

Reaction Paper Elisa Jaramillo

The Resilient City

Lawrence Vale and Thomas Campanella in the introduction and conclusion of "The Resilient City" mention how cities remain one of humankind's most durable artifacts and expand on two ideas: the impact of urban destruction and the process of recovery – building of resilience.

The impact of urban destruction depends not only on the scale of the "attack" but it is also a function of what such a disaster means for the survivors. As a matter of fact, "smaller disasters are attracting global attention based on the place where they took place or what they may symbolize to the people directly and indirectly affected by them". The symbolic dimensions apply both to the disaster as well as the subsequent recovery and they are closely linked to the political, social and cultural process of the city.

Recovery implies reestablishment of the "normalcy" of social and economic relations. For governments, it is indispensable to enhance or restore the political legitimacy that may have suffered because of the tragic event. The process of recovery may entail more direct exercise of government power (e.g. land expropriation) but characteristically, there are usually no radical changes in what was public policy or urban planning practices prior to the event. The authors believe that it is an opportunity to reframe the tragic event as a chance for progress and development. I would say this is a valid statement in the case of developed and middle income developing countries but not for the poorest nations where vulnerability simply continues to grow. Furthermore, it is not infrequent that at the moment of setting the priorities for the reconstruction and recovery of communities the only voices heard are those of the privileged members. For the survivors, the process of rebuilding provides therapeutic effects by serving as a form of distraction from loss and suffering while giving reassurance of the future.