

DISASTER PLANNING ACROSS SCALES:

Lessons from Post-Earthquake Rubble Management in Oaxaca, Mexico

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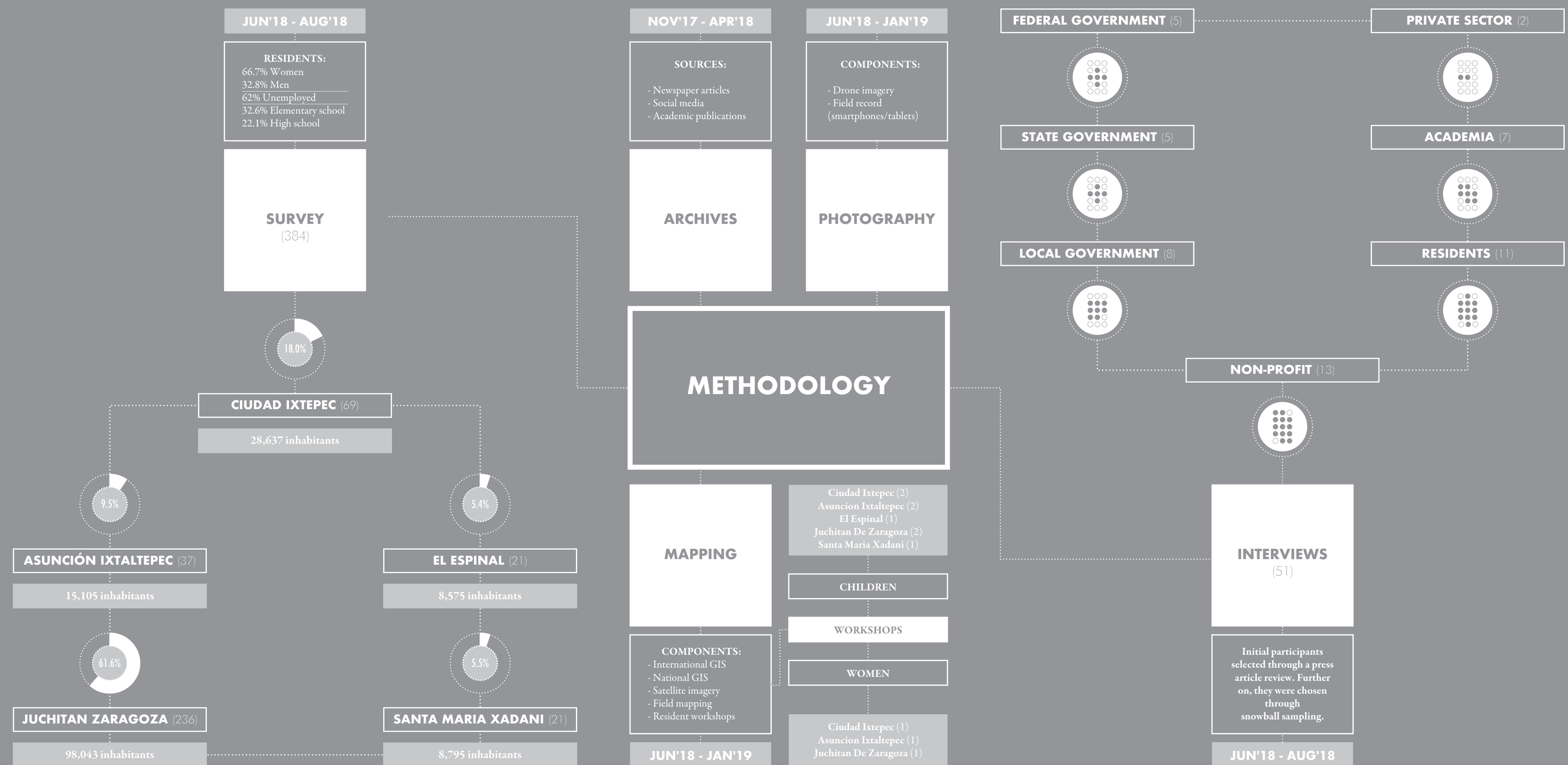


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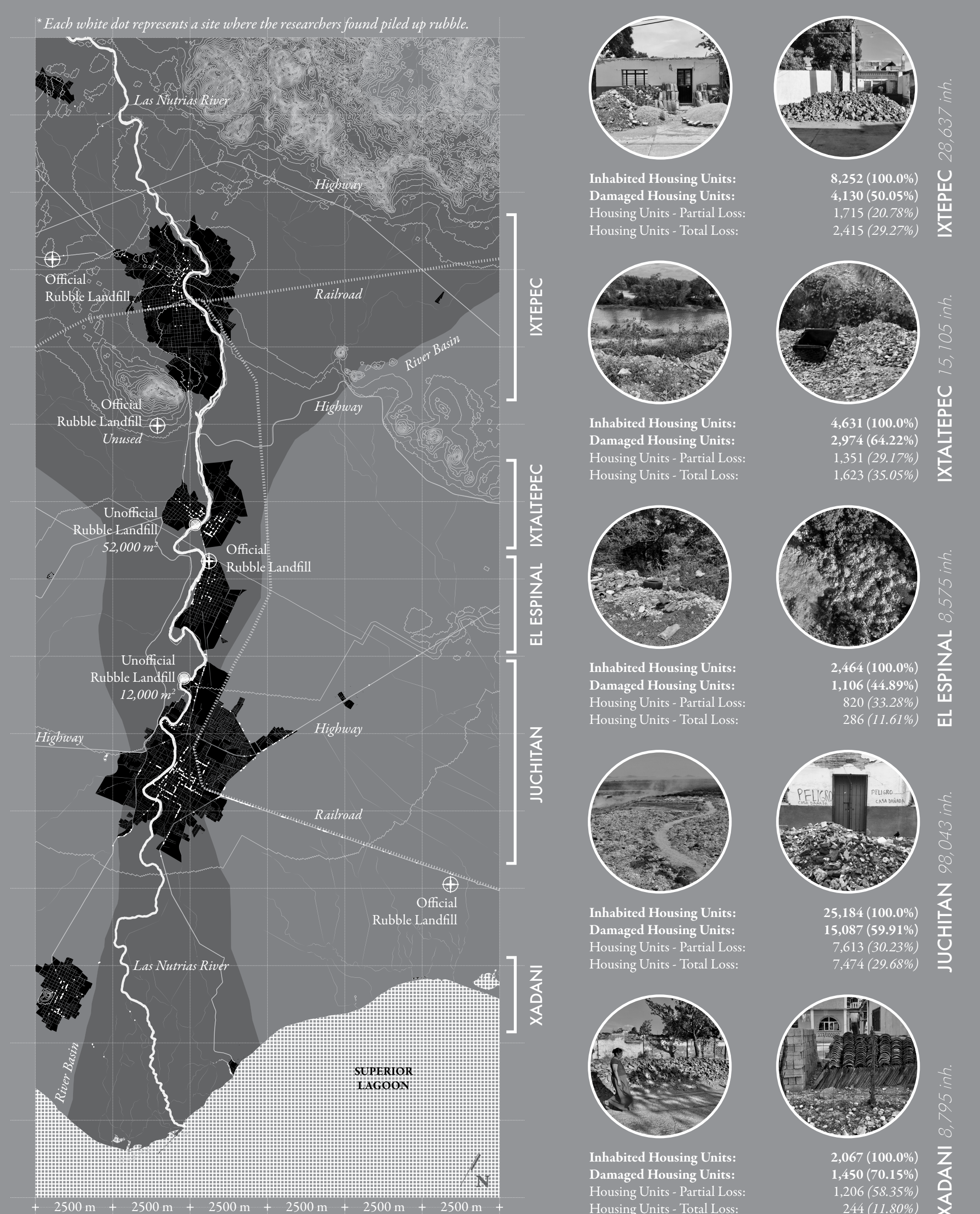


POST-DISASTER RUBBLE MANAGEMENT

What accounts for the frequent disconnect between nationally-produced plans and the reality of local, post-disaster action in marginalized communities? This study examines rubble management as both an important but often neglected component of disaster response and a powerful example of the prior disconnect.



THE LAS NUTRIAS RIVER



NORM CASCADES AND INSTITUTIONAL TRUST FOR CONTEXTUALIZED PLANNING

- 1 Despite the recurrent nature of disasters, response plans were created retroactively, prioritizing reaction and short-term action instead of prevention and long-term planning.
- 2 National disaster response plans were conceived with large cities in mind, despite the prevalence of smaller disaster-prone municipalities and rural areas.
- 3 Fragmented post-disaster action emphasized municipal boundaries, rather than a regional understanding of the affected territories.
- 4 Plans ignored economic incentives, allowing for new market dynamics in which profits, resources, and knowledge went to the "highest bidder".
- 5 Rubble management plans had no clear designation of duties, creating an ambiguous situation in which ill-prepared municipalities were held accountable despite lacking capacity and resources.

Institutional isomorphism may have played a powerful role in shaping the form and content of nationally-produced rubble plans.¹

Greater inclusion of local stakeholders in the development and implementation of rubble plans is essential.

The idea of *norm cascades* could work to change the normative conditions in which certain planning approaches are viewed as legitimate.²

Universities, which emerge as widely trusted institutions in the post-disaster Mexican context, may play a pivotal role in helping to initiate such changes and in building bridges between planning actors at different scales.

1. DiMaggio, Paul J., and Walter W. Powell. "The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields." *American Sociological Review* 48, no. 2 (1983).
2. Fineman, Martha, and Kathryn Sikkink. "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change." *International Organization* 52, no. 4 (1998).

