

ABSTRACT

The Kingston Metropolitan Area (KMA) is situated within a dynamically changing environment which is subject to natural upheavals. This study develops the argument that the management of the human use of the land in the Jamaican environment has often been in conflict with this environment. The natural hazards which interrupt the steady-state are earthquakes, tropical cyclones, flooding and landslides. The human use of the land often means that man suffers loss of limb, life, or economic livelihood when natural hazards strike.

It is unfortunate that there has been a long quiescence of major natural hazard activity. This has led to cognitive reactions which have made men unprepared for future occurrences of these hazards. High-rise structures and high density housing tracts are being constructed without regard to these hazards. When the next great hazard strikes, it is very likely that the population will be unprepared for the resultant disaster.

More seriously, it appears that government is becoming aware of the probability of hazard occurrence but has not really taken any steps to clearly establish the risk of various sections of the Kingston region. This study attempts to fill this gap by an assessment of the four hazards in magnitudinal, temporal and spatial contexts. The susceptibility of the KMA to the four hazards is confirmed.

Using socio-economic factors, it is possible to construct

a quantitative guide to be used to establish the priority to risk of the various individual hazards or of the total environment. In the priority formula, this susceptibility becomes the base whereupon the priority for mitigation for the region is found. The historical core of the KMA has the highest risk and so requires the greatest allotment of funds and materials to prevent the occurrence of a disastrous situation.