

1 Post-disaster recovery and sociocultural change: rethinking social capital development for the new  
2 social fabric

3 **KW: Recovery, social capital, Montserrat, volcano, cohesion, disaster**

4

## 5 **Abstract**

6 The post-disaster period is critical for reducing vulnerability and building resilience. Social capital  
7 plays an important role in generating and maintaining risk reducing behaviour and a rich evidence  
8 base demonstrating its contribution to the recovery process exists. Yet, so far little distinction has  
9 been made between the different types of social capital, despite important variations of outcomes.  
10 To address this gap, this article examines the evolving roles of specific forms of social capital on the  
11 long-term post-disaster recovery process. We explore the disaster recovery process on the active  
12 volcanic island of Montserrat in the Caribbean, marked by rapid and intense post-disaster  
13 demographic change following the beginning of the eruption in 1995. We explore the challenges of  
14 the shift from a relatively homogenous to a relatively diverse population for building a resilient society.  
15 Our investigation illustrates the complexity of the recovery process and the coexistence of conflicting  
16 objectives which, if poorly managed, can create new forms of vulnerability and impede the  
17 sustainability of the development process. We argue that not all forms of social capital development  
18 are beneficial for the long-term recovery process. In a diversifying society, bonding social capital may  
19 have perverse effect while bridging and linking social capital may be key for building social cohesion,  
20 a key contributor to sustainable development. We argue that measures for re-development should be  
21 sensitive to the long-term effects of different forms of social capital, in particular their consequences  
22 for building social cohesion, a key contributor to sustainable recovery in a dynamically changing  
23 society.

24

## 25 **1. Introduction**

26 Post-disaster periods give rise to major short-term and long-term challenges for affected  
27 communities. In addition to facing emergency response' needs, recovery measures have direct and  
28 indirect impacts on the long-term development trajectory of an affected society. Yet, the complexity  
29 of the long-term recovery processes and the multiplicity of its dimensions remains relatively  
30 underexplored.

31 A growing number of studies have shown that social capital is a key driver of sustainable recovery  
32 [1], [2]. It can prevent marginalisation of some social groups [2]–[4], support preparedness to disaster  
33 and risk awareness [1], [5]–[7], or even support trust between social groups and decision-makers [8]–  
34 [10]. Yet, social capital can also have a perverse effect on long-term recovery by reinforcing  
35 inequalities [11]–[14] or by encouraging harmful behaviours [12], [13], [15], [16]. There is therefore a  
36 need for a more careful attention on the paradoxical effects of social capital for long-term recovery.  
37 A distinction between different forms of social capital, namely bonding, bridging and linking, enables  
38 a better understanding of their evolving roles and influences through different stages of the post-  
39 disaster recovery process. This study is one of relatively few to explore the role of specific forms of  
40 social capital for supporting sustainable post-disaster recovery. Here we aim to provide more

41 understanding of the obstacles to reducing vulnerability, building resilience and lessening the risk of  
42 recurrence in future.

43 Using an ethnographic approach, we analyse the case of Montserrat, a Caribbean British Overseas  
44 Territory, severely affected by volcanic eruptions from 1995 to 2010<sup>1</sup>. One of the main long term  
45 impacts of the disaster is the rapid demographic change due to high levels of both emigration, with  
46 the departure of affected people, and the immigration of workers from neighbour countries. Here, we  
47 explore the challenges of the shift from a relatively homogenous to a relatively diverse population for  
48 building a resilient and sustainable society. The paper illustrates the complexity of the post-disaster  
49 recovery process and the coexistence of conflicting objectives which, if not well managed, can create  
50 new forms of vulnerability and hence impede the sustainability of the development process. We argue  
51 that measures for re-development should be sensitive to the effects of different forms of social capital,  
52 in particular their consequences for building social cohesion, a key contributor to sustainable  
53 development, in a dynamically changing society.

54 After briefly reviewing relevant research literature on disaster, recovery processes and social  
55 capital to establish the basis for our analysis, we describe the empirical case study focus for the paper,  
56 and outline the methodology employed in the research. We then explore the role of different forms  
57 of social capital through the post-disaster period and their implications for the long-term recovery  
58 process and resilience building. We conclude by highlighting the importance of promoting a shift from  
59 bonding to bridging social capital in a diversifying society in order to build resilience.

60

## 61 **2. Disaster, post-disaster recovery and social capital**

### 62 **2.1. Recovery**

63 Post-disaster recovery is discussed mainly in terms of response, rehabilitation, restoration and  
64 reconstruction but rarely are the long-term dynamics considered. Recently, the focus of disasters  
65 research has been at decadal-scale post-disaster recovery and directed towards vulnerability  
66 reduction [17]. The post-disaster decision-making process is challenged by the consequences of the  
67 disaster and the loss of resources. Yet, it plays a crucial role in determining the long-term recovery  
68 trajectory of affected communities. It is an opportune time for learning from past events in order to  
69 create a more resilient society [18]–[20]. The Hyogo Framework for Action for 2005-2015 and the  
70 Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction for 2015-2030 have institutionalized this in the principle  
71 of “Build-Back-Better” [19]. It distinguishes the recovery process from the idea of a “return to normal”,  
72 i.e. to the conditions existing before the disaster, to a need for change and improvement in order to  
73 reduce the impact of drivers of vulnerability to natural hazards. Hence, it recognizes the need to  
74 include preparedness measures within the recovery period, instead of considering them as separate  
75 stages of the disaster cycle.

76 While building-back-better and learning from experience is ideal, it remains challenging to  
77 understand the post-disaster recovery process and the recipe for its sustainability. Indeed, the  
78 recovery process encompasses multiple dimensions, e.g. physical, environmental, social,  
79 psychological or demographic, each proceeding at a different pace and interacting with the others, in  
80 ways that might facilitate or impede them [21]–[23]. It is critical to understand these interactions in

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<sup>1</sup> As of May 2019, the eruption is still officially ongoing although activity at the volcano remains low.

81 order to implement sustainable practices, reduce vulnerability and build resilience. The sustainability  
82 of the process is strongly linked with the concept of resilience [24]–[27], which is seen as “the intrinsic  
83 capacity of a system, community or society predisposed to a shock or stress to adapt and survive by  
84 changing its non-essential attributes and rebuilding itself” [25]. It presupposes a learning process that  
85 prevents reproducing pre-disaster status-quo [28] [29], although policy-makers and affected people  
86 commonly attempt to recreate the resources lost during the disaster and the environment with which  
87 they were familiar. Recovery processes build on pre-existing social structures, culture and values, in  
88 order to create a more resilient and sustainable future. They can, in turn, reproduce existing social  
89 inequalities or, inadvertently, create new sources of vulnerability to disaster [30].

90 We argue that there are learning processes taking place at different levels in the recovery  
91 process, implemented through policy and practices, that contribute to determine how adaptive or  
92 maladaptive is society’s transformation, and hence the sustainability of the implemented change [26],  
93 [31], [32]. Although there has been much research on the best approaches to reduce the risk of  
94 disaster and address vulnerabilities, there are relatively few studies of the challenges of implementing  
95 measures for DRR in a post-disaster period, a period of transition marked by multiple disruptions to  
96 society.

## 97 **2.2. Social capital, disaster and recovery**

### 98 **2.2.1. What is social capital?**

99 The concept of social capital has been used increasingly in recent years to explain differences in  
100 economic, social and political development [8], [33]. While this concept has initially been developed  
101 and understood by the sociologists Bourdieu and Coleman as a private good, beneficial at the  
102 individual or small group level [34], disasters and post-disaster development research tends to be  
103 informed by the collective perspective of Robert Putnam. His concept focuses on the *collective*  
104 outcomes of connectedness between people and the structural effects of social capital on community  
105 or national development. He describes social capital as, “the features of social organizations, such as  
106 networks, norms, and trust, that facilitate action and cooperation for mutual benefit” [35]. He  
107 elaborates on this, noting how these, “intangible resources of community, shared values and trust  
108 upon which we draw in daily life [...] can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated  
109 actions” [35].

110 The understanding and measurement of social capital are made difficult by the different contexts  
111 to which the concept is applied and the purposes to which it is put [15]. However, a distinction can be  
112 drawn between bridging, bonding and linking social capital [8], which in turn is related to the  
113 heterogeneity or homogeneity of groups [3], [15]. Bonding social capital refers to social ties that link  
114 people together with others who are primarily like them in some key respect (e.g. community, race,  
115 religion). It often characterizes homogenous groups [2]. Bridging social capital refers to social ties that  
116 link people across social differences and divides [36]. Linking social capital refers to ties with people  
117 with access to power [37]. This third type introduces a more hierarchical dimension, although in many  
118 cases it can overlap significantly with bridging networks.

119 Despite its analytical limits [38], [39], such a distinction is critical since the different forms of social  
120 capital contribute differently to adaptation [40], development and social cohesion [39], [41]. Putnam  
121 argues that bonding social capital, “is good for undergirding specific reciprocity and mobilizing  
122 solidarity” [8]. It reinforces conformity and solidarity but can be, as a consequence, exclusive to the

123 others, those who do not share this conformity [39]. Importantly, research demonstrates that  
124 homogenous communities often display stronger bonding social capital than heterogeneous ones, but  
125 less bridging and linking social capital [3], [42]. Putnam also maintains that bridging social capital is  
126 inclusive and enables, “linkage to external assets [and] information diffusion” [8]. Correspondingly,  
127 research has demonstrated that in heterogeneous populations bridging social capital has greater  
128 value, because it enables exposure to, exchanges and development of ideas and values, and hence  
129 enhances social cohesion [3], [15], [43].

130

### 131 **2.2.2. Social capital, disasters, and recovery**

132 The importance of social capital and social cohesion for development and resilience is now widely  
133 acknowledged [1], [2], [6]. As disasters are intimately linked to daily life and development processes  
134 [24], social capital plays a critical role in reducing the risk of disaster [2], [5], [6], [44], [45] and for post-  
135 disaster recovery [46], [47]. Murphy [6] also claims that the value of social capital as a lens through  
136 which disasters can be analysed is in, “its emphasis on the role of community members as active  
137 agents rather than passive victims”. In a review of the literature, Meyer [1] shows that social capital  
138 has a positive impact on mitigation and adaptation strategies. Reflecting on post-disaster context,  
139 Aldrich [44] argues that social capital is, “the strongest and most robust predictor of population  
140 recovery after catastrophe”. Pelling and High [40] suggest that the growing interest in social capital  
141 enables us to better understand the role played by social attributes, in particular social networks and  
142 norms, in the production of adaptive capacity and adaptive actions to environmental change, a view  
143 echoed in other studies [48]. Because of the importance of social change [2], [49], [50] and social  
144 capital in the recovery process, several authors have called for a re-orientation of recovery  
145 programmes, from the established approach focused mainly on physical infrastructure to programmes  
146 that target forms of social infrastructure, like social capital [2], [17], [41], [51].

147 Social capital can facilitate access to a variety of resources, including information, social support,  
148 and financial aid [2]–[4], that can prevent the marginalization of individuals or communities, support  
149 their awareness of risks and level of preparedness, and hence reduce their level of vulnerability to  
150 disaster. Trust, a critical element of social capital, is particularly critical for facilitation, coordination,  
151 cooperation and communication [8]–[10], [14] before, during and after a disaster. It also contributes  
152 to shaping collective and individual actions [40], [44], [52], and to encouraging the participation of the  
153 different stakeholders in decision-making [8]. Research shows that trust, inclusion and participation  
154 in decision-making have been major factors in successful community-level preparedness, mitigation  
155 and adaptation [1], [40]. Moreover, numerous studies have shown that bonding, bridging and linking  
156 social capital are complementary during and after crises, playing different roles [2]. For example,  
157 research has found that a high level of bridging social capital is generally associated with a higher level  
158 of preparedness [1], [5]–[7] and better access to information and supplies during the recovery process  
159 [3]. Linking social capital is particularly valuable as it provides access to power structures and  
160 institutions [3], [43]. During the post-disaster period, affected individuals and communities tend to  
161 rely primarily in their bonding social capital, in particular their family members, for immediate support,  
162 mainly through the supply of provisions [2], [49]. Studies have demonstrated that strong bonding  
163 social capital increases the likelihood of collective action for recovery [2], [14], [46], [53], [54] and can  
164 reduce the reliance on external support and aid. Hsueh [47] also emphasized the complementary role  
165 of the three forms of capital after a typhoon, and the higher support rates and recovery satisfaction  
166 among the people who had higher bridging and linking network, compared to those relying exclusively

167 on their bonding network. Yet, the nature of the social fabric is not specified, hence it makes the  
168 generalisation of those results to another case study difficult.

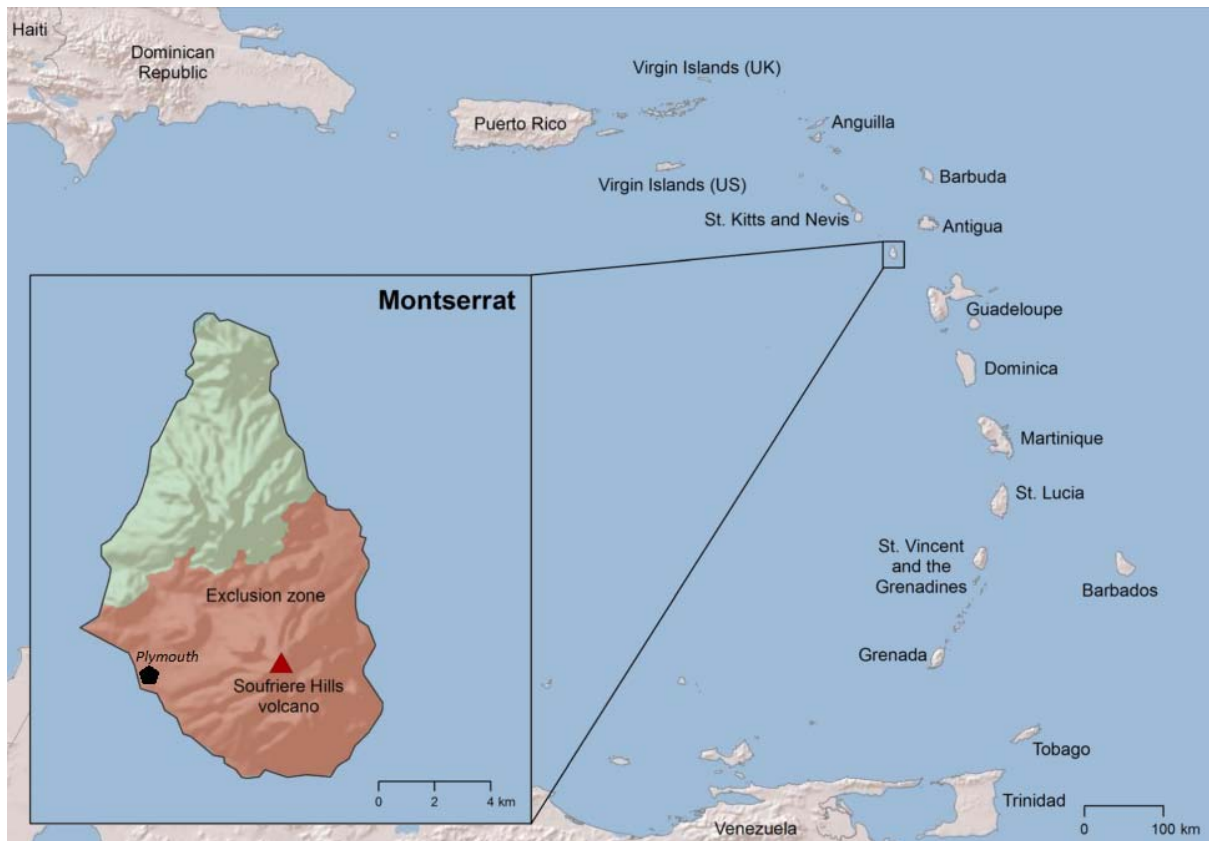
169  
170 The availability of these different forms of social capital also evolves over time, and is context  
171 dependent. Islam & Walkerden [55] found that immediately after extreme weather events,  
172 communities in Bangladesh relied heavily on both their bonding and bridging social capital. As time  
173 elapsed, however, they found that only bonding networks continued to be active, while bridging  
174 relationships tended to weaken because of poverty, conflict or competition over access to resources  
175 or external support. The same analysis was made by Masud-All-Kamal & Monirul Assan [56] a few  
176 years later, still in Bangladesh, as they highlighted that linking social capital eventually was used for  
177 the benefit of a few only. Although other research has found that the role of bridging social capital  
178 grows over time after disaster [1], [3], [4], there is evidence that bonding networks, because of their  
179 exclusivity, can tend to prevent the development of bridging social networks [11]–[13].

180  
181 The existing studies focus on the use of social capital. There is a need to analyse how the later can  
182 be adjusted and transform to promote sustainable recovery. The negative externalities of social capital  
183 must be considered as they can alter the recovery process and resilience building [12]–[14].  
184 Recognizing the perverse effects of social capital is essential in order to adapt policies and  
185 development projects during the post-disaster period [12], [13]. Research has highlighted two major  
186 downsides of bonding social capital in particular. First, when a group is linked by strong ties that lead  
187 to the exclusion of outsiders, it can reinforce social and economic inequalities [11]–[14]. In their study  
188 of the recovery process following Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, Aldrich and Crook [57] show that  
189 strong local networks benefited only some sections of society. While they provided resources for a  
190 fast and efficient recovery for a large part of the society, they also tended to exclude those who were  
191 ‘outsiders’ to those social networks, and hence it encouraged resistance against certain recovery  
192 needs. A high level of bonding social capital can also increase the incidence of risky behaviours due to  
193 individuals following or helping other members of the community [1], [58]. These studies emphasize  
194 the paradoxical roles of social capital within the recovery processes, and hence the need to better  
195 contextualise the process, both in terms of social fabric and recovery needs and objectives for short  
196 and long-term. Here, we argue that different forms of social capital should be strategically thought  
197 and developed, informed by these studies, in order to promote sustainable capital.

198

### 199 **3. Study area**

200 This research was conducted on the island of Montserrat, a small British Overseas Territory  
201 located in the Caribbean that was severely affected by volcanic eruptions from 1995 to 2010. The first  
202 eruption occurred only six years after Hurricane Hugo had devastated about 90% of the country’s  
203 infrastructure. The Soufrière Hills Volcano, located in the South of the island, became active after more  
204 than 300 years of dormancy. In 1997, the southern two-thirds of the island was evacuated and remains  
205 an uninhabited exclusion zone (Figure 1). Pyroclastic flows and lahars destroyed the capital city,  
206 Plymouth, and most of the major infrastructure. Although the last significant activity occurred in 2010,  
207 the volcano is still active, with continued uncertainty regarding the level of risk [59].



208

209 *Figure 1: Position of Montserrat in the Lesser Antilles island arc [60]*

210 The disaster gave rise to transformative social changes. In 1998, three years after the  
 211 beginning of the crisis, three-quarters of the population of about 10,300 emigrated to the UK or to  
 212 neighbouring Caribbean countries. This was largely in response to relocation schemes set up by the  
 213 British government. The rest of the population, reduced at its lowest point to only 2,400 inhabitants,  
 214 and including dislocated families, had to relocate to the underdeveloped North of the country. The  
 215 Montserratian government decided, in 1998, to attract immigrants from other Caribbean countries to  
 216 encourage demographic growth, support rebuilding and compensate for the loss of skilled workers.  
 217 From 2002, the population started to increase again thanks to immigration, stabilizing between 4,000  
 218 and 5,000. Reliable data are not available but it is estimated by Montserratian officials that as much  
 219 as half of the current population is composed of immigrants, mainly from Guyana, Jamaica and the  
 220 Dominican Republic. As a result, the population profile is considerably changed, from the relatively  
 221 homogenous society that existed before the disaster, composed of only 19% non-Montserratians<sup>2</sup>, to  
 222 the very diverse society of today. It is because of this process of rapid, disaster-induced social change  
 223 and its consequences for post-disaster recovery that Montserrat was chosen as the empirical focus  
 224 for this study. The aim of the research was to examine how the different forms of social capital  
 225 contributes to the sustainability of post-disaster recovery.

226 It may be objected that Montserrat, given the prolonged nature of the volcanic eruption and  
 227 the relative scale of displacement and subsequent depopulation, represents an extreme case. The  
 228 rationale for choosing it as a focus for this study is that it more starkly highlights processes that need  
 229 to be understood and enable lessons to be learned that may be relevant to more typical situations

<sup>2</sup> Data provided by the Department of Statistics of the Government of Montserrat in 2016

230 [61]. Montserrat shares common characteristics with small island developing states that are  
 231 vulnerable to volcanic or other natural hazards. Without claiming that the specificities of the situation  
 232 in Montserrat can be generalised, we can, nonetheless, learn from its experience and glean insights  
 233 about the role of social capital in processes of post-disaster recovery that may be transferred to other  
 234 settings. They will have particular relevance for other places with a relatively homogenous population  
 235 that face rapid demographic change after a disaster.

236

237 4. Methods

238 The researcher (Monteil) spent a total of nine months on Montserrat, in April 2015, January-  
 239 May 2016 and January-March 2017, and used a variety of qualitative data collection methods to study  
 240 post-disaster recovery processes, including ethnographic observation with detailed field notes; both  
 241 semi-structured and informal interviews; and focus group discussions. Multiple methods were used  
 242 to triangulate the data, adjust to the sensitivity of the subject, and to capture both the said and non-  
 243 said within society. In total 130 interviews as indicated in Table 1.

	<i>Institutions/groups</i>	<i>Total number of interviews</i>	<i>Formal interviews (number)</i>	<i>Informal interviews (number)</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Age range (estimation)</i>
1	Government officers (British and Montserratian government) from different departments	21	21		9	12	30-60
2	Risk management/ monitoring institutions (Disaster Management Coordination Agency, Montserrat Volcano Observatory, Red Cross)	10	10		5	5	30-60
3	Social/Health/Educational institutions (like social services, schools, churches)	16	16		12	4	30-65
4	Business people	5	5		2	3	25-55
5	Montserratians	20	8	12	7	13	20-75
6	Guyanese	14	8	6	8	6	15-65
7	Jamaicans	14	6	8	6	8	20-65
8	Dominicans from Dominican Republic <sup>3</sup>	12	7	5	5	7	45-70
9	Other nationalities	18	3	15	4	14	30-60
	<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>72</b>	

244 *Table 1: Interviews conducted between 2014 and 2018 in Montserrat - (The members of risk management, social/health*  
 245 *institutions and business people (categories 2, 3, 4) were both Montserratians and non-Montserratians).*

246 Despite repeated efforts, it was not possible to convene a focus group of immigrants from the  
 247 Dominican Republic. Observation was mainly focusing on the type and level of interactions between  
 248 social groups, of participation to various sorts of activities organised by NGOs, government, schools  
 249 or communities themselves. It was also focusing on people's reactions to development programs and  
 250 policy changes. All data, including notes and audio records, were transcribed, and then coded in NVivo  
 251 for triangulation and analysis. The process of coding evolved throughout the analysis, corresponding  
 252 overall to the three stages defined by Charmaz [62] as the initial coding, the focused coding and the

<sup>3</sup> The latter are referred to in this article as Dominicans but should not be confused with people originating on the Caribbean island of Dominica, of whom there are also a number living on Montserrat.

253 theoretical coding. Data were analysed with guidance and constant comparison with the conceptual  
254 framework developed earlier. It is important to acknowledge the practical difficulties encountered  
255 during the data collection process and how they may have influenced the results. Data collection  
256 methods had to be adapted after entering the field because of the sensitivity of the topics tackled in  
257 this study, which often made it impossible to make audio-recordings or even taking notes during most  
258 interviews. The consequent reliance on the researcher's memory when making notes after the event  
259 may have led to some inaccuracies or inadvertent omissions. Moreover, it was challenging for the  
260 researcher as a young white woman to gain access to some individuals or groups within the different  
261 communities in order to conduct interviews or group discussions. The researcher made efforts to  
262 minimise any impact that these practical challenges might have on the dependability of the study by  
263 triangulating data from each interview with those collected from other data sources.

264

## 265 **5. Results and discussion**

266 Analysis of the post-disaster recovery processes in Montserrat highlights the complex role of social  
267 capital. In this section, we first review briefly the adverse effects of the disaster on social links and  
268 social cohesion on the island. We then examine how efforts to re-establish a sense of cultural  
269 normality and economic stability for the remaining Montserratian population, which have perverse  
270 implications for both social cohesion and disaster risk reduction, come into conflict with long-term  
271 sustainability goals. Finally, we examine efforts to create and reinforce forms of social capital that  
272 contribute to social cohesion.

### 273 **5.1. Disruption of social links during the volcanic crisis**

274 The eruption of the Soufriere Hills Volcano in 1995 was followed by several episodes of intense  
275 activity, the most recent in 2010. It prompted the evacuation of the capital city, Plymouth, and  
276 surrounding villages, that were partly destroyed in 1997 by pyroclastic flows [63]. The evacuations of  
277 the Southern and Eastern parts of the Island led to significant disturbance of Montserrat's physical  
278 and social environment [64]–[66]. The displacement of most of the population, first within the country  
279 and then, for 75% of Montserratians, off the island, led to a breakdown of the social fabric, both at  
280 household level and at community level [67]. New interviews revealed that some families remain  
281 separated twenty years after the beginning of the crisis. The break-up of communities also led to a  
282 transformation of social practices, in particular relating to social care for children and the elderly, and  
283 to a persistent sense of loss and of nostalgia for the old neighborhoods and communities. About this  
284 rapid transformation, a policy-maker said during an interview in May 2016:

285

286 *“Our sense of what is being a Montserratian is lost, [...] all those kinds of things that are deeply*  
287 *embedded in the culture. People [...] have anxiety because those things are being lost and also*  
288 *they have anxiety because young people are leaving [...] so there is this feeling that for some*  
289 *people they really don't want to come to turn to the fact that it's a completely new Montserrat.”*

290

291 The rapid immigration of other nationalities and ethnicities since the beginning of the crisis has for  
292 many Montserratians compounded this acute sense of disruption and loss. That immigrant groups  
293 have come to constitute, in just two decades, about half of the total population has ramifications for  
294 the development trajectory of the country, for power relations between social groups, and for cultural



295 practices. This dramatic influx of ‘foreigners’, economically and politically necessary in the absence of  
296 a return by large numbers of the Montserratians who left the country during the volcanic crisis, is  
297 experienced by many who remained as bringing an additional unwanted transformation to their  
298 society. The presence of these new immigrants consequently has become the focus of critical public  
299 comment, which often reveals the fears of ordinary Montserratians and their rejection of these  
300 groups. During interviews and informal conversations, Montserratians frequently emphasized the  
301 differences between native Montserratians and the three main immigrant groups and expressed  
302 disquiet or anger at the changes that have accompanied the arrival of these new residents.  
303 Immigration was encouraged to address the shortage of workers that resulted from the mass exodus  
304 from the island during the volcanic crisis. Inevitably this has led to increased competition in some  
305 sectors of the labor market, as the incomers, in the way of economic migrants worldwide, are often  
306 more ready to accept working conditions and levels of pay that are not attractive to Montserratians.  
307 Immigration is also blamed by some for a perceived increase in crime and for a loss of traditional  
308 values. This is fervently expressed in a contribution by a Montserratian, in February 2016, to a public  
309 discussion on Facebook:

310 *“After [immigrants] finish doing what they came to Montserrat to do, I say send them*  
311 *back home to Jamaica or wherever they came from. Soon they will start making*  
312 *children and start telling us, THE NATIVES, how to live in our own island. We don’t need*  
313 *other people from other countries coming here and dictate to us. Soon they will [bring]*  
314 *their criminals elements with them.”*

315 The post-disaster period hence began with an important disruption of the pre-existing social capital.  
316 Bonding social networks have been broken down first by the quick and large emigration of the  
317 previously homogenous social group. This has been rapidly intensified by the immigration of foreign  
318 labour, strategically attracted as a recovery strategy, and thus with the transformation of the society  
319 as a heterogeneous group.

## 320 **5.2. Recovery process challenged by contradictory priorities**

321 The multitude of needs and objectives during the post-disaster period make conflicts,  
322 compromise and trade-offs inevitable. The psychological dimension of recovery plays an important  
323 role, especially in a small society like Montserrat, where decision-makers and citizens are closely  
324 connected. A large part of the decision-making therefore aims to reinforce the sense of stability and  
325 safety of the Montserratian social group, despite the long-term implications it may have. That  
326 proceeds mainly by multiple efforts to restore – or recreate - the society as it used to be; that is  
327 homogenous and centred around the Montserratian social group, which has the largely unintended  
328 consequence of preventing the integration of non-Montserratians groups. It emphasizes in particular  
329 the objective of restoring a strong bonding social capital.

330 Hence, although there is a persisting need for demographic and economic growth, decision-  
331 makers have made it explicit that it should be addressed by encouraging the return of the  
332 Montserratian diaspora. Yet, return of diaspora has been proved relatively difficult, mainly because of  
333 lack of jobs and housing, and remains slow according to Montserratian officials. Institutional  
334 measures, such as immigration control through enforcement of work permit regulations, the  
335 tightening of visa renewal procedures and naturalisation process to achieve British citizenship, aim to  
336 coax potential returnees back by making it challenging for immigrants to work and stay in Montserrat.  
337 Moreover, despite the demand for highly qualified and skilled workers, amplified by the emigration of

338 Montserratians during the volcanic crisis (Halcrow Group Limited, 2012; Sword-Daniels et al., 2014),  
339 informal measures attempt to restrict access to certain jobs, in particular governmental jobs, to  
340 Montserratians. The national newspaper states on its page for job advert:

341 *“All employers are reminded of Section 4.8 of the Work Permit Policy which requires*  
342 *that ‘Every job being offered to a non-belonger must have first been advertised*  
343 *extensively in the media in order to give local persons a fair opportunity to apply’. Proof*  
344 *of such advertisement must be submitted to the Labour Department when making*  
345 *application for Work Permits” [68].*

346 Interviews with both Montserratians and non-Montserratians have shown that the term ‘local  
347 persons’ is often understood as a person of Montserratian origin. It leads to a widely spread and  
348 unquestioned belief that priority for employment must be given to Montserratians, while the article  
349 79 of the Labour Code [69] states that no discrimination should occur. In practice, this divides the job  
350 market by nationality of origin and effectively restricts access to employment in the public sector to  
351 the Montserratian community. The post-disaster recovery process is fraught with conflicting  
352 objectives in a context of social fabric transformation. On the one hand, the need to restore stability  
353 and sense of ‘normality’ is demonstrated by efforts at national scales to reinforce bonding social  
354 capital among the remaining Montserratian social group. On the other hand, the objectives of  
355 economic, physical and demographic recovery require a better consideration of the diversification of  
356 the society through the development of bringing and linking social networks.

### 357 **5.3. Shaping cultural identity as strengthening Montserratian bonding capital**

358 During the volcanic crisis, in the face of catastrophic disruption, a strong sense of collective  
359 identity and shared adversity helped those Montserratians who remained on the island to endure,  
360 adapt and begin the process of recovery. The post-disaster period, however, has been marked by the  
361 question of what it means to be Montserratian, a question regularly discussed publicly in media and  
362 often a subject of great interest both for those who remained and those who left the country. Shaping  
363 cultural identity with the aim of restoring a sense of Montserratian society “as it used to be”, a notion  
364 often asserted by native residents, has been an important response to the rapid post-disaster socio-  
365 cultural changes.

366 Montserratian identity is expressed publicly in specific practices, which are celebrated and asserted  
367 during national cultural events, such as the Christmas or St Patrick’s Day festivals. These practices  
368 contribute to the symbolic construction of a Montserratian sense of community, citing cultural  
369 references that bring the included group together and distinguish it from others [70]. They also  
370 emphasize values that are seen as distinctly Montserratian, such as the sense of hospitality and the  
371 quietness, but are felt to be endangered by immigration. A Montserratian academic explains:

372 *“The essence of Montserratness is captured in maroons, [...] calypsos, steelbands,*  
373 *masquerades and string bands. It is also manifested in dressing in one’s ‘Saturday and*  
374 *Sunday best’, the ‘strangers’ paradise’ hospitality, ‘the-morning-neighbour-morning’*  
375 *greeting, the communal joys and sorrows and an exciting ‘Montserrat English’ (dialect).*  
376 *There is no Montserratness without these Irish legacy: the Shamrock, the Lady and the*  
377 *Harp, St Patrick’s Day, goat water, surnames such as Allen, Bramble, Dyer, O’Brien,*  
378 *O’Garro, Riley and Tuitt.” [71].*

379 This construction of Montserratian culture emphasizes elements drawn from a specific representation  
380 of the pre-disaster society. Although this can be seen as the expression of a desire to emphasize  
381 cultural continuity after the collective trauma of the disaster and the subsequent social changes, it  
382 also arises from a conscious questioning of what constitutes the Montserratian identity, something  
383 that was not such a focus of concern during the pre-disaster period when this identity was not felt to  
384 be threatened and hence was not questioned. One consequence of this has been a greater emphasis  
385 on Montserratian cultural practices and a stronger assertion of a specific identity than was the case  
386 prior to 1995. This is not, however, viewed as an unmitigated good by all of the island's residents.  
387 Three community workers, Montserratian and non-Montserratian, from different organizations who  
388 were interviewed expressed regret that cultural events emphasize very little of the post-disaster  
389 characteristics. For instance, while several events celebrate the villages that were abandoned during  
390 the volcanic eruptions as part of the national heritage, some of the interviewed community workers,  
391 of different origins (including a Montserratian) regret that there is no equivalent for the new villages.  
392 One community worker explained that the exclusive focus on abandoned villages prevents the  
393 development of social cohesion and of pride in the newly built neighbourhoods. This was echoed  
394 during a focus group with a group of Guyanese women, who explained that they do not like the period  
395 of the St Patrick's festival because its cultural exclusivity reminds them that they do not belong in this  
396 culture.

397 Hence, while the reinforcement of Montserratian cultural identity strengthens the bonding capital of  
398 the Montserratian community, weakened by two decades of rapid demographic transformation, it  
399 simultaneously obstructs the creation of closer connections between different social groups and the  
400 cultivation of bridging social capital. It therefore excludes non-native Montserratians, who represent  
401 about half of the population and who play a critical role in the economic and physical development of  
402 the island, from the process of collective identity construction that is so important to social cohesion.

#### 403 **5.4. Promoting social cohesion to promote sustainable recovery**

404 The post-disaster recovery period is critical for sustainable development in the sense that it aims  
405 to promote changes that support a fully functioning society that is less vulnerable to natural hazards.  
406 Learning from disaster involves, among other things, paying greater attention to factors of  
407 vulnerability. Strong bridging and linking social capital are critical for social cohesion [3], [15], [43],  
408 and hence to resilience and vulnerability reduction, two major aspects of the recovery process [1], [2],  
409 [6]. In order to assess the sustainability of the recovery process among this heterogeneous and  
410 changing society, we analysed the type and impact of initiatives that have gradually emerged during  
411 the post-disaster process and that aim to promote social cohesion and hence encouraging sustainable  
412 recovery. They are mainly grassroots initiatives that have been developed as a reaction to the  
413 emerging challenges associated with the cultural diversification of the population. They are initiatives  
414 conducted by government, disaster risk reduction organizations and those involved in welfare  
415 (including churches and schools). Our analysis shows that they are mainly dedicated to the promotion  
416 of some specific aspects of social capital, in particular the creation of shared representations and  
417 meanings between social groups, and less focused on the creation of network of access between social  
418 groups of different origins and trust building [72].

419 Because of the increasing diversity of both teachers and pupils, secondary school teachers who were  
420 interviewed highlighted the need for events that foster cultural understanding. One teacher  
421 explained:

422 *We had a cultural presentation [...]. We actually featured the culture of all other*  
423 *territories, so they were able to share and everybody appreciate each other's culture.*  
424 *And that was really essential for the unity of the school. [...] We have a number of*  
425 *students from Santo Domingo, Spanish speaking [...]. And the students accepted what*  
426 *they did, and actually surprisingly [...] they were very welcoming. (Interview in*  
427 *January 2016)*

428 Such initiatives aim to promote some aspects of bridging social capital including sense of trust,  
429 respect, and sense of identity that links social and cultural groups. However, this kind of initiative  
430 remains relatively rare, and limited mainly to a few spaces where interactions between social groups  
431 are critical, such as school and church.

432 Similarly, sporadic initiatives have aimed to address language barriers faced by two of the  
433 immigrant communities. Teachers pointed to the importance of language classes. Spanish-speaking  
434 students are offered English classes to support them in their academic studies, and hence in their  
435 social integration. However, Spanish classes are also offered to all students. A teacher explained  
436 during an interview that with the increase of the Dominican population, English-speakers also had to  
437 make an effort to communicate with these newcomers. Similar initiatives have begun to address the  
438 language needs of adult immigrants. Bi-lingual leaders in the Haitian and Dominican communities  
439 explained that they translate official documents into, respectively, French Creole and Spanish, to  
440 enable their community members to manage official administrative tasks. A member of the Dominican  
441 community also voluntarily organises English classes on her free time, although this is insufficient to  
442 address the needs of the whole Dominican community. A similar project has been established by a  
443 pastor for the Haitian community. At the time of this study, however, there was no translated  
444 information being offered by government for key services such as health and welfare.

445 All of the grassroots initiatives described above have emerged from the realisation that with the  
446 increasing diversity of the population, there is a need for better integration. The same observation has  
447 been made by members of the organisations in charge of disaster management and hazards  
448 monitoring. During interviews, they emphasized that language and lack of cohesion were a major issue  
449 for the efficiency of their work. A scientist working at the Montserrat Volcano Observatory (MVO) in  
450 2016 pointed out that he had little knowledge of what constituted effectiveness of MVO's  
451 communication activities, in particular because he was not sure that immigrant groups use the same  
452 media information sources as Montserratians. The Montserrat Disaster Management Coordination  
453 Agency (DMCA), facing the same issues, has taken the initiative to translate information pamphlets  
454 into several languages. Nevertheless, members of the agency's staff also indicated their uncertainty  
455 about the effectiveness of these measures because of the assumed inadequacy of pamphlets generally  
456 as a communication tool. Despite these efforts, it therefore seems reasonable to infer that differential  
457 access to information continues to be a barrier to communication and awareness raising for disaster  
458 risk reduction that is effective across all social groups.

459 At the time of the study, measures for promoting social cohesion were mainly focused on  
460 facilitating communication. Apart from the school initiative described above, we have not identified  
461 major measures promoting trust between social groups, a critical element of bridging social capital  
462 [8]–[10]. The Red Cross is the only organisation that explicitly aims to reinforce bridging and linking  
463 social capital through its programs while playing a major role in poverty alleviation and disaster risk  
464 reduction on the island. Several immigrants explained during interviews that volunteering with the

465 Red Cross was a way of becoming integrated into the life of the island and to connect to powerful  
466 actors. This is reflected in the composition of the Red Cross's volunteer team, which includes many  
467 newcomers. Yet, the small number of Montserratians actively involved in the organisation limits its  
468 capacity to build strong links between migrants and non-migrant groups. The organisation also plays  
469 a critical role in giving a legitimate and effective voice to facilitate exchanges with policy-makers, and  
470 hence build linking social capital, crucial for effective recovery process [3], [43].

471 The development of both bridging and linking social capital require supporting measures to be  
472 taken at a national level in order to make structural transformations. Although, as we saw earlier,  
473 there are no major national initiatives as a consequence of the existing pressure to restore a form of  
474 'normality' that reflects the pre-disaster society, there were indications of an increasing awareness of  
475 the need to foster bridging social capital. Political campaigning during the 2017 by-elections saw calls  
476 for the integration of immigrants. A party political speech broadcast by the opposition 'Movement for  
477 Change and Prosperity' (MCAP) party during their campaign couched this in terms of social justice:

478 *"We need a new kind of politics, a politics of inclusion. Instead of creating divisions we*  
479 *should be breaking down barriers. Everybody on this island deserves to be treated*  
480 *equally. Do we really think Montserrat is going to progress if we disenfranchise half*  
481 *the population? [...] We want a Government of the people, by the people, and for the*  
482 *people."* (Radio broadcast by the opposition MCAP party, January 2017)

483 He argues here that the development of linking social capital could be used consecutively for  
484 supporting the reinforcement of bridging social capital between the different social groups.

485 The sustainability of the recovery process is still endangered by the lack of major government  
486 initiatives for promoting social cohesion. Yet, there is growing public acknowledgement among the  
487 island's politicians, similar to what has driven the grassroots initiatives, that social segregation  
488 adversely affects the functioning of society and may be harmful to the Montserrat's long-term  
489 development.

490

## 491 **6. Conclusion: bonding social capital as an obstacle to sustainable recovery in a diverse society**

492 Among the effects of disaster, social disruption can have significant long-term impacts. In extreme  
493 cases, such as that of Montserrat, this extends to the transformation of the socio-demographic  
494 structure of the society, from a homogenous to a heterogeneous one. These changes in turn may  
495 influence or even determine the trajectory of post-disaster recovery. During this critical period, re-  
496 thinking the role of social capital is critical. It can either promote social cohesion, thereby contributing  
497 to reducing vulnerability, or it can create the conditions for future disaster. However, this study  
498 highlights that the conflicting goals of the post-disaster recovery period, in particular the need to  
499 support the psychological and social recovery of affected social groups, as well as economic and other  
500 constraints on policy intervention, can prevent the development of new or altered forms of social  
501 capital in order to adapt to changed post-disaster conditions. The transformation of the social  
502 structure requires adjustment of the type of social capital, in this case to develop bridging and linking  
503 social capital, in order to promote social cohesion, a key factor of a sustainable recovery process.

504

505 Yet, in the case of Montserrat, the need for stability and a sense of normality encourages the  
506 reinforcement, in both formal and informal ways, of the bonding social capital that helped the

507 population get through the crisis period. Although this supports the recovery process to some extent,  
508 it also damages the social cohesion within the newly diverse society by obstructing the development  
509 of bridging and linking social capital between the different social groups. There have been *ad hoc*  
510 grassroots measures aiming to promote bridging and linking social capital, but there remains a major  
511 need for more coordinated measures to support the transformation of social capital in a way that  
512 promotes social cohesion. In the absence of that, in a context of significant demographic  
513 transformation, the resulting recovery trajectory may contribute to maintaining immigrant groups in  
514 a situation of relative marginalization, which in turn is a root driver of vulnerability to disaster [24], an  
515 obstacle to sustainable recovery process.

516  
517 More broadly, this study contributes to better understanding of the complexity and specificities of the  
518 different forms of social capital in any affected community or society. While the importance of social  
519 capital for post-disaster recovery is now widely acknowledged, studies often lack more detailed  
520 characterisation and contextualisation, and hence may fail to adequately assess the sustainability of  
521 the recovery process. This study highlights the need to distinguish the different forms of social capital  
522 and their effects, both intended and unintended, in order to adapt them to the long-term needs of  
523 post-disaster recovery, and to better evaluate and coordinate measures taken to promote social  
524 cohesion. It emphasizes how different forms of social capital may be strategically thought and  
525 developed as a tool for a sustainable recovery.

526  
527  
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531

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