



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Progress in Planning

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/pplan



Stories of tragedy, trust and transformation? A case study of education-centered community development in post-earthquake Haiti

Jayne Engle*

McGill University, School of Urban Planning, Macdonald-Harrington Building, Room 400 815 rue Sherbrooke Ouest, Montreal, QC H3A 0C2, Canada

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 14 March 2016
Received in revised form 4 April 2017
Accepted 5 April 2017
Available online xxx

Keywords:

Community development
International development
Social transformation
Phronetic social science
Participatory methods
Haiti

ABSTRACT

Haiti's catastrophic earthquake of 2010 left approximately 200,000 people dead, 1.5 million homeless and most government buildings destroyed. Even pre-disaster, Haiti's outcomes on the UN Human Development Index were among the lowest in the world, and since the quake the country has fallen into further decline. Today, most Haitians continue to lack basic services, struggle with daily survival, and confront daunting challenges in their change efforts. Many have called for reconstruction of society, and argue that local civil society organizations should lead the way in these efforts by valuing local knowledge, and building on small-scale community successes. This research investigates one community's change efforts toward a new form of community development and potential pathway to transformation in Haiti. We aim to apply learning from this case to inform development practice and policy in Haiti and similar contexts.

The case study community, Bellevue-La-Montagne, is applying an education-centered community development approach which has placed construction of a new school and education at the heart of collaborative rebuilding efforts by local residents and organizations, primarily Haiti Partners. Education and participatory practices are embedded in all aspects of the community development, including: social entrepreneurship, healthcare, environmental stewardship, community agriculture, planning and construction. These efforts involve participation of people and organizations (local and international) in dialogical negotiations that aim to share power and build capabilities of local people, and to create, change, or preserve structures and institutions consistent with the interests of local people. Participatory and phronetic research methodologies reveal nuanced understandings of the community development and its meaning for local people. In spite of substantial progress in development projects, findings reveal tension points that potentially threaten long-term sustainability, such as: the highly fragile nature of state-society relations, lack of a sense of agency of local people despite strong levels of participation, and differences between outcomes for the community as a whole and individual households.

Moving from revealed *community* change in this case to a broader and deeper *social* transformation will require key 'levers of transformation', identified in this case as: 1) education; 2) place identity, networks, and research; 3) social entrepreneurship and social innovation; and 4) state-society trust and accountability. These levers can be activated through participatory and education-centered community development strategies that provide important roles for local people and civil society, and a nuanced role for international organizations which is sensitive to power dynamics. Such development strategies would give 'voice' to communities in their struggles for change. Strengthening, networking and scaling community level innovation that shows promise of transformation, such as the case of Bellevue-La-Montagne, would contribute to Haiti's attempts to forge a new narrative, and to evolving international development planning policy and practice.

© 2017 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: Jayne.Engle@mail.mcgill.ca (J. Engle).

1. Introduction

I'm not completely comfortable [with my life], because I'm limited. If I had continued in school, I could have a different future . . . I am my father's oldest daughter¹; he had dreams for me, but things went wrong; I should have gone further in school to be able to get a job with a regular salary. Currently, I have no regular income. By now, I would have almost completed my education. I had to quit school [at age 19], when I was supposed to go into 7th grade.

Lisa (female, 25 years old), resident of Bellevue-La-Montagne, 2013²

Haiti has never had a tradition of providing services to the population (Singh & Barton-Dock (2015)).

The majority of children in Haiti do not attend school regularly. Only twelve percent of primary schools are public, and most of the rest rely on parent-paid tuition, which is difficult for most families to sustain. Basic services such as clean water, electricity, and healthcare are scarce or nonexistent in most communities, and malnutrition and hunger are on the rise. There are an estimated 200,000 formal jobs in a country of more than ten million people. Stories such as Lisa's are not unusual. She lives in a country where education is not a right, nor is access to basic human services. In short, Haiti is a country where there has never been a true social contract in which the state listens to or works with civil society (Tippenhauer, 2010; Singh & Barton-Dock, 2015).

Current conditions in Haiti are an outcome of the country's historical development, which has produced weak formal governance and economic structures, high levels of inequality, and limited social safety nets. The Haitian state was characterized as 'predatory', 'fragile' or 'failed' even before the catastrophic earthquake of January 12, 2010. There was hope that the disaster would open a window of opportunity for transformation (Pierre-Louis, 2011; Pierre-Louis, 2012). However, outcomes in Haiti have deteriorated since then. Haiti's ranking on the UNDP Human Development Index fell by three places in 2014 to 163 out of 188 countries and territories – by far the lowest of any country in the Americas. Adjusted for inequality of education and income within the country, Haiti ranks even lower (UNDP, 2015).

Foreign assistance with post-earthquake recovery has produced mixed results. Six years after the disaster, more than 60,000 people still lived in tent camps. While there are pockets of somewhat successful post-earthquake development (see Engle-Warnick, Bornstein, & Lizarralde, 2013; Engle, Bornstein & Lizarralde, 2016), most attempts of scalable recovery and rebuilding efforts have failed. The political effects of foreign interventions have undermined the sovereignty of the Haitian Government, which some claim, has become a 'virtual trusteeship' of 'the international community' (Fatton, 2014, 2016).

Given the numerous challenges and barriers to development, exploring instances where progress has occurred provides a possible roadmap for other endeavours. In this paper, I investigate the experience of an education-centered approach to community development in Bellevue-La-Montagne, an area where post-earthquake recovery initiatives have had some success. I explore this community development from various perspectives, in order to address the questions: What does this case contribute to learning about possibilities for community change and pathways

to transformation in Haiti? And relatedly: Is Bellevue-La-Montagne an example of 'transformative community development' – that is, local participatory development that is having an impact on social change?

The article is set out in the following sections: 1.) Haiti context, conceptual framework and methodological approach; 2.) the community case study including background and vision of the lead organization, Haiti Partners; 3.) a 'behind the scenes' view of the community development underway based on perspectives and lived experiences of local residents, and a discussion of the 'tension points' revealed through analyzing various perspectives; 4.) identification of existing and potential leverage points for systems transformation for which this case provides a microcosm and is instructive to practice and policy across Haiti. I conclude by returning to the question of whether community development for social transformation is evident in this case.

1.1. Haiti context and conceptual framework

A central argument of this article is that much-needed change to Haiti's development trajectory can be furthered by learning from and scaling local community level experience with participatory development that shows promise of transformation, such as the case of Bellevue-La-Montagne presented here. Three points provide important context: 1) historical patterns of oppression and development have resulted in entrenched structural inequalities in Haiti; 2) since the role of government has been undermined by foreign interventions and internal politics, NGOs – large and small, local and international – have come to play a dominant role in the development landscape, with associated drawbacks and opportunities; and 3) the community level is a highly promising site of transformation when local people have the agency – through participatory development – to act, particularly in the areas of education, social entrepreneurship, and women's empowerment. In order to understand the context for local community development in Haiti and its potential pathways to transformation, it is important to begin with the broader backdrop of development challenges.

1.1.1. Dilemmas of development in Haiti

Historical patterns of slavery, oppression and isolation intertwined with deeply embedded structural inequalities and frequent disasters – most notably the catastrophic earthquake of 2010, present enormous challenges to changing the development trajectory of Haiti (Farmer, 2011; Schuller, & Morales, 2012; Wilentz, 2013). But it would not be the first time that Haitians overcame seemingly insurmountable barriers. The broader story that has contributed to shaping present-day Haiti began with an unprecedented historical success of the first, and still only, successful slave revolution, which led to the independence of the country in 1804. That feat, which was unfathomable at the time, came about during colonialism and a globalized slave trade, and led to other countries isolating Haiti and failing initially to recognize its independence (Girard, 2010). Haiti would go on to pay a massive 'debt of independence' to France until 1946, and various US interventions throughout history – not least an occupation from 1915–1934, and the support of brutal dictators during the Cold War – contributed to Haiti's inability to recover and its external focus. Export trade and international relationships were more important to government than inward efforts to build a solid society and political culture (Dubois, 2012). Haiti's central government has been oppressive, brutal, and predatory at worst, and at best, in short periods of relative stability, it has remained dysfunctional and corrupt (Heine and Thompson, 2011). The never-ending transition to a stable democracy began after the exile of dictator Jean-Claude Duvalier in 1986 with the establishment of

¹ The father has had 20 additional children since Lisa.

² Research participants' names have been changed throughout in order to protect their privacy. All participant quotations in the article indicate a first name (pseudonym), gender, and age in 2013, which is the year of all quotations. All participants were residents of Bellevue-La-Montagne.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/8942544>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/8942544>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)