Laissez-faire approach to Disaster Risk Reduction:

A case study of floods in Belgrade, Serbia

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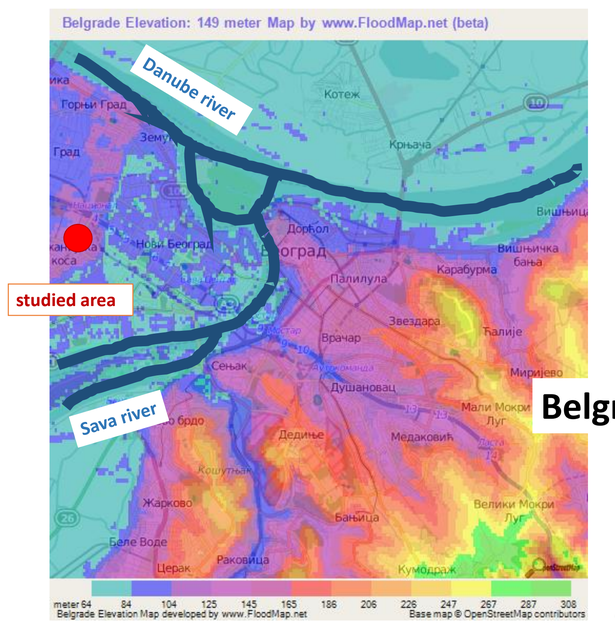
INTRO

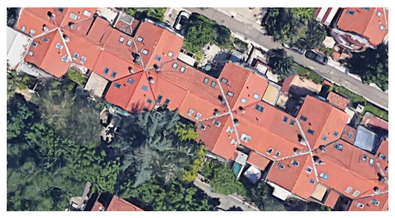
Climate change has raised sustainability issues (transitions) that face enormous institutional, social, and environmental problems in developing countries. However, studies are sporadic in analyzing specific sustainability issues, such as resilience and DRR.

A flood hit Belgrade on July 5, 2022.

The mayor declared that ... no one should be blamed because we cannot influence God's will.

The floods (2019-2023) occurred suddenly and stopped after 10 to 15 minutes. The water that filled the lower parts of the houses during that time remained -until it was pumped out.





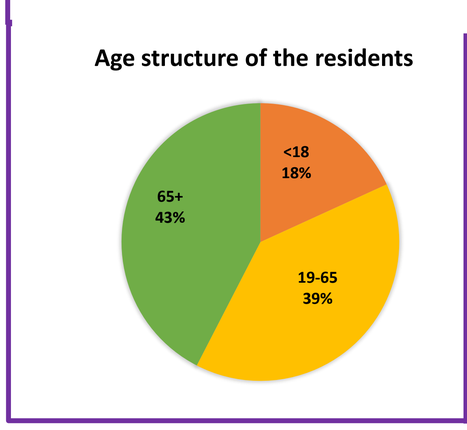
Aerial and street view of similar neighborhood

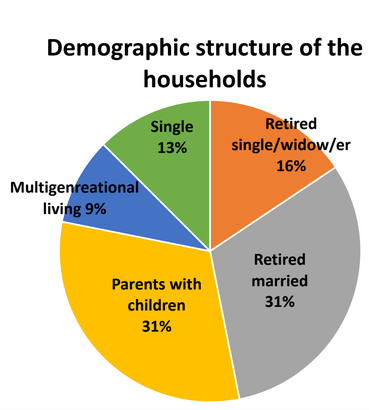
OBJECTIVE

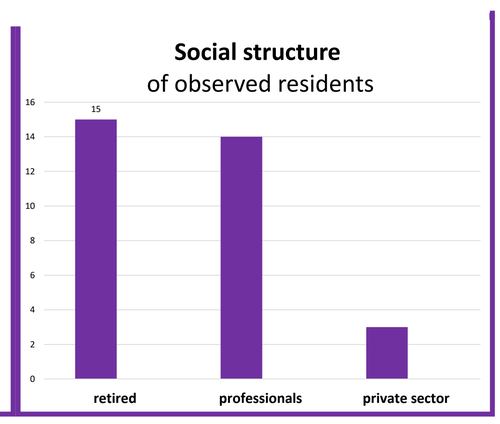
The objective is to examine the relationship between a *laissez-faire* approach to Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) from the city government and some groups from hill areas (historically not flooded), who were flooded and have started to develop DRR approaches to adequately respond to the next possible flood.

METHODS

Participant observation site work is in progress and includes 32 households in the residential hill area of Belgrade that experienced its first rain floods from 2019 to 2023. DRR is represented through self-installed special devices on the city sewage network. The data collection and analysis included narrative analysis and sociological analysis of photographs. All data was first anonymized as some practices were viewed as legitimate but not always legal.



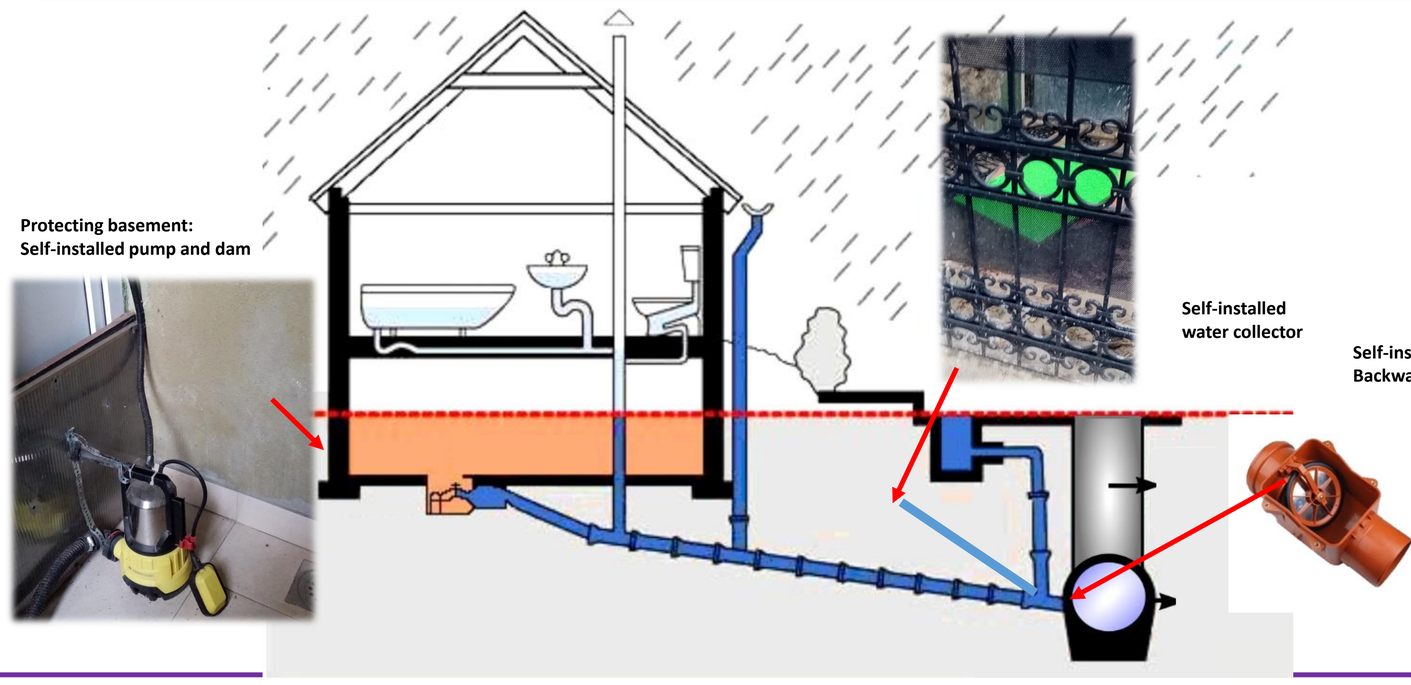


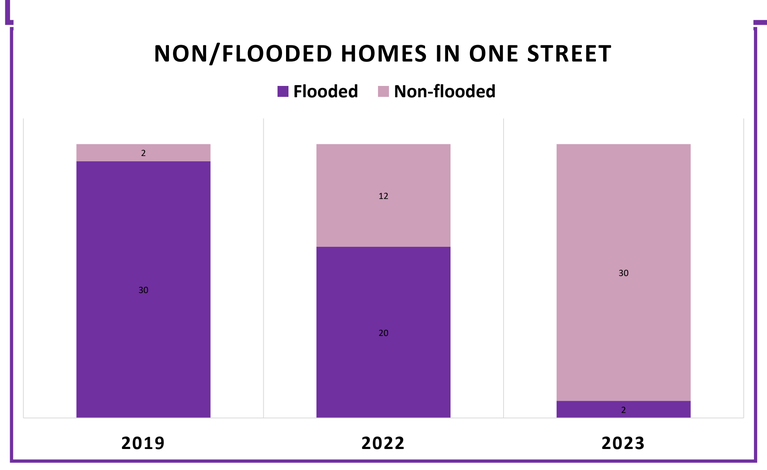


RESULTS

During the relevant three years, the number of non-flooded homes increased proportionally with increasing self-installation of special devices on the city sewage system

Respondents compared floods with the principle of Communicating Vessels. It was as if someone had closed the valve on the main sewage and rainwater drain and then their basements filled with water to a height of half a meter. After ten minutes it seemed as if someone opened that sewer valve and the water stopped flowing into their rooms and the sewers started draining the rain again.





CONCLUSION

Groups left without official DRR policies can develop resilience through individual actions in communal infrastructure and find ways to resist natural hazards and government laissez-faire DRR. This practice of neighborly communication in solving structural problems refutes the practice from the end of the 20th century, i.e., the self-isolation of tenants by erecting high walls around their homes. How much socio-economic, educational, neighborhood, and other factors have influenced this communication and resilience remains to be explored.

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