

## Resettlement

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injustice and inequality are pushed outside the frame and rendered legitimate, even natural?

### Risk Subjects

It is important to note that this program is being met with a broad range of responses. By no means

does everyone subject to CVP resettlement see it as a form of dispossession. In fact, many inhabitants of zones of high risk *do* claim their right to be resettled and *do* hold the state accountable for its responsibility to protect the poorest citizens from environmental risk. They are active, empowered risk subjects who respond positively to this policy, taking advantage of the political opportunities opened up by it and seeing the state as performing its

job. Others who have been excluded from the resettlement program for technical and legal reasons petition relentlessly for recognition and inclusion. In addition, there are those who are actually relocating to recently-declared zones of high risk in pursuit of the additional rights and benefits that come with the territory. It is therefore clear that *risk* now frames a field of reason, affect, morality and law through which urban government is enacted and

in which people—with no other recourse to the benefaction of the state—claim, disclaim and negotiate their rights to the city and to membership within the nation.

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# Displacement and Deconcentration in Tampa

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Public housing projects are rapidly disappearing from US inner cities. Cleared sites are being redeveloped and former residents have been scattered into private housing. Our research over the past decade has examined various aspects of these changes across multiple sites in Tampa, FL. We have interviewed approximately 100 women who were relocated from public to vouchered housing and 40 homeowners in two major receiving neighborhoods. We have participated in numerous planning meetings, neighborhood functions and community forums. Our initial work, documenting early outcomes of mass relocations, has been followed by a National Science Foundation (NSF) grant to study the process of resettling families from public housing into two very different working class neighborhoods. Our work also involved partnerships with local agencies and support from a team of graduate students, including Lance Arney, Shari Feldman, Wendy Hathaway, Linda Hose and Brett Mervis. This article will describe these varied activities, along with discussion of theoretical and policy implications.

### Deconcentration

Neoliberal urban policies in the US over the past two decades have sought to “deconcentrate” pockets of inner city poverty. Poor people, concentrated in poor neighborhoods, are theorized to be hand-

icapped by their exclusive associations with other poor people. Especially within the dense and stigmatized conditions of public housing, it is believed that individual relationships and collective behaviors promote dysfunctional social conditions. The proposed solution is demolition of these alleged socially toxic environments and dispersion of the former tenants into new kinds of social settings where they can learn more appropriate values and patterns of action. This process, implemented primarily through the HOPE VI (Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere) program, envisions the creation of new kinds of social space in mixed income neighborhoods

HOPE VI was initiated in 1992, enabling public housing authorities (PHAs) to apply for multi-million dollar grants to demolish and redevelop public housing complexes deemed “severely distressed.” HOPE VI promotes deconcentration by replacing traditional public housing complexes with “mixed income housing” in which a percentage of the units are reserved for individuals who qualify for public housing assistance, while others are market rentals. One vehicle for deconcentration is the Housing Choice voucher (formerly Section 8), which allows public housing residents to relocate to market

“Public Housing Transformation and the Hard-to-House,” *Housing Policy Debate* 16[1]).

The Tampa Housing Authority (THA) has received two HOPE VI grants to demolish four public housing complexes. Our research tracked the initial relocation of nearly 1200 families in 2000, 61% of whom moved with vouchers into private rentals. Many moved into neighborhoods that were no safer than the demolished complexes. In several receiving areas, the influx of low-income renters has provoked conflict and resistance. There is scant evidence that meaningful relationships are forming across class lines. In addition, relocated residents have experienced social disruptions and various kinds of economic losses as a result of being moved. Social ties were broken, some households were involuntarily divided, and childcare and other arrangements required renegotiation. Many of the new neighborhoods have limited access to mass transit and necessary services (Greenbaum et al, “Deconcentration and Social Capital,” *Journal of Poverty* 12[2]).

### Partnerships

We envisioned this project as a multidisciplinary, community-focused endeavor that would engage collaborative efforts with several university and community entities. One of our early partners

some aspects of the community. Through a contract with the Tampa Housing Authority, the Urban League provided staff support to assist residents in the transition to new neighborhoods. Working with the Urban League, we were able to gain clarity on the relocation process and identify potential residents to interview. We worked closely with Urban League case workers—a core group of African American women who had been “in the field” interviewing residents, conducting needs assessments, and providing information to displaced residents.

Initially, we had an adversarial relationship with the Tampa Housing Authority, whose leadership was angered at our criticisms of HOPE VI. Following a presentation of our preliminary results, the director of THA twice wrote a letter to the president of the University of South Florida (USF) urging her to restrain our work. The university leadership suggested instead that they join us and take advantage of what we could offer. They agreed to work with us and over the next 18 months we collaborated with THA staff and residents of Central Park Village to better understand how HOPE VI worked on the ground.

Central Park Village was an historic African American settlement devastated by urban renewal in the 1970s and slated for demolition through HOPE VI. We made a determined effort to assist Central Park Village residents by using our knowledge about the problems that previously relocated residents had encountered. We jointly planned a day-long community forum that produced concrete suggestions for improving the relo-

## COMMENTARY

value housing. Over 200 grants and six billion dollars have been awarded to PHAs across the US (see Comey’s 2007 Urban Institute Metropolitan Housing and Communities Center Brief #1 and Popkin, Cunningham and Burt,

was the Tampa-Hillsborough Urban League, a historic organization that had long and deep connections in Tampa. Our research team had worked with the Urban League on other projects and they were a critical entity for entrée into

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## Tampa

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cation process and later joined the weekly THA planning meetings that implemented that process. We produced maps of potential destination neighborhoods showing locations of schools, shopping, services and transit lines, which THA used in connection with bus trips designed to expand residents' knowledge about places to move. Anthropology graduate students Brett Mervis and Kalfani Ture worked with THA staff and a youth committee to organize a Central Park Village youth festival providing additional information about neighborhoods, higher education and youth services, combined with entertainment.

### Conclusions

After nearly two years of planning, Central Park Village was demolished in August 2007. Residents were dispersed and plans were unveiled for a new mixed income community. Shortly thereafter, the Florida Supreme Court issued a ruling in an unrelated case about public financing that effectively

prevented use of tax funds in the redevelopment project. Coming at a critical moment, as the housing bubble burst, this judicial decision likely killed the project altogether. Although the court reversed its opinion on September 19, 2008 and cleared the way for the redevelopment to proceed, the shaky status of the real estate market likely makes the reversal a moot point. Tampa's condo market has collapsed and THA's private partners are scrambling to maintain the solvency of their current portfolios. This historic site where Ray Charles, James Brown and Thurgood Marshall rubbed elbows with local residents has been transformed into acres of rubble surrounded by a ghostly scattering of churches and old storefronts. The past is buried underneath and the future is very murky.

The former residents of Central Park Village have been relocated into the same neighborhoods as those displaced by the earlier HOPE VI demolitions. One of the main receiving areas in our NSF project presently has a 20% mortgage foreclosure rate and an elementary school that earned an F again this year. Relocated residents face no fewer obstacles in this neighbor-

hood than in the public housing complexes they left. This is not the "opportunity-rich" environment they were promised in exchange for the disruption and losses of relocation.

Notions about eliminating poverty through "assisted mobility" appear more frivolous as a deepening financial crisis threatens to swallow our whole economy. Some pundits have blamed this development on low income minorities who irresponsibly bought houses they could not afford. A "culture of poverty" narrative claims that poor people have orchestrated their own subprime victimization. The most significant lesson from the work we have done in Tampa is that this narrative must be defeated. The long litany of public policies adopted to cure alleged character deficiencies of the poor, the repeated failures and unintended consequences of these patronizing and often disingenuous schemes, have not succumbed to evidence alone. Our work has shown us, however, that university researchers, community activists and public agencies of various stripes can work together within localities to illuminate these problems and seek better solutions.

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## Habitat

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a reduction in crime in the past ten years and is considered a "hot," affordable, diverse neighborhood just outside downtown Charlotte. Additional research could be done to address the role of Habitat homeowners in the transformation of these neighborhoods. In the meantime, Habitat Charlotte continues to emphasize leadership, education, personal responsibility and partnership as essential components of homeowner training, and points to the success of neighborhoods that have seen Habitat development.

*Katherine Metzko teaches applied anthropology at UNC-Charlotte and would like to thank the homeowners and students who were part of this study, in particular students Jamie Allen and Kerby Price, as well as Nancy Pugh, Darryl White and Merritt Card from Habitat for Humanity. Metzko also examines heritage conservation in the Lake Baikal World Heritage Site. ☐*

## Katrina

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different responses. In the AHPP, we're learning that three years post-Katrina, recovery for some continues to be a tremendous challenge and merely providing better housing is insufficient. The protracted recovery process that placed victims in "temporary housing" for months and even years was not fully appreciated. We have learned that as the disaster magnitude increases, "temporary housing" requirements may exceed capabilities. In particular, many living in rental housing before the storm continue to struggle with finding permanent housing.

By treating disasters as "special events," something unpredictable and unprecedented, we deny that disasters are a social phenomenon. Chronic issues plaguing disaster response efforts—such as centralized versus decentralized decision-making, equitable resource distribution for victims, and variation in

public will to assist communities—are well documented, but not mitigated through a completely institutionalized approach (Rubin 2006). A multidimensional disaster response requires a more holistic approach to both emergency management and recovery assistance with a model for mitigating the needs of different types of victims that functions at multiple (federal and local) scales. Such an approach would ensure that resources are in place and would provide a general model to be tailored to specific disasters to account for diverse populations and circumstances. Through careful study, such as with the Alternative Housing Pilot Program, this model can be improved over time.

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## Puerto Rico

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from the sea, they have co-opted policies and practices that were developed to protect the housing rights of coastal peoples to build secondary homes. Seasonal housing is associated with coastal gentrification and although the construction and upkeep of these properties provides some employment for permanent residents, it is mostly low paying, informal and perpetuates their lower economic status. Together, these findings suggest a need to modify current policy so that the housing rights of traditional residents are protected and their coastal land does not become a closed playground for the rich.

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