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Shealing: Post-disaster slow healing and later recovery

Authors:

Kasia Mika\*  
Ilan Kelman

\*For correspondence

Acknowledgements

This paper is dedicated to Anthony Carrigan.

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## Shealing: Post-disaster slow healing and later recovery

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### Abstract

This paper explores approaches to ‘later recovery’ or ‘slow recovery’ in post-disaster contexts, viewing it as a positive force by terming it ‘slow healing’ contracted to ‘shealing’. Slow healing hopes to develop a multi-scalar, processual, open-ended, and future-oriented approach to asynchronous and differentiated processes and practices of individual and collective recovery. ‘Shealing’, as used here, then denotes ongoing, individual and collective efforts through remaking and building one’s life post-disaster. This process of shealing, of re-making and making lives liveable, is a process of assembling, or trying to assemble, life and livelihoods, without necessarily immediately eradicating all traces of destruction which might be vestiges of a life before the disastrous manifestation of compound vulnerabilities. Shealing provides an alternative to assumptive, linear approaches in order to enfold healing and vulnerability reduction within day-to-day, continual, accepted, non-spectacular actions. From a noun or an attribute, ‘shealing’ functions as a verb by being a continuous and open-ended process in the present, not just a defined stage, whether a hoped-for endpoint or a recovery of some pre-disaster state. Shealing allows theorising the many ways of living in and through disaster

experiences alongside the range of everyday post-disaster approaches to re-making one's life that an individual or community might embrace. Shealing forms a joint scholarly-practical approach that better addresses what needs to be done and accepted after experiencing a disaster. This paper focuses on disasters, but wider implications and connections emerge, such as for grief, trauma, and social work.

### **Keywords**

healing, recovery, hazards, disasters, vulnerability, resilience

### **Introduction**

After a disaster, value is often placed not only in moving on from the destruction and 'returning to normal', but also in doing so as quickly as possible. Conversely, some approaches in trauma studies accept that, as with physical wounds, recovering and healing from difficult experiences—from job layoffs to assault to sudden death—take time (Herman 1992). Even more so, in cases of insidious trauma of structural violence, such as racism or sexism, endpoints might not be feasible (Brown, 2008; Craps 2010 and 2013). It is not clear that situations such as losing a house or a child to a wildfire, or having a settlement razed by an earthquake leading to community members scattering, could ever be recovered from or that 'normalcy' or 'normality' could ever be achieved (if it existed in the first place, e.g. Fordham 1998; Hills 1998).

This situation is not necessarily to be eschewed or to be seen as a deficiency, lack, or failure on the part of the individuals and communities affected. After a disaster, it is important to

recognise the efforts involved in living with loss while proceeding with day-to-day and decade-to-decade life. Infrastructure and social networks need to be developed to support surviving and living. While rapid post-disaster work is often the first priority so that people have essentials such as water, health care, food, and shelter, meeting immediate physical needs does not bypass or supersede understanding and addressing long-term physical and psychological needs, as has long been accepted regarding post-disaster shelter (Davis 1978) and reaffirmed in recent work (e.g. Trivedi, 2018).

For disaster-affected communities and individuals, there may be no swift and easy way back to the pre-disaster state. Nor is the pre-disaster state, the 'vulnerable normal', necessarily an aspiration, given that this state includes the vulnerability that caused the disaster in the first place (Hewitt 1983; Lewis 1999; Mika 2019; Wisner et al. 2004). To work out what to do post-disaster and how to work through the post-disaster process, time is needed. Yet in the face of immediate pressures and needs, time is frequently lacking. Just as many physical wounds take time to heal, scar, and be similar to, but not exactly like, the pre-wound condition, individual and community recovery, healing, and continuation of life after a disaster requires time, and, most often, might not have a 'perfect' end-point in sight. And sometimes achieving similarity to the pre-wound state is not feasible at all, for example for those experiencing amputation, bereavement, or forced relocation.

~~This combined physical and community aspect of recovery was clear after Haiti's 2010 earthquake. The country's 'newly disabled citizens' (Iezzoni and Ronan 2010, 814), long after the rescue teams are gone, 'will either have to live with insurmountable disabilities that cannot be assisted without prosthetics, or they will have to undergo further invasive surgical procedures to do so' with their humanity continually being denied (Chaney 2011, 116). This is equally true on the collective and regional level when hazards such as tropical storms,~~

~~earthquakes, or droughts—can and do occur in parallel with long-term processes of post-disaster recovery, whether this means rebuilding housing infrastructure, assuring access to education in disaster-affected zones, or regaining one’s sense of belonging in the local area.~~

Recognising this disjunction between immediate needs and long-term care, the aim of this paper is to theorise approaches for ‘later recovery’ or ‘slow recovery’ as a positive force by terming it ‘slow healing’ contracted to ‘shealing’. In so doing, the paper is anchored in vulnerability-focused approaches to disasters, drawing on scholarship in emerging postcolonial disaster studies (Carrigan 2015; Mika 2019; [Siddiqi and Canuday 2018](#); ~~Siddiqi 2018~~) and disaster anthropologies of the everyday (Hoffman and Oliver-Smith, 2002; Oliver-Smith and Hoffman, 1999). The discussion here forges a conceptual vocabulary which recognises the daily effort of living on and remaking one’s life (Das et al. 2001; Samuels 2016), encompassing the joint sense of asynchronicity and overlap between timelines of fast recovery and slower—as in ongoing and often unfinished—personal and affective translations. The discussion demonstrates that the assumptions behind early recovery and swift recovery, with speed and ‘transition’ as their primary characteristics, are not necessarily valid nor should be the only ways of accounting for the process of post-disaster infrastructural and social rebuilding.

Shealing, then, offers a more nuanced conceptual vocabulary which, in distinction to sequential or cyclic phase-based approaches to disaster recovery, accounts specifically for the complex, asynchronous, non-linear, and open-ended character of ‘recovering from disaster’. In so doing, shealing emphasises the labour, the effort involved, and the different ways of navigating and living in ‘unrecovered’ times. These periods, as theorised by Baraister (2017, 2), are of ‘time’s suspension—modes of waiting, staying, delaying, enduring, persisting, repeating, maintaining, preserving and remaining—that produce felt experiences of time not passing.’ Shealing, then,

recognises the usefulness of thinking with and attending to the varying time scales—whether these are at the level of individual life, community processes, religious frameworks, material rebuilding or formal political processes of regaining state governance—that living with and through disasters implies.

### **Shealing: from place to process**

The term ‘shealing’ (also spelled as ‘shieling’) in an original use in Scottish denotes: ‘[a] piece of pasture to which cattle may be driven for grazing’; ‘[a] hut of rough construction erected on or near such a piece of pasture’ (*OED*, 2018); and ‘[a] hut or rude shelter, a temporary house of stones, sods, etc., esp. one built for the accommodation of shepherds and dairy maids in the higher or more remote areas used as summer grazing ground for sheep and cattle’ (*DSL*, 2004). For its etymology, some point to the Icelandic ‘*skjöl*’ a shelter, a cover; akin to Danish and Swedish *skjul*’ (*OED*; *Webster*) as its likely earlier sources. Slow healing, as shealing, partly draws on these associations of shelter and nourishment, in order to capture the slow, yet no less urgent, process of rebuilding, plodding towards, and climbing up to a shelter for oneself or a cluster within which a disaster survivor could dwell such that s/he can, once again, imagine possible futures, form relationships of care, and forge one’s own mode of being and belonging in the world. Slow healing directly resonates with and conveys ideas similar to the etymology and meanings of ‘shealing’ as a cover, a temporary house, a work- and place-in-progress, and a shelter.

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‘Shealing’, as used here, then emerges as a concept that builds upon, layers, and expands the regional uses of the word to denote ongoing, individual and collective labour through remaking and building one’s life in the wake of a disaster. Those who are disaster-affected include individuals—such as being bereaved, losing property, being forcibly displaced, or being responders or aid workers—and communities, encompassing everyone living in affected locations or with connections to them. ~~The latter can include groups as diverse as expatriates such as Americans living in the UK during 9/11 (Megoran, 2006) and external responders such as those working under Canada USA agreements for mutual firefighter assistance during wildfires (Saekinger, 2005).~~ That is, the quotidian efforts go beyond event-focused markings with the disaster neatly delineated in space and time. They also go beyond the definitive parsing offered by consecutive phases of disaster recovery, such as search-and-rescue, response, relief, early recovery, medium- to long-term recovery, and community development. From a noun or an attribute, ‘shealing’ functions as a verb by being a continuous and open-ended process in the present, not a defined stage hoping for an endpoint or a recovery of some pre-disaster state. Consequently, anyone or any community with links to a disaster could embrace shealing as an analytical approach, ~~including journalists affected by the trauma they cover (Seely, 2019) and those displaying adverse post-disaster mental health impacts (Langan, 2018),~~ and its emphasis on the long-term, asynchronous, and discordant experiences and meanings of a disaster.

‘Slow’ in slow healing, shealing, does not mean non-urgent or passive. Rather, the adjective ‘slow’ denotes ongoing and gradual, so a process. It can be a laborious slog, without expectations of ending soon, immediately, or ever. It starts immediately, yet moves at different paces in different forms for each individual and community, and it is ever-present. It will not necessarily proceed similarly with everyone nor start simultaneously. Shealing as a process incorporates creeping personal, collective, and social changes as well as pre-existing

capabilities of individuals and communities, who might be always moving along, but not necessarily regularly, nor in the same ways, nor at the same rates.

Consequently, shealing for individuals is inextricably intertwined with shealing for those around each individual, thereby linking to the ‘accommodation’ definition through the need to accommodate people around one. — They work together, they create tensions and synergies, and they proceed in spurts and starts in varied forms and ways. This process of accommodation includes trying to form anew one’s networks of shelter and care, however limited or difficult this might be. It is re-pairing, pairing again, as well as, from Das et al. (2001, 4), ‘engaging in repair of relationships in the deep processes of family, neighbourhood, and community [...] resuming the task of living (and not only surviving)’. This is not a simple trajectory to be pursued in readily identified or identifiable stages towards a clear goal, but a process on multiple intersecting planes and scales, at the pace which individuals and collectives can afford, requiring giving-and-taking, building and re-organising, constructing and reconstructing, and assembling and re-assembling.

Shealing, ~~then~~, in its non-linear and relational focus, is equally concerned with ensuring that those affected by a disaster can move forward and support each other without re-creating the processes, conditions, and vulnerabilities which led to disaster(s) in the first place. Disasters are not disconnected events, but are processes (Carrigan 2015; Lewis 1999; Mika 2019). Accordingly, shealing as an ongoing action and practice is shaped by and responds to this multi-scalar, processual character of disasters and disastrous vulnerabilities that typically continue long after the earthquake stopped shaking or the hurricane dissipated. Consequently, shealing is not only attentive to the pre-disaster vulnerabilities, but also accounts for the ways in which these continue in the form of post-disaster non-urgency and neglect. These are seen as forms

of ‘passive hurt’ as in ‘lack of urgency or neglect’ (Danticat 2011, 257) that is different from— for instance, after the 2010 Haiti earthquake—the ‘active hurt, like the pounding rain and menacing winds from the hurricane season, the brutal rapes of women and girls in many of the camps, or the deaths from cholera’ (Danticat 2011, 257). In this sense, the open-ended character of slow healing links together the violence of pre-disaster vulnerabilities and their post-disaster translations as they cut through the everyday life long before and long after a specific hazard appears.

This much longer perspective allows consideration of, in a more integrated and comprehensive manner, forms of structural violence (Galtung 1969) which, due to their direct concern with power relations, oppression, and social justice, cannot be reduced to only ‘vulnerability.’ As another example, Brown (2008) and Root (1992) discuss ‘insidious trauma’ (also Craps 2010 and 2013) as not being direct trauma per se, but as the constant, daily reminders of the threat of violence with direct, negative, and material effects on functioning day-to-day. Expressing these experiences, such as through initiatives including Bates’ (2014) ‘Everyday Sexism’ and analyses of ‘quiet violence’ for Bangladesh (Hartmann and Boyce 1983), ‘silent violence’ for Nigeria (Watts 1983), and ‘slow violence’ in postcolonial regions (Nixon 2011), is one step towards normalising the importance of tackling the root causes and trying to improve everyday situations as a long-term process (Hewitt 1983; Lewis 1999; Wisner et al. 2004).

Knowing that action is being taken and that perpetrators of vulnerability and disaster—~~including action against abuses by international organisations and peacekeepers (e.g. Arie, 2018; Bell et al., 2018)~~—are being challenged, is part of everyday shealing. The key to this process of post-disaster (re)assembling of a life for oneself and others is making lives liveable. It involves taking the time to overcome the vulnerability and the disaster processes and cannot

be separated from the histories of oppression and their ongoing violence, before, after, and during the disaster. Shealing joins these asynchronous and discordant temporalities: that a harm has been done through vulnerability creation, and that healing processes cannot and perhaps should not or even cannot—such as combatting race- and gender-based inequities—be swift.

Shealing's emphasis on process, open-endedness, and asynchronicity does not mean impeding or dismissing the reinstatement and development of services such as water, energy, health, education, and food. It means meeting differentiated needs at various levels without suppressing any, including place attachment and acceptance that building and solidifying infrastructure does not necessarily, in a causal relationship, build and solidify or heal the psyche or the community. Shealing, as *sheltering*, at once a temporary and ongoing process of creating a shelter, recognises homes and houses as both physical, emplaced assets and interactive processes changing people and place (Davis and Alexander 2015; Schlunke 2016, 230).

Consequently, this process of slow healing, of re-making and making lives liveable, is not guided by a 'progressivist thinking' which assumes that 'only rebuilding signals "progress"' (Schlunke 2016, 224). It is a process of assembling, or trying to assemble, life and livelihoods, without necessarily eradicating all traces of destruction immediately: for those directly affected, they are still vestiges of a life before the disastrous manifestation of compound vulnerabilities. The post-disaster present is thus imbued by a tension between the inability, or lack of desire, to forget about the disaster experience and continuous efforts to inhabit this present while attempting to envisage a possible future other than as an impasse or as a likely repetition of an impending disaster. In effect, the challenge is coming to terms with these permanent changes and losses while still being able to continue to live and strive towards a more fulfilling life.

### **An uneven process in space and time**

Similarly to the disaster process and the vulnerability process (Carrigan 2015; Lewis 1999), shealing through space and time recognises and includes the uneven but essential interconnectedness of people, places, environments, infrastructure, and services. The conceptual models of stages, phases, and cycles, often used to depict disasters (~~King et al., 2019~~), are less applicable (also shown by Alexander, 2019). Hazards and vulnerabilities are ever-present and vulnerabilities ought to be tackled as part of daily life to avoid them leading to a disaster when a hazard manifests (Hewitt 1983; Lewis 1999; Wisner et al. 2004). After difficult circumstances, people and communities need time and space/place to work through what happened and, on their own terms, to (re)assign meaning, whether as part of one's personal narrative or a wider cosmology (Orton and O'Grady 2016), also giving a sense of direction for the future. Even if facilitated through social work, therapy, or culturally relevant counselling and psychological and psychiatric interventions, these efforts and processes of 'sense-losing, improvising, sense-remaking, and renewing' (Orton and O'Grady 2016, 226) happen in discordant ways and at different times as well as across multiple, not necessarily shared, scales and ways of viewing the world. Shealing accepts both personal and collective experiences, recognising that they can influence each other positively or negatively, adding to the interactions and feedbacks which occur during shealing. No one-size-fits-all approach exists, meaning that amorphous, ubiquitous assumptions about top-down directions or wished-for universal outcomes need to be revisited to ensure that harm is not done to shealing.

Furthermore, shealing as a process and as a verb draws directly from previous work in disaster-relevant sectors, namely housing as a verb (Turner 1972) and post-disaster shelter being a

process, not a product (Davis 1978). Shealing is needed and happens for all disaster scales (Shrestha and Gaillard 2013), while layering within shealing appears through specific elements of dealing with post-disaster situations. Remaking of one's dwelling and consequently one's sense of self is an integral part of slow healing. For instance, remaking the structure of a house after disaster damage does not necessarily mean that livelihoods, services such as electricity and water, or feelings of dignity and security are present—nor does it mean that they were present before the disaster (Alexander, 2019; Davis, 1978; Davis and Alexander, 2015; Lewis, 1999).

In community building and place-making through shealing, taking one's time means neither passivity nor servitude. Instead, *shealing*, like *housing*, as a verb implies continuity and ongoing action. It is not simply a noun providing a product, a state, or a defined place in space or time as in a shealed community. It is taking an active stance and controlling the process of dealing with disaster such that new conditions for disasters are not created. Place and subjectivity-defining place-making are part of this process through time and making time, drawing on Malpas' (1999) understanding of the idea of place. As with the disaster, vulnerability, housing, and shelter processes, no assumptions are made about shealing being linear, being universally applicable, or aiming towards a specific end point or goal.

Being a process, swiftness is not necessarily a desirable criterion for shealing. Success in reducing disaster vulnerability, so using reconstruction to reduce vulnerability, can actually mean less rapidity in cleaning up and rebuilding. The process entails heterogeneous practices of healing which require multiple, interacting, multi-scalar inputs and might be constant for disaster-affected people, even if memorialisations become sparser as time goes on and even if further hazards and vulnerabilities interrupt healing from a previous instance. Schlunke (2016)

articulates this point in relation to Australian bushfires through describing the importance of staying with ‘ruins’—that which remains post-disaster—rather than clearing everything away to start afresh. The key here is the understanding of the importance of ‘staying with ruins’—in terms of memorialisation, memory, and accepting loss (McLeod 1984) and beyond—and of coming to terms with them, rather than just sweeping them away.

Consequently, Schlunke’s (2016) emphasis on staying with ruins and taking time, which shealing as a theoretical frame shares, challenges dominant reconstruction trends, where swiftness and distancing from the disaster’s assumed time and site can be defining principles. Soon after the 2010 Haiti earthquake disaster, for example, some analysts hoped to alleviate Port-au-Prince’s socio-environmental pressures through moving Haiti’s capital to seismically safer areas of the country (Höges 2010). Others called for reconstruction to be shaped accordingly with the country’s known geological features, arguing that building so-called critical infrastructure (e.g. hospitals and schools) in the vicinity of active faults should be prohibited (Terrier et al. 2012). Moving the capital city or only critical infrastructure could lead to it experiencing other hazards, and might rebuild the same vulnerabilities as before. It does not address the situation outside of Port-au-Prince, not to mention the significance of cities as sites of collective, cultural memory and history, palimpsestic spaces where the material infrastructure and urban design are an important, but not exclusive, aspect of what constitutes ‘city space’ (Huysen 2003). Moreover, almost exclusively focusing on Haiti’s capital, such analyses ignore that almost 80% of Léogâne (World Bank 2017), the town nearest the epicentre, as well as other towns as far away as Jacmel in southern Haiti, were destroyed or damaged. Taking these approaches, which equate moving away with moving on, would yield superficial healing, because they focus on the hazard, not on the vulnerability or on the deadly structures of violence, oppression, and everyday wounding.

Similarly, following the 2017 Atlantic hurricane season, questions were raised about why people remained on islands such as Anguilla, Barbuda, and Dominica to experience the storms' full force and then to scramble for survival in the aftermath. Evacuating from islands is not always possible and in a manner which supports and respects the evacuees, given resources available. In any case, evacuation once a hurricane forms yet again misses the fundamental point of disasters being caused by vulnerabilities rather than hazards (Hewitt 1983; Lewis 1999; Wisner et al. 2004). Instead of planning for a sudden and expensive exodus via boats and aircraft, followed by the cost of sheltering the evacuees and then transporting them back to the island after the hurricane has passed, the key to shealing following previous hurricane disasters should be tackling vulnerability. Infrastructure can be built so that it still functions after a hazard and people who live in areas likely to be inundated can be moved to wind resistant inland shelters or evacuated vertically in safe structures, with materials stockpiled for rebuilding afterwards. Some islands are so small and/or low lying that nowhere is safe from storm surge, so such evacuation would be difficult. Yet even a temporary evacuation or relocation is not necessarily synonymous with a sense of safety or easy recovery. Kinship relations, personal networks, and everyday modes of sociality of the Caribbean are at the core of making sense of and living through deadly storms (Philogene Heron 2018) yet even these social networks and 'relations can only do so much in response to hurricanes of the intensities that the Caribbean witnessed in 2017' (Philogene Heron 2018, 130). In other words, shealing, and addressing the wounding vulnerability, require place and take time, rather than being quick transitions or transformations from an 'erroneous' or 'vulnerable' past to a 'fault less', 'flawless', 'resilient', or 'shealed' present. Shealing, then, builds and expands on the importance of quotidian, everyday efforts and practices of remaking (Das et al. 2001) as an ongoing process of mitigation, negotiation, and collaborating.

## Potential and limitations

Despite the term's inclusive and open-ended character, it is important to recognise that the meanings and interpretations of shealing have limitations that can, potentially, introduce a level of tension within the concept and its potential applications.

First, the original word's use to denote pasture can be connoted negatively as servitude and plantations, especially in relation to regions marked by a history of slavery, colonialism, and indentured labour (e.g. the Caribbean and the Pacific). Contrary to these potential connotations of passivity, servitude, and exploitation, the shealing concept encompasses a non-exploitative reconnection with and repositioning of society and the environment, seeing both as integral to the recovery process through routine and (re)-establishing local livelihoods. This includes an engraining that 'nature' is not the enemy and that disasters are not 'natural' (Hewitt 1983; Lewis 1999; Wisner et al. 2004): fault lines and storms are environmental phenomena that become fatal through constructed and sustained vulnerabilities.

Second, is there a need for a new concept to denote what others refer to as 'resilience' and 'building back better' (e.g. see [Alexander 2013](#))? Although it is not a new word, as a critical concept, shealing encapsulates many fundamental tenets of disaster research, policy, and practice which are frequently sidelined within an increasingly exclusive focus on resilience assumed to be inherently positive as a 'trait, a process, or an outcome' (Southwick et al. 2014, 2). Resilience continues to be as seen a snapshot or an end goal (Forrest et al., 2019) and is too often misused to assume that people do not need assistance because they are 'resilient'. With some authors still under the impression of disaster resilience referring to bouncing back (e.g.

Halkos et al., 2018) or a return to the pre-disaster ‘normal’ (Horney et al., 2018), ‘resilience’ can detract from ‘focusing on individual, community-level, and covert long-term infrastructure disorders that must be addressed’ (Rahill et al., 2014, 600). In so doing, resilience risks foreclosing any attempts to counter or amend structures of vulnerability. As with much critical literature on resilience (e.g. Lewis, 2013ab; ~~Reid 2019;~~ Sudmeier-Rieux 2014), shealing recognises that although they do have some converse characteristics, vulnerability and resilience are not exact opposites and can exist simultaneously, aiming to address the multiple planes of the disaster experience as lived through, differently, by individuals and communities.

Moreover, resilience, whether functioning as an aim or a characteristic of a group, can act as an exploitative and marginalising tool and a dehumanising discourse that silences communities and individuals striving towards more just and equitable lives. As used, for example, in the aftermath of the 2010 Haiti earthquake, ~~in Haiti,~~ still-repeated claims of Haitians’ ‘extraordinary resilience’ and parallel narratives of the country’s and the event’s uniqueness were ‘premiered ~~on a notion of ‘not only on the notion of Haiti’s endless suffering, but also on a concomitant notion of~~ the Haitian people’s endless *capacity* for suffering’ [italics original] (Glover 2012, 200). Such narratives of exceptionalism, ~~firmly~~-rooted in stereotypes and practices of dehumanisation, ~~further~~-obscure the complexity of diversification, in terms of networks and access to supports, within the same community (Philogene Heron 2018). Furthermore, networks have changed because many people including leaders have died or moved, while relationships might be reconfigured (e.g. positions of responsibility, relationships, and roles); life views ~~changed~~- and access to resources altered. In fact, disasters are frequently shown to accelerate or exacerbate changes and choices which were already in progress without necessarily creating new ones (e.g. Quarantelli and Dynes 1976). Shealing

recognises these circumstances and radical differences without trying to force artificially a normality, or a presumed or expected state as an end point.

Beyond resilience as a clearly identifiable and idealised outcome or state to aspire to (~~e.g. Forrest et al., 2019; Halkos et al., 2018~~), shealing embodies the open-ended process of rebuilding lives, accepting that, in post-disaster contexts, people often have decisions and aspects of recovery forced upon them. Against ~~objectifying and~~ disempowering assumptions of permanent vulnerability ~~and threat (Bankoff 2003)~~ or, conversely, passivity and lack of agency on the part of the disaster-affected communities, shealing affirms that there is some modicum of choice, control, and agency at all stages of one's efforts to remake a post-disaster life. This includes ~~listening to and~~ putting at the centre of immediate rescue efforts, as well as the long-term recovery and policy-building, the voices of those directly affected by disaster without assuming or forcing top-down, seemingly transferable scenarios ~~of post-disaster aid~~ that can 'help' anywhere and everywhere. This also includes those who choose not to be involved in post-disaster recovery efforts, perhaps because they migrate, as well as the potential benefits of post-disaster 'active forgetting' (Forrest et al., 2019), suggesting a lack of interest in or need for shealing. Finding a universally accepted and all-embracing concept of disaster experience is impossible, nor should it be wished for. Shealing is not an exception in this regard: rather, it puts to the fore, in a non-prescriptive manner, the range of heterogeneous processes and factors that shape lives with and after disasters.

## **Conclusion**

This paper aimed to examine theorisations of 'later recovery' or 'slow recovery' as a positive force to be deliberately implemented as 'shealing'. The discussion showed how assumptions

behind early or swift recovery are not always appropriate. Slower or later processes can be advantageous as well as allowing for meaningful (re)making for individuals and communities, especially for countering the slow, quiet, and silent violence which creates vulnerabilities, and hence disasters, and which continues to shape processes of recovering. Shealing/shieling supports the notion of disasters as processes, rather than events, as well as vulnerability (and resilience) not being end states, but multi-layered processes. The advantage of making shealing explicit is to better understand and respond to individuals' and communities' material and non-material post-disaster needs alongside their affective experiences of living through and in the aftermath of disasters. ~~Shealing forms a joint scholarly-practical approach that better addresses what needs to be done and accepted after experiencing a disaster, going beyond the ever-recurring, but still not well-implemented, claims of 'lessons learned' and 'build back better' from across disaster contexts.~~

The focus in this paper has been on disasters, but wider implications and connections emerge between our discussions and the wider ideas of long-term, open-ended healing, such as those that are the focus of grief and trauma research or social work, e.g. forgiveness (Ransley and Spy 2004). Shealing seconds this work by accepting disasters and disaster recovery as inseparable from dealing with injustice, oppression, and various modes of conflict as well as the multiple modes of bereavement, loss, and meaning-making. Thus, building on this nexus of recovery, justice, and asynchronicity, shealing might be a bridge amongst different approaches. In sum, shealing allows theorising the many ways of living in and through disaster experiences and the range of everyday post-disaster approaches to re-making one's life that an individual or community might embrace. It emphasises ~~in Wagner's (2010, 23) words,~~ that although '[t]he initial moment of rupture is over [...] this disaster has no foreseeable end.' (Wagner 2010, 23). It is in these cracks of time, and from these breaks, that relationships of care for oneself

and for others are broken, remade, and reconfigured. In short, these multiple ways of making sense and remaking one's life require a theorisation different than the binaries of origin and return, the closed-off markings of pre- and post-disaster state, or the linear, progress-driven theorisations of recovery as the universally wished-for end state. Shealing is one way of accounting for this multiplicity of time and temporalities that disasters, their histories, and their aftermaths, pull together.

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