), the abandonment option simply smacks too strongly of racism (Frey, 2005).

So what are we to do? Can we make a better New Orleans rising from the mud and detritus of the flood? A better city would be more integrated racially than the pre-Katrina city, and it would have a sounder economy diversified beyond tourism.

TARGETING FEDERAL AID

Following are some key priorities for directing federal aid to create a veritable Marshall Plan for a new city.

The first priority is to re-house those in the diaspora who wish to return in a way that does not reconcentrate their poverty or segregate them by race. The diaspora consists of a largely poor and black population numbering close to a quarter of a million people. Many will not come back, of course, but more would be tempted if there were attractive neighborhoods to which they could return. The city should not simply allow homeowners to use federal grants to rebuild anywhere they wish. Instead, the city and its neighborhood advocacy organizations should plan a housing scheme that deconcentrates poverty and desegregates racial enclaves.

These new neighborhoods might be designed according to new urbanism templates, respectful of vernacular architecture and committed to mixed use and mixed income. They could be funded by federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) monies allocated for hurricane recovery. The New Orleans share amounts to a large, though as yet undetermined, portion of more than $10 billion in CDBG funds appropriated by Congress for Louisiana in January and June of 2006.

New Orleans should resist trying to recreate the Ninth Ward or other formerly high-poverty districts, and should reject efforts to rebuild on land that lies below sea level behind inadequate levees. One advantage of this geographical shifting would be that the nation could finance a less ambitious levee reconstruction than would be necessary to protect the Ninth Ward. But the primary virtue of this plan would be to break up the old pattern of concentrated poverty.

Some will object that moving neighborhoods and transforming their social and architectural makeup will profoundly alter the culture and community fabric (Reed and Steinberg, 2006). But this view greatly romanticizes neighborhoods deeply scarred by poverty and isolation. In concentrated poverty neighborhoods, fear of crime is so pervasive that parents do not allow their children to play outdoors and adults are afraid to work the night shift because it means commuting during the hours of darkness. The cultural virtues of desperately poor neighborhoods—

the proximity of churches and networks of relatives, for example—are vastly outweighed by their often dangerous social dysfunctions, namely the absence of retail outlets, poor public services and lack of jobs. Bringing residents of these former neighborhoods into the larger society and exposing them to the better educational and employment opportunities and lower crime rates characteristic of working- and middle-class neighborhoods is worth whatever is lost in cultural and social ties. Besides, many personal bonds will be re-established in new neighborhoods.

A second priority linked to neighborhood rebuilding must be to offer housing subsidies to people in critical economic sectors who lost their homes. Current plans in New Orleans call for providing grants to homeowners, but little has been done for renters and nothing has been done to focus on particular sectors of the city's labor force.

The city should consider, for example, planned housing developments for displaced musicians to help re-establish this vital element of the tourist industry. Health care workers might be another targeted labor sector. Similarly, subsidized housing for port workers would enable New Orleans' port, the fifth largest in the country, to guarantee the presence of its labor force. Although exact figures for employment in the New Orleans port are not available, economists estimate that the three major Louisiana ports—New Orleans, Baton Rouge and South Louisiana—generate more than 269,000 jobs (Congressional Research Service, 2005). In the early days after Hurricane Katrina, some port workers had to be housed in cruise ships. New dedicated port worker housing developments would also encourage the return of skilled workers.

A third priority must be to recruit and employ those who left the city during and after the hurricane, as well as putting to work those who stayed behind but remain jobless. Among those who stayed but lost their jobs due to Katrina, 24.9 percent were still unemployed in May 2006 (Liu, Fellowes and Mabanta, 2006). The New Orleans labor force has historically relied on the tourist industry, ranking the city near the top in the nation in the percentage of its workers in service occupations. It has never been a manufacturing town, nor is it a major regional business or high-tech center. To transform its economy, the city needs to set aside reconstruction jobs for returning and current residents. Preferential hiring for New Orleans residents involved in reconstruction, along with subsidized job training, would be an important step in this direction. Recent Census data indicate that about 100,000 Latinos moved to the Gulf Coast following Katrina. Although it is uncertain how many are illegal immigrants and how many are living in New Orleans, a small March 2006 survey of reconstruction workers in New Orleans by Tulane and Berkeley researchers estimated that as much as a quarter of this workforce was comprised of illegal immigrants, most of whom arrived there from other parts of the U.S. (Fletcher and Pham, 2006). New Orleans and other Gulf Coast residents displaced to other cities or thrown out of work by the hurricane should be given employment preferences.

Finally, New Orleans, with the help of Congress and the state legislature, must establish a preferential contracting system for local firms for reconstruction and clean-up. The rebuilding process should function as an opportunity for economic development—that is, as an occasion for firm-building and capacity enhancement. To contract out the business of rebuilding to outside firms, leaving only the most menial labor tasks to local residents, is to gain no long-term development benefits from the experience. Reconstruction is a multi-year project, but when it is over, New Orleans firms would be able to compete nationally for disaster recovery work in a way similar to Halliburton and other such national and transnational corporations.

A new New Orleans will never look like its pre-Katrina self, but perhaps that is not so bad. Its old portrait, after all, was deceptive, a picture retouched and carefully cropped to hide the ravages of extreme poverty. Here is a chance to present a new and better face to the world. ◆

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REBUILDING THE GULF COAST: THE CONGRESS FOR THE NEW URBANISM AND THE MISSISSIPPI RENEWAL FORUM

BY JOHN NORQUIST

When Hurricane Katrina hit Mississippi and Louisiana people expected a bad one, maybe another Hurricane Camille (of 1969). Katrina wasn't another Camille. It was worse—much worse. The surge was higher, the damage was greater and in the aftermath even more damage and deaths were added as levees (particularly in Louisiana) and services failed. As citizens pondered their fate after the storm, perhaps they recalled the first two verses of the Lamentations of Jeremiah:

> How lonely sits the city that was full of people.
> How like a widow she has become.
> She that was great among nations.
> Princess among provinces has become tributary.
> She weeps bitterly in the night.
> Tears on her cheeks.
> Among all her lovers she has none to comfort her.
> All her friends have betrayed her.

People were in shock. Homes were gone, friends and relatives were killed and hope was almost nonexistent. In Mississippi, Governor Haley Barbour's economic policy director and retired businessman Leland Speed helped organize the state's response. The governor and Speed tried to deal with the immediate needs of shelter, food and water. As they searched for survivors, Speed saw another immediate need: planning for the future. He convinced the governor that even with the immediate emergency, Mississippi citizens needed hope and faith that life could get even better than it had been before the storm.

Speed also felt that mistakes had been made that had undermined development in the Mississippi Gulf region. He'd read *Suburban Nation*, a book co-authored by Andres Duany, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk and Jeff Speck, which lays out the basics of new urbanist design ideas. Speed saw the sprawl across the Gulf Coast caused, in part, by separate-use zoning and overbuilt highways, and hoped to change the future pattern of development. Speed contacted Duany and invited him to the governor's office in Jackson. The governor asked Duany to prepare a plan for Gulfport, Biloxi and nine other coastal cities. Duany, recognizing the urgency, replied that his firm lacked the capacity to plan for 11 cities at once. He needed help and asked the Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU) to assist in organizing a large team of designers to develop plans for the Mississippi Gulf recovery.

Governor Barbour appointed Netscape founder Jim Barksdale to chair the Mississippi Renewal Commission.

Barksdale and the Knight Foundation assembled just under a million dollars and funded an eight-day, multi-disciplinary, collaborative planning forum, or "charrette." A well-planned charrette assembles urban designers, traffic engineers, elected officials and other specialists and gets them all working together—something that doesn't otherwise happen enough. The Mississippi Renewal Forum involved 120 new urbanist architects, engineers and planners and 35 architects and planners from the 11 coastal cities, making it perhaps the largest charrette to date.

Flying into Mississippi, we immediately witnessed the storm-ravaged communities. The view from the ground was even more grim and heartbreaking. Coastal cities such as Waveland, Pass Christian and Bay St. Louis were as much as 70 percent destroyed. Others, such as Biloxi and Gulfport, now had storm-wrecked neighborhoods to add to stubborn pre-existing issues such as overscaled casino complexes, underdeveloped downtowns and traditional character threatened by placeless sprawl.

On October 11, 2005, work began with 12 to 15 designers assigned to each of the 11 communities. Taking their cues from the history and traditions of coastal Mississippi, the teams got right to work. Planning that would typically happen over the course of months in the independent offices of many consultants took place in one very large room in the Isle of Capri Casino in a week. During that time, residents, local government officials and new urbanist designers articulated a vision for the rebuilding, combining community desires with urban design principles.

A planning venture of this size easily could have run into obstacles, but this one did not. As the charrette's primary organizer, Andres Duany assembled what he called "the swarm" of dedicated new urbanist designers. The principles shared by this group helped the teams quickly establish priorities and efficiently produce outstanding work. The resulting set of plans and drawings presented on the final day of the charrette impressed observers such as Blair Kamin, the Pulitzer Prize-winning critic of the *Chicago Tribune*, who said, "In scope and style, as well as speed, this was a 'make no little plans' effort worthy of Chicago's Daniel Burnham."[1]

As the citizens of the Gulf Coast reassemble their lives and communities, CNU designers have prepared options for rebuilding neighborhoods that are even stronger and more

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[1] Blair Kamin, "Big plans, grand dreams in Mississippi," *Chicago Tribune*, October 23, 2005.

valuable than before the hurricane. A Gulf Coast pattern book provides practical tools and resources for small builders, homeowners and suppliers, and attempts to conserve and restore the sense of place that is specific to each locality. The pattern book was distributed to all building supply stores along with preapproved building plans provided free to builders in time for the spring 2006 construction season. New zoning and building codes were also offered to the 11 participating communities. These codes are mixed-use and form-based codes intended to replace the current separate-use zoning.

Governor Barbour accepted the reports in the fall of 2005. Since then, charrette team members have been returning to the cities and towns of Mississippi for public meetings and continuing the planning work. Ten of the 11 communities have adopted versions of the form-based codes that were articulated in the charrette. Biloxi, which has the largest concentration of casinos, felt the need to deal directly with the casinos without an operative form-based code.

Demand for housing solutions is strong, particularly for the "Katrina Cottage" designed by charrette participant and New York City architect Marianne Cusato. Recognizing the need for affordable housing and the well-known tendency of temporary housing to remain in use for years after disasters, Cusato's design was inspired from the coastal vernacular architecture of the region, using modular construction with carefully detailed traditional style.

The Katrina Cottage poses some clear advantages over FEMA trailers. Construction can occur quickly and the cottages are built to hurricane-resistance standards. They also cost less and add real permanent value. FEMA spent about $75,000 to deliver and install each of the 23- to 28-foot trailers for storm victims, while a Katrina Cottage can be set up for under $60,000. So far the cottages come in three sizes—300, 450 and 700 square feet.

Governor Barbour took his plea for cottages to the U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee on March 7, 2006, stating, "modular housing designed like the 'Katrina Cottages' … provides a much better living environment for disaster victims. Occupants of a 'Katrina Cottage' can use the cottage as a base from which to build their new permanent home."[2] Louisiana Governor Kathleen Blanco joined Governor Barbour, and the committee authorized Katrina Cottages as substitutes for FEMA trailers.

The only significant resistance to the recommendations of the Mississippi Renewal Forum charrette has come from the Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT), which is independent of the governor and controlled by a three-person commission dominated by road-building interests and elected in very low-turnout spring elections.

New urbanist proposals for smaller streets organized on a grid and supported by transit have been rejected by MDOT. They are proceeding with old plans that call for several giant multilane, grade-separated expressways in this relatively sparsely populated region. But because the estimated cost of MDOT's program is billions of dollars beyond projected revenues, there is some hope that eventually MDOT will consider the less expensive charrette plan. Of the 11 local communities, only Biloxi has supported MDOT's plan. Gulfport, the city with the largest population, is vigorously opposing the MDOT plan to build new freeways there.

One result of the MDOT mega-road plan is that the repair of bridges has been held up. MDOT wants to expand the Biloxi–Ocean Springs Bridge from four lanes to 12. This is one instance where Louisiana has acted more expeditiously than Mississippi. The causeway over Lake Pontchartrain in New Orleans, which was damaged by Hurricane Katrina, is now reopened at its pre-Katrina size. Mississippi will have to wait at least three years for what Ocean Springs Mayor Connie Moran calls "BridgeZilla."

The hard work isn't behind us. A whole list of things has to be addressed before Mississippi realizes the promise of renewal: mayors and other officials have to continue to take projects under their wings; MDOT has to be convinced to create neighborhood-sustaining roads and infrastructure; builders and developers must see the value of creating traditional urbanism; and a range of technical issues needs to be addressed, including how to respond to proposed FEMA rules for rebuilding in flood zones.

The Mississippi charrette was successful at teeing up reconstruction and revising zoning codes that had been working against good urban development. The charrette so far, however, has failed to overcome the commitment of MDOT to building giant sprawl-inducing superhighways to the exclusion of street grids and transit. As Leland Speed pointed out to a group of new urbanist traffic engineers recently, "Remember, this is Mississippi and reform takes time." All in all, the groundwork has been laid for a better Mississippi Gulf. ◆

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[2] U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations, full committee hearing to review the president's request for additional resources to assist the Gulf Coast region in its recovery from hurricanes in the Gulf of Mexico in 2005: Testimony of the Honorable Haley Barbour, Governor of Mississippi, 109th Congress, March 7, 2006.

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