

Preface

Change is the only constant

—Heraclitus

(Disaster) brings about social change, though not necessarily progress

—Rebecca Solnit

Resilience has become a ubiquitous buzzword in recent decades as the global awareness of natural hazards and their impact on society has deepened. The need for resilience in social, political, and economic upheaval that often accompany natural disasters prompt many of those affected by the event to take action. Resilience is slowly emerging alongside sustainability as a recurring theme amongst the thought-leaders of technology, design, and architecture as well as in the social fields and politics. The definition of resilience is nuanced by the given social context, yet the common thread that weaves through the narratives is the realization that we as species are beyond the point at which we can depend on the sustainable adjustments alone to counteract the forces that are endangering our global ecosystem. Traditional measures that we have relied on to keep human species sustainable have failed in the face of insatiable growth that feeds the vicious cycle of consumption. In the current post-industrial era, the promise of technology to solve all of the world's problems has failed to deliver, and because disasters seem inevitable, resilience remains the last line of defense we have to change.

Indeed, since sociologists first developed the concept of disaster as a catalyst for social change, the field of disaster research has since exploded to become a thoroughly interdisciplinary affair. At first glance, the architectural voice is all but missing in the mainstream disaster research literature, but we find that the architectural narrative on disasters is not as well integrated as with all the other disciplines. Architectural points of view on disasters are embedded in topics of historic preservation, planning, and vernacular buildings, as disasters have been part of an

urban layer that is constantly changing and evolving with the built environment in which building activities occur.

The architectural narrative is an important one, because of its ability to represent multiple viewpoints across time and space. This book takes a number of transdisciplinary strategies developed in the design field to help key decision-makers of our cities, organizations, and communities navigate the urban politics of cities in crisis—what Horst Rittel calls “wicked problems.”

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