

Memory of Disaster : Linking Experiences to Learning

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Being rated as a century event of the largest island shake, Taiwan's 921 Chi-Chi earthquake in 1999 has manifested itself an unforgettable and integral part of the society's collective memory. Two aspects of learning are considered successful over the past decade. The first concerns with the effective coping of long-term individual and collective behavior in response to the disaster impact and recovery process. The second concerns with the emergence of new vision together with a set of new values in school rebuilds and community renewal. The occurrence of 2001 Toraji typhoon in the impacted mid-Taiwan area after 921 earthquake might have caused fatal consequences. It was relaxed to a large extent through the maneuvering by the same experienced team who were working there for the post-earthquake recovery. However, not all developments following the disaster are satisfactory. Morakot typhoon in 2009 had caused unbearable consequences over the inflicted south and middle parts of Taiwan. It was the day of the 50th anniversary of August 7 flooding, the most serious of its kind in the history of natural disasters in Taiwan. It was also just a few days before the 10th anniversary of 921 Chi-Chi earthquake. The incident had been bitterly criticized and led to a shock reshuffle in the Cabinet. The government was blamed for the negligence in launching the effective mitigation measures that have been proven successful in the past. It is the dark force of forgetting that is taking lead. Memory of disasters should be helpful to alert the hazard awareness by linking human experiences to promote useful learning. The problem at issue is how the network of disaster memory can be effectively implemented and how the useful implications can be derived from the network. There are many types of disaster memory that can be stored. It could be personal and psychological, like, PTSD, suicide, resilience, and community support. It could also be collective or social, like, societal empathy and donations, large-scale rescue and recovery measures, government failures and civic complaints, and out-migrations. The emphasis of memory representation could be focused on the museum- or curriculum-type storing of disaster memory for an effective reminiscence of the suffering past so as to improve the measures of hazard mitigation and disaster reduction. The real or virtual museum is very versatile in storing on-site (e.g., active faults and landslides), documentary (like, government's written and printing documents), and/or digital archives (e.g., hundred-kilometer long rupture, rescue and recovery processes after the disaster) to serve different demands. The museum park of 921 Chi-Chi earthquake is the earliest one of its kind in Taiwan. The story is systematically told in a real building on the already ruptured surround. However, it's not the only one. In the beginning, 17 landmark memorials were forcefully proposed by local governments and concerned citizens. Five geological and architectural landscapes were finally agreed upon. A multi-media presentation together with an additional virtual interaction on the web is also under implementation in memorial of the 2009 Morakot typhoon. It will be displayed as part of the exhibition in an already-existed science museum and tailored to the need of distant learning and web interaction.