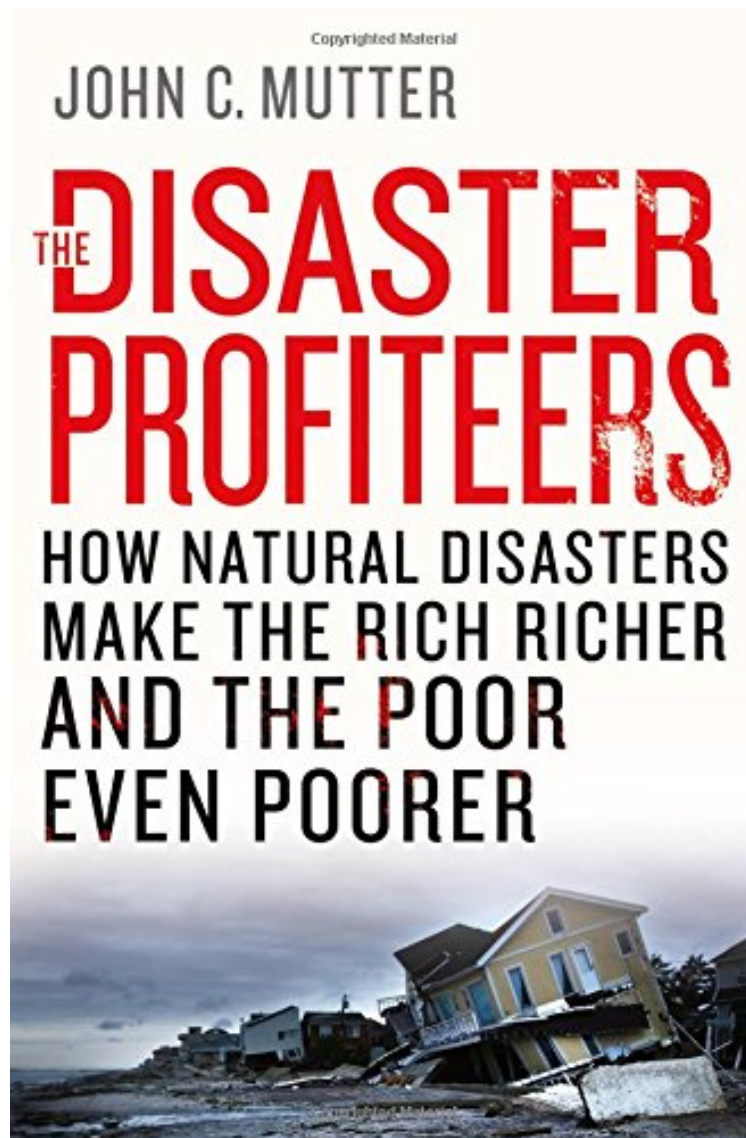


(Mobile book) The Disaster Profiteers: How Natural Disasters Make the Rich Richer and the Poor Even Poorer

The Disaster Profiteers: How Natural Disasters Make the Rich Richer and the Poor Even Poorer

John C. Mutter

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John C. Mutter : The Disaster Profiteers: How Natural Disasters Make the Rich Richer and the Poor Even Poorer before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Disaster Profiteers: How Natural Disasters Make the Rich Richer and the Poor Even Poorer:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. A disturbing expose of who ultimately benefits from natural

disasters worldwide. By Paul Tognetti "Post disaster situations are fertile ground for some and wastelands for others. An elite few make out-of-sight decisions about rebuilding or not rebuilding, about who will benefit from the lucrative contracts that will be part of any reconstruction and who will not. But more important still are the actions of another elite group (perhaps with some of the same members as the first), operating outside media scrutiny, to exploit an opportunity to reshape society in order to secure its hold on power and capital. Wealth is clearly a factor in long-term disaster outcomes. -- page 49

Over the years I have read perhaps two dozen books about various natural disasters. I find the genre to be positively compelling. The details surrounding the disaster itself are usually quite riveting but what I find eternally more interesting is the manner in which government officials, the business community, private citizens and NGOs respond in a time of crisis. There are those who perform above and beyond the call of duty while the actions of others are positively despicable. John C. Mutter looks at the subject of natural disasters from an entirely different perspective in his thought-provoking new book *The Disaster Profiteers: How Natural Disasters Make the Rich Richer and the Poor Even Poorer*. Mutter examines the fallout from nearly a dozen major calamities all over the planet and reveals a pattern of outcomes that is remarkably consistent. You will discover the impact of disasters in such diverse locations as New Orleans, Myanmar, Chile, the Philippines, China, Sri Lanka, Japan and Haiti and exactly who stands to gain from these tragedies. It is remarkable that in virtually every instance the needs of those displaced by the event are cast aside in favor of the interests of the elites who stand to reap a financial windfall. For example, in Myanmar Mutter reports that in the wake of Cyclone Nargis displaced farmers were forced to become landless laborers. In a number of other instances waterfront property previously occupied by the working poor was confiscated by "eminent domain" and transformed into hotels, restaurants and other commercial property. Those who were displaced were pretty much left to fend for themselves. Furthermore, as you might expect, there is invariably a racial or ethnic aspect to these situations. Mutter quotes from an article in "Mother Jones" by Mike Davis in which a French Quarter landowner opined "The hurricane drove poor people and criminals out of the city and we hope they don't come back." Indeed, large portions of New Orleans have been remade in the aftermath of Katrina. John Mutter is a scientist by trade and he candidly admits in the opening chapter of the book that in order to fully understand the subject matter that he was exploring he had to immerse himself in the social sciences with which he was largely unfamiliar. Making that extra effort paid off handsomely. I found *The Disaster Profiteers* to be a particularly well-written book. Mutter explains that all natural disasters can be analyzed in three phases and why what happens in Phase 3 all too often results in new laws, regulations and projects that ultimately benefit the rich. After reading Mutter's analysis it all makes perfect sense to me. Mutter also argues that due to climate change we can expect more powerful weather events in the future that will impact cities much farther north and south of the equator. *The Disaster Profiteers: How Natural Disasters Make the Rich Richer and the Poor Even Poorer* would be a great choice for history buffs and general audiences alike. This is a book that is certainly worthy of your time and attention. Very highly recommended!

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. The disaster profiteers By Clare O'Beara Dovetailing neatly with a journalist's view in 'Disaster Capitalism' by Anthony Lowenstein which I read recently, this look at *The Disaster Profiteers* examines who profits and why from natural disasters. Haiti, New Orleans and Myanmar are studied along with Hurricane Sandy and other events from a science point of view. For instance, why does a large earthquake have little impact on Japan's modern economy while years later Haiti is still struggling to rebuild? We're told that there is a thread of renewal after harmful events, replacing old buildings, machinery and processes with new and improved ones, so Haiti which had not had an earthquake in 200 years was on the floor to begin with, while Japan regularly rebuilds. The stages are described as planning before the event, during the event and its immediate aftermath of media coverage and aid, then the gradual rebuilding process. A developed economy has money, experts and workers to spare for rebuilding but a poor economy has only bare hands. The figures quoted in this book bear out the statement in *Disaster Capitalism* by Anthony Lowenstein, that almost all the aid money sent to Haiti went to companies and workers from outside the nation. We're also told that it was foreign troops who brought in cholera with them, making the people distrustful of outside aid. This is an immensely readable book for those who want to understand and don't mind looking at a few graphs. Hurricanes and earthquakes are explained as natural processes. And poor countries don't have science students or seismometers in some cases. The photos are also very helpful. Some show images from space of which countries are lit by night. These are wealthy lands. The Korean peninsula is startlingly dark above the national divide, with one bright square for the capital city. We can see the crumpling fault zone on which Haiti's capital is built, and on which its new housing is also being built. We get great economics lessons and an understanding of how rich people grab land from displaced farmers in the wake of disaster. The rich people have also chosen secure, safe homes while poor people are living in flood or mudslide zones, cramped together with bad transport routes. Rape after disasters, we are told, is commonplace as displaced women are not in secure homes and with their friends. But this applies to poor women. The rich women have, quite naturally, hightailed it out of there with their families, and they won't miss the odd looted bit of jewellery or handbags; it's insured, and they have money in the bank, and they can claim for rebuilding their mansion. Oxfam International's report in 2014, *Wealth: Having It All and Wanting More*, tells us that by 2016 over half the world's wealth and resources will be owned by just 85 people. The excellently written 'The Disaster Profiteers' explains in part how this occurs, with contracts sometimes given to those with friends

or relatives in government to rebuild or supply services. To balance the tale, the author John C Mutter reassures us that while an increasing global population means that more people live in unstable areas, far fewer people die each year from disasters than used to be the case. I strongly recommend reading this book for anyone wishing to understand both natural processes and economic ones in our globalised world. I also believe we should be demanding more transparency in how aid money is spent. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Too often, we focus on helping those who get to the front of the line first. By Robert Moore-Go Cubs GHelping those most in need should be the top priority after a disaster, but we too often focus on helping those who get to the front of the line first. Although natural disasters affect everyone, they can also widen the gap between the richest and poorest members of a community. Surprisingly, post-disaster government assistance can contribute to this inequity. Overall, this book will open your eyes to the inequities associated with the aftermath of natural disasters. It made it onto my 2016 Climate Reading List at[...]

Natural disasters don't matter for the reasons we think they do. They generally don't kill a huge number of people. Most years more people kill themselves than are killed by Nature's tantrums. And using standard measures like Gross Domestic Product (GDP) it is difficult to show that disasters significantly interrupt the economy. It's what happens after the disasters that really matters-when the media has lost interest and the last volunteer has handed out a final blanket, and people are left to repair their lives. What happens is a stark expression of how unjustly unequal our world has become. The elite make out well-whether they belong to an open market capitalist democracy or a closed authoritarian socialist state. In Myanmar-a country ruled by a xenophobic military junta-the generals and their cronies declared areas where rice farms were destroyed by Cyclone Nargis as blighted and simply took the land. In New Orleans the city was re-shaped and gentrified post Katrina, making it almost impossible for many of its poorest, mostly black citizens to return. In *The Disaster Profiteers*, John Mutter argues that when no one is looking, disasters become a means by which the elite prosper at the expense of the poor. As the specter of increasingly frequent and destructive natural disasters looms in our future, this book will ignite an essential conversation about what we can do now to create a safer, more just world for us all.

"This book will open your eyes to the inequities associated with the aftermath of natural disasters." Natural Resources Defense Council "Natural disasters, Mutter shows, often make inequality worse, but that process is no accident of nature.... Mutter's [book] is focused, zeroing in on natural disasters and the patterns their effects follow." --New Republic Foregoing vitriol and industry jargons, Mutter's book is accessible to all readers. His bridging of the two sciences lends an in-depth feeling to an important and timely issue. Library Journal Blending insights from the natural and social sciences, *Disaster Profiteers* makes a major contribution to knowledge about how catastrophes deepen inequality. With gripping accounts from disasters around the world, Mutter shows why the aftermath of crises often matters more than the initial shock. This is an illuminating, unsettling book. Eric Klinenberg, author of *HEAT WAVE: A SOCIAL AUTOPSY OF DISASTER IN CHICAGO* Urgent... A hackle-raising book about nature and human nature, venality and justice, and how disasters - before, during, and after - sharply mirror society. Kirkus s (Starred) Forget your assumptions about the true impact of natural disasters. John Mutter has written a riveting account of how natural disasters disproportionately affect poor and disenfranchised communities before, during and after the disaster hits. These are the communities where response is often more about control and containment, rather than humane assistance - and where recovery is rarely effective in rebuilding resilient communities for the pre-storm residents and more about building communities designed to gentrify and attract more affluent populations. This is a must read for anyone interested in the true story of disaster response. Irwin Redlener MD, Director, National Center for Disaster Preparedness, Earth Institute at Columbia University Professor Mutter provides a highly engaging overview of the physical forces that initiate natural disasters and the social dynamics that define their consequences. By dissecting the features of - and responses to - recent high-profile earthquakes, typhoons, floods, and tsunamis, he pushes hard to separate fact from perception, with special emphasis on the biases and inequalities that too often hit marginalized groups the hardest. John W. McArthur, Senior Fellow, Brookings Institution John Mutter has written an insightful book that stresses that disasters are social phenomena more than they are natural events. He highlights how disasters have been manipulated for political and financial gain via case studies ranging from Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy in the United States to Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar and earthquakes in Haiti and Japan. Howard Kunreuther, James G. Dinan Professor of Decision Science and Public Policy, Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania About the Author JOHN C. MUTTER is a professor at Columbia University with appointments in the department of Earth and Environmental Sciences and in International and Public Affairs. He was previously deputy director of the Earth Institute. Mutter was a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 2007. A contributor to the blog site OECD and to *EARTH Magazine*, Mutter has appeared on broadcast media including CNN and CBS. He lives in New York City.