Social contracts underpinning action on disasters: lessons for resilience

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Panel title: Making resilience useful for Disaster Risk Management: Multiple uses of the concept and its integration in policy

This paper examines the social relations that are implicit in perceived responsibility for managing significant shocks to social-ecological systems. The immediate effects of shocks are dealt with in the realm of disaster management. Responsibility for disaster management is usually seen as the responsibility of state agencies and authority – the protection of citizens in times of crisis. But underpinning such relationships is a broader and often implicit social contract between citizen and state inherent in how disaster risk reduction and protection is carried out in practice. And such implicit social contracts change when events are of such magnitude as to alter the relative roles the individual, private sector, civil society and the state can plan in response and recovery. The paper discuss examples that examine the role of markets and the role of government in coping with crises, drawing on empirical work in the UK. The paper argues that such social contracts require change to incorporate notions of resilience and social learning as the extent and scope of disasters change over time.