FACTORS AFFECTING LONG TERM COMMUNITY RECOVERY

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Background

Often it is after the media spotlight fades that the real recovery process begins. Regardless of the level of interest and the effectiveness of the response during the event, the recovery process extends over time and passes through stages of short-term, medium and long term recovery.

For recovery efforts to be successful it must be recognised that communities and individuals have complex and interrelated needs that have to be understood and addressed. It is important that people, communities, organisations and government agencies play complementary roles and understand the interrelations between the social, community, cultural, political, economic and built environments.

The manner in which recovery activities are planned and undertaken is critical and can require appropriate enablers to be present to optimize the effectiveness of any recovery intervention. Conversely some activities fail to reach their potential due to presence of various barriers. There is a need to be able to assess and understand the enablers and barriers present within a recovering community so as to ensure that the right actions are taken at the right time.

Project Objectives

This project will address two complimentary areas of research relating to the long term recovery of communities after a disaster.

Firstly, the project will investigate how a person's history of residential mobility influences the likelihood of their willingness to dissolve social ties? This question will be addressed by considering 1) Why do people move
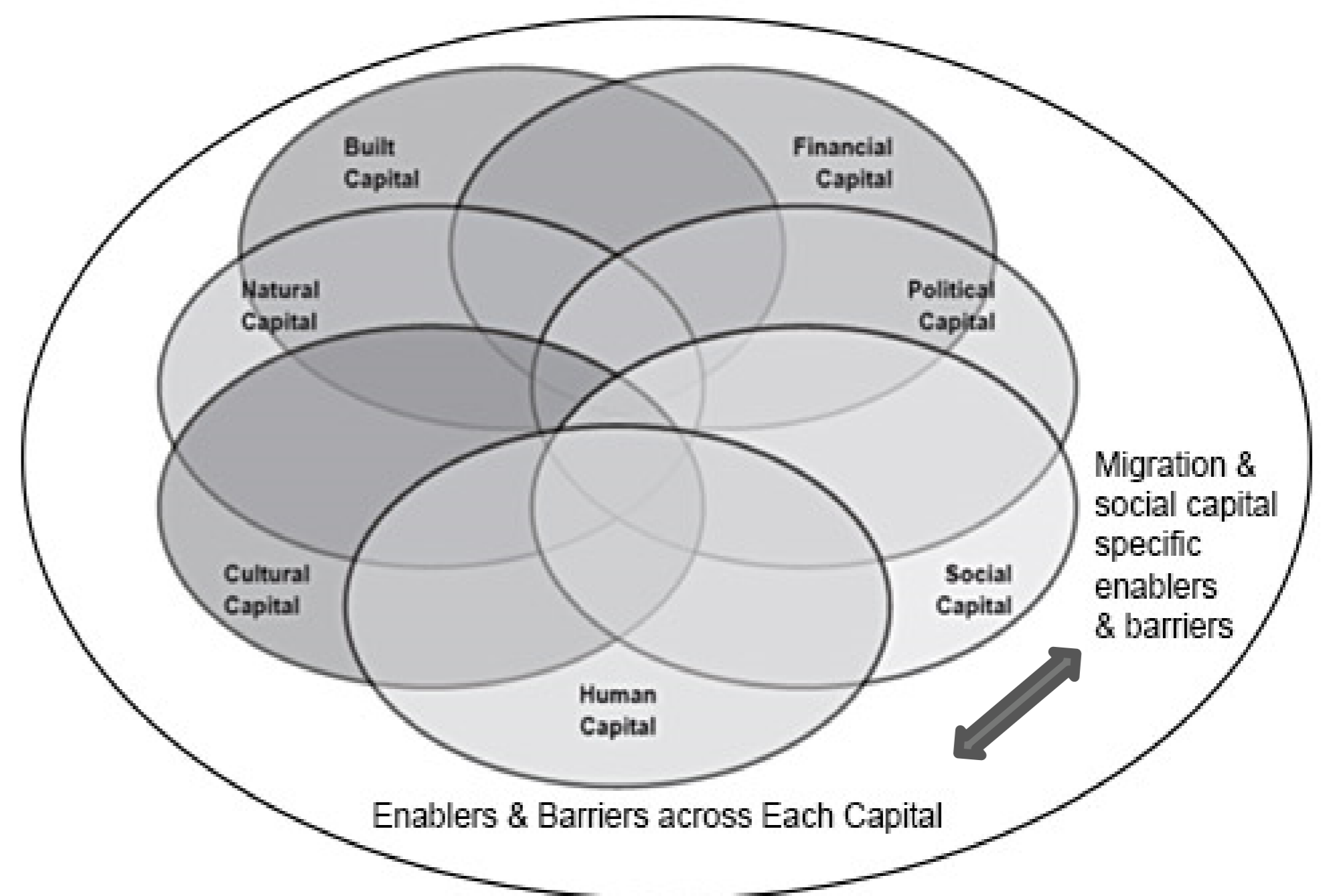2) How does their history of mobility play out in a disaster situation?
3) How does it affect the social capital of the community that is left behind?
4) How does it impact on the social capital of the community that is moved into?
5) What can we learn from this in order to increase the social capital in these communities?

The second area will expand on the social capital aspects be an examination of the enablers and barriers to successful recovery using a framework of community capitals (Figure 1). This will look at natural, cultural, human, social, political, built and financial resources, their interconnectedness and interactions in disaster recovery. Examination of these assets through case studies and working with end users will identify both potential areas for improvements as well as recognise what has worked well in recovering communities. This process will provide feedback and a guide for the planning of recovery activities in a range of communities.

Outcomes and Deliverables

This project will utilise end user oriented action-research to improve the way that planning for disaster recovery is addressed. This will help organizations to audit and gauge the level of resources available in target areas and inform program design for long term recovery based on a theoretical understanding and actual mapping of the real-life levels.

Some of the questions that this project will address are;
What are the long term impacts of disasters for individuals and communities?
What are the different stages / phases of recovery over the long term?
What are the long term impacts of appeals/grants?
What are the community level impacts of disasters?
What are the enablers, barriers, strengths and limitations of community led recovery?
How should we consider what a community is for the purposes of recovery?
What are the impacts of disasters on business and how are these impacts measured?
What are the conditions that enhance or detract from resilience?
How can we better understand resilience and vulnerability in the context of disaster recovery?

Project outcomes and deliverables will include;
A better understanding of how the history of residential mobility affects disaster recovery.
An improved knowledge base on the various enablers and barriers for recovering communities based on capital flows
A guide to assessing resources and appropriate actions in communities recovering from disasters.
Evidence based policy recommendations
Case study reports for a number of locations around Australia and New Zealand that will be developed in consultation with the projects end users.

END USER STATEMENT – Kate Brady, Australian Red Cross
Recovery from disasters is a long term, complex, multifaceted process. By better understanding the way that a community's social, natural, human, political, financial and cultural capital impacts on recovery from a disaster event, recovery managers will be better able to develop and implement recovery plans which meet the needs of the people impacted. By then taking a deeper look into the link between social capital and why some people choose to relocate after a disaster, this research will provide practical guidance to those helping communities prepare and recover from events.

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