

THE POST-DISASTER AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO RECONSTRUCT A MORE JUST CITY

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abstract

This paper would like to investigate the response strategies to a disaster from two different cities. In this context, the disaster looks like as an opportunity for the city to be able to decide the direction for their reconstruction. The reflections relate the strategies undertaken by two cities: New Orleans and Beirut hit by a disaster, respectively by Hurricane Katrina and a civil-war. As the disasters give rise to complex situations (new socio-spatial configurations, conflicts, inequalities) and have greater effect on the most vulnerable populations, it is believed that the issues related to justice in post-disaster may be interesting topics of discussion. For this purpose, firstly, the paper would like to promote reflections on the concept of disaster. Generally disasters are classified according to their root cause. This paper would like to draw on definitions of disaster from the social sciences in order to develop reflections with reference to the disaster impact (effects) rather than the phenomenology (causes). After that, an exploration of the direct and indirect effects of disasters will drive the reading of the case studies. In the end, the analysis of the response strategies of the two cities will investigate the effects previously identified whether or not they were considered and the implications it had on the city.

1.Introduction

This paper would like to propose the first part of a doctoral thesis, still ongoing, that wants to investigate the operation of the planning in the context of the post-disaster situation. The thesis intends to inquire the possibility for planning to catch the disaster as an opportunity to operate with the a propose of urban justice. Many academics argues that planners should strive for "just city" as a main goal or main objective of the planning acts (Fainstein, 2000, 2005, Krumholz and Forester, 1990; Harvey, 2003). The thesis intends to investigate how these debates may be declined in a post-disaster situation. The importance of justice in the city is highlighted by Susan Fainstein that describes the justice as one of the main elements of a good city but also one of the most transgressed elements (Fainstein, 2009). According to the Susan Fainstein's ideal of "just city" the city is identified as the place " public investment and regulation would produce equitable outcomes rather than support those already well off " (Fainstein, 2009,p.3); More over pen families or those who have less, excluding them from rights that are enjoyed by others who are wealthy individuals it is unjust. Democracy, diversity and equality are the three main qualities that made up the Fainstain's "Just city". Equality is fundamental even for Uitemark's just city. In according to him, a "just city" are requires to be both " accessible to each and every person irrespective of their purchasing power", and to be a city where " residents have control over their living environment, that is, they engage with the polity of which they form part". (Uitermark 2009,p.359). This investigation of the the implications of disasters and their considerations in planning in terms of justic, would like to propose the first part of the PhD research. This first part starts from the definition of disaster deduced from the social sciences, identifies the effects of disasters and ends finding the majors key to put the focus on the justice in the city in post-disaster situation.

Regarding this, it has been chose to start with scouting the international literature including different discipline and proceeding with the classification of the disasters effects. Finally, this major effects are investigated in two specific context: the city of Beirut and the city of New Orleans.

The choice of this two context is linked to the easy availability of information on the disaster effects and the planning activity in the post-disaster phase. More over this two disasters, are considered interesting because are at the same time originated from different causes and the time elapsed since the disaster is sufficient to investigate three different phases: the pre-disaster, the moment of impact, and the post-disaster.

The proposition of the direction that the planning has undertaken in response to the disaster and how it has considered whether its effect will advance the considerations on how the latter seizes the disaster as "windows of opportunity". At the end all these considerations want to be useful to explore and persecute the concept of "windows of opportunity".

2. Disaster as "windows of opportunity"for...

Disasters can be seen: in one hand as an "windows of opportunity" for the city to improve itself (Cuny 1983, Burby et al 2000, Vale and Campanella 2005,) in the other hand they can unleash the latent situations which, if not considered, hinder the city in the recovery. Infact in some case, they may perpetuate the economic and social inequalities pre-event. As like disaster of deliberative human origin (M.C Treu, 2010), for someone this disaster may represent the opportunity to increase the prosperity, the power and influence, whereas in an extreme point of view , they can become an influential power tool (N.Klein , 2009).

These results underline and highlight the lack of clearness of what can be defined as "better" and "more just", which implies the lack of a conceptual framework to guide recovery efforts (Regnier 2008).

What is a "Disaster"?

When an external event impacts violently into an urban system, it causes a shock and a interruption of the normal course of his function. If you imagine two similar events, like two earthquakes, with the same intensity, duration, magnitude, but dislocated in two different place, one in a desert uninhabited and one in a city, it is simple to understand that the two outcame are very different. Therefore an event can be defined "disaster" only when it strikes people socially organized in a space(Marcuse 2013; Donovan 2013; Ligi 2009).

In the sociology of disasters, academics define the disasters as "collective events that require extraordinary efforts to protect and defend a social resource whose existence was seriously threatened." Ligi 2009).

In according to Daniel P. Alchrich and Michelle A.Mayer, the disaster is "an event that interrupts the normal activities and causes severe damage to the society. Disaster can be defined as events that can both kill people and destroy homes, infrastructure, economies and the human bonds in a society, in other words everything needed for a society to operate properly "(Alchrich, Meyer, 2013). Therefore, disasters are social phenomena (Cutter, 2010).

3. Disaster effects

The consequences of disasters on society are often similar: extensive loss of life, economic block, destruction of the natural environment and of buildings, obstacle of development and endangered local institutions and livelihoods . However, the damage directly caused by the effect of the agent itself (direct damage) are not sufficient to explain the consequences of disasters (Tierney, 2001). Quarantelli argues that "even if indirect effects (secondary impacts) are massive, the recovery process sometimes ignores or minimizes this indirect effects of disasters" (Quarantelli, 1999). in agreement with this approach, we intend to provide a classification of the effects of disasters which takes into account the direct and indirect effects.

Physical impacts

The physical impacts of the disasters have several effects. In one hand affects people regarding their personal health, mortality and violence (Charveriat, 2000) ; in the other hand affects the damage of the built environment as damage of material goods and infrastructure (Tierney 2001).

The physical destruction has even other indirect effects on the society , like:

- the destruction of home and key building (such as public facilities, cultural and historic buildings) has a double indirect effects. First on the reorganization of urban space due the forced moving of people, the second on the loss of "identity" of individuals who see destroyed their landmarks.
- the destruction of infrastructure (such as roads, bridge and dams). For example, the importance of the destruction of transport infrastructure, is evident since the phase of response to a disaster because transportation is a major component in any emergency preparedness and evacuation plan. Unequal access to transportation alternatives in a disaster increases the vulnerability of the poor, elderly, and disabled people. In addition, their destruction cause indirectly the difficulty for individuals to access to homes and jobs.
- The destruction of businesses and workplaces causes indirect damage to the economy and productivity (Lindell and Prater 2003).

Social impact

In addition to the physical impact, the disaster generate effects on society. The entity of these effects are strongly correlated on the social context, this is specified in the concept of social vulnerability. In according to Winsner, social vulnerability is defined as "the characteristics of a person or a group that affect their capacity to anticipate, cope with, resist and recover from the impacts of a natural disaster" (Wisner, 2004) . This concept is also been expanded in post-conflict situations by Aurbee . In according to Aurbee, social vulnerability is defined as 'the characteristics of a person or group in terms of their capacity to anticipate, cope with, resist and recover from the impact of any form of natural or artificial hazard '. Cutter describes social vulnerability as including "the susceptibility of social groups or society at large to potential losses (structural and nonstructural) from hazard events and disaster"(Cutter,2006).

This vulnerability (or susceptibility) to the impacts of disasters of a group of individuals, according to Susan Cutter, "is not only a function of demographic characteristics of the population (age, gender) but of more complex constructions" (Cutter,2006).

For this reason, the social vulnerability is influenced by the :

1-socioeconomic status (income, poverty, employment and education variables).

2-minority status (social and economic marginalization of racial and ethnic groups).

Smith and Petley argue that inequality in society are highlighted more after a disasters. As stated by Haas recovery is not an equal process: infact it accentuates the disparity between those who can rebuild in a faster way and better position. Those who have greater access to resources before the disaster continue to have greater access even in to post-disaster situation (Haas, 1977).

The importance of recognizing explicitly the role of the vulnerability during the recovery process is highlighted by Wisner et al. (2004), which defines the recovery based on the reduction of vulnerability. He argues that to reach a real recovery, the people (individuals, families and communities) in the post-disaster must have reduced their vulnerability and increase their resilience. A community is defined as resilient if it swiftly recovers after a disaster (Cimellaro 2010).

A further element that affects the social vulnerability is the social capital. Many studies have focused on social capital in the post disaster shown the ability of disasters to modify existing levels of social capital (Putman 1993 Catiglione, Van Deth and Walleb, 2008 and so on). In according to Putnam social capital is

defined as, features of social organizations, such as networks, norms, and trust that facilitate cooperation for mutual benefit (Putnam, 1993: p. 35). Studies have been demonstrated that disasters reduce the social. Social capital may deteriorate following a disaster because of dislocation of network members, loss of network ties through injury or death, or overwhelmed network resource capacity (Kaniasty and Norris 1993).

4 disaster in Beirut and New Orleans

Beirut pre-disaster context

Beirut in 1970 was a city with a million inhabitants. Originally, the inhabitants were Sunni Muslim and Greek Orthodox Christians, with a small percentage of the Jesuits. Beirut also has become home to many immigrants and refugees, including Armenians and Greeks, that added to the diversity of the city and enhanced its commercial base. The social tolerance between ethnic groups and the many sects of the city (including Shiites, Sunnis, greek-orthodox, greek-Catholic, Maronite Catholics, Druze and Jews) was guaranteed by common economic interests.

The downtown was the Lebanon's Melting Pot; place where people from all walks of life mingled. Khalaf argues that "the relation and the intercultural mixing in the city center, was strong. Many merchants of various communities were partners in private business and in the old souks and bazaars, artisans and merchants have worked side by side. Christians and Muslims have continued to meet in an official capacity, and served on the same committees, tribunals" (Fawaz, 1983). In addition, the historic core contained important buildings such as the Parliament and a number of ministries, the Municipality, the Central Post Office, banks and public squares.

The disaster effect in Beirut

The destruction that followed the civil war broke out in 1975 caused massive displacement of population.. During the war, Beirut was divided along ideological and religious lines. The famous "green line", starting from Martyrs' Square in the historic center, divided the city in two parts east and west. The central district was completely abandoned because it was the main combat zone. In particular, commercial activities and businesses destroyed were relocated in the suburbs, in the specific in coastal areas north of the city. The population that had animated the old town before the war moved to the suburbs and Ras Beirut, while the buildings destroyed were occupied by people displaced by the war and forced to take up residence in abandoned buildings.

Beirut post-disaster and reconstruction. Solidere 's Master Plan in the City Center

After the war, the city started the reconstruction phase channeling his forces over the city center as part more destroyed. Because the government had no effectively and efficiently structure neither enough funds for reconstruction, the physical reconstruction and development of the central area entrusted in 1991 was assigned to a private company known as Solidere (Lebanese society for the development and Reconstruction of Beirut Central District). The vision of the Solidere's Master Plan in the City Center was to create a lively center of activity mixed: commercial activities, offices, administrative buildings, public spaces, recreational areas and cultural in addition to residential areas.

The goal was to restore Beirut as a regional and international center business: the new city center was to become a coveted tourist destination and prime residential area. Beirut had to have the most beautiful center city of the Middle East.

In the preliminary phases, the objectives of the master plan were established to the citizens. On this occasion, the citizens did not agree on replacement of most of the urban fabric with new forms because the latter was

completely unrelated to those pre-existing. In short, the plan presented ideas were not shared by the inhabitants (Gavin, 1996).

However, the aim of recreating a sense of place that is a sense of "community feeling of identity" was expressed in its slogan "ancient city for the future.". The goal of this slogan was very clear in the strategy of mixed uses. this strategy had a double goal: promoting the housing market and creating an urban fun life in continuity with the atmosphere that existed in Beirut's downtown before the war. Look to the future, however, was seen as the development of grand scale of the project, using mostly high-rise buildings and modern construction technologies to represent wealth and regeneration.

Outgoing

the conflict caused extensive damage to the urban fabric. As regards the downtown, almost all of its buildings and infrastructure had been destroyed. the population was forced to abandon their homes and leave the downtown, as well as for security reasons. These movement have caused the destruction of the existing social network. The aim of the Solidare's plan was to recovery of the economic aspect. In this direction, the plan held was concerned by type of building and their economic use . The fragmentation of property, as a result of the conflict, allowed Solidare to expropriate all the eligible parties. Moreover, the target population was made up of Lebanese expatriates or wealthy Arabs and not the old citizens and merchants. The reconstruction was not sent to the effects generated by conflict: the pre-disaster population, the urban functions of the city, the activity, the increase in urban poverty.

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New Orleans Before Hurrican Katrina

The population of New Orleans before Hurricane Katerina was estimated at 484.672 inhabitants (2002). New Orleans was characterised by high poverty rates and low-wage jobs (Gault et al., 2005) was infact one of the poorest cities of the USA, with a poverty rate Opinions more than twice the national average (Center for Progressive Reform, 2005). The main core city, the Orleans Parish, and the region with about the 23% of the residents of New Orleans, the Jefferson Parish, lived in poverty. In Particular, the 48% of Orleans and 32% of the residents of Jefferson was low income. Eighty four percent of New Orleans residents living in poverty were African-American. The Ninth ward fully reflect these characteristics, infact before the hurricane the Lower Ninth had a population of about 14.008 inhabitants, 98% made up of African-Americans and 34% of the population lived in poverty. However, in their marginalization, the African-American population was organized in social circles creating a socio-political tradition, self-help, mutual aid, and resistance to structures of oppression. This enabled the population to realize institutions, social networks and events that was expressed in a neighborhood full of small businesses, barber and beauty shops, corner stores, eateries, gasoline stations, day care centers, as well as public schools and many churches.

The disaster effect in New Orleans

The disaster effect in New Orleans On August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katerina has caused destruction and flooding in 75 percent of the city. Immediately after the disaster, 200,000 individuals were displaced (FEMA2005). The New Orleans African American residents were much more likely than displaced white residents to end up living far from the region. Many African American displacees ended up in cities such as Houston and Atlanta. For these people, the forced movement to another state destabilized generation-old networks of kindfolk and close - knit communities. Infact , longstanding social aid and pleasure clubs, organized to support leisure and community needs, have dispersed, as have church congregations and parishes. In addition, the displaced have been labeled as "refugees" (Rhodes, 2010) this alludes that is not as if they had lost only their home, but also their right to have a home.

Post- disaster and reconstruction. People's plan of Ninth Ward district

After Katrina, New Orleans Mayor *Ray* Nagin asked the ULI to prepare a strategic plan for the reconstruction of New Orleans that would guide the work of his committee recently established. ULI sent 40 of its members representing the public, private and non-profit organization for the city, under the leadership of Marilyn Taylor of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill , an architectural firm in New panel was published after a careful review of the planning reports of the past, the analysis of past data and present the United States Census, the visual inspection of the city, 300 local interviews and the organization of a local town hall meeting . Amongst other things, the ULI s report suggested a strategic operati redevelopment : the short-term rehabilitation of the areas that were less damaged and the destination of a park and wetlands for areas badly damaged. Many of these areas fall in the district Nith ward. However, the report of the mayor recommended the creation of planning teams to production of recovery plan for areas badly damaged. For this occasion, ANCON contacted the Department of City and Regional Planning for technical support, planning and design for all those who sought to rebuild New Orleans. The team format started a qualitative and quantitative analysis (Reardom, 2006). The quantitative analysis showed that a relevant part of the Ninth Ward was recoverable (as opposed to the analysis given in the report).The qualitative analysis, based on participatory processes, showed that residents of the area were willing to move to reconstruction of their neighborhood. This effort is underlined in the People's plan, presented just a month after. The People's plan is a strategic plan of action aimed at identifying a recovery model for the area. The vision of this plan is to "Create a Opinions more vibrant, sustainable and equitable 9th Ward That offers former and current residents, business owners, and institutional leaders to higher quality of life and attracts new residents and investors eager to participate on in an unprecedented revitalization of one of America's most historically, culturally, and socially significant urban communities ". The aim of the equity, highlighted by the plan, is clear both the result to be reached and plan process itself. Infact, the team was working both to ensure that all inhabitants to be able to return in their neighborhood and also that all inhabitants to be able to be part in the process. For example, in addition to the activities of survey and collection of information on the economy, population, employment etc, people and civic organizations were interviewed to collect their ideas about the redevelopment strategies. These analyzes have identified a series of answers to the issues that concerned the city both before the disaster (as endemic crime, the lack of jobs etc .) and after the disaster (lack of funds to rehabilitate houses, close of business etc.).

Outgoing

The impact of Hurricane Katina involved the devastation of 80% of the city. The Lower Ninth Ward recorded the largest number of damages. The majority of the population was forced to abandon their homes and leave the downtown, as well as for security reasons. The destruction of homes, economic structures and roads caused a lot of indirect damage to society as a weakening of social networks and, in turn, the increase in their social vulnerability. The Nagil's plan appears to take no account of this aspect. The right to return to their homes was not equally guaranteed to all citizens: while citizens of the less damaged houses was given the chance to rebuild, to the citizens of the houses damaged this possibility was not offered. the goal of the

People's Plan was to address this issue in order to allow the same right to citizens of the most damaged . It is possible to observe through analysis of the case of Ninth Ward that through the active involvement of the population, the solutions are directed not only to the physical reconstruction (the plan gives different directions), but also are directed to social reconstruction. the solutions, in the process and in the outcome, have been directed to the reduction of social vulnerability because they aspire to :

-Enable all citizens access to the assets. objective of the plan is not only to allow all citizens the right to return to their homes, but also to be able to improve their living conditions through the attention paid to the improvement of urban spaces and work spaces.

- Ensuring that all citizens the access to "power". the planning process had a strong inclusive nature. That has been reflected in the People's Plan. In this way citizens had access to power to target and contribute to the rebuilding process of their living environment.

5. Conclusions

As Ozerdem Argues, if disasters and their impacts are the result of unresolved development challenges, then disasters can Shops provide new opportunities for development. 'This requires a development approach That is both sensitive to opportunity and able to reserved respond by designing reconstruction Programmers to built such opportunities' (Ozerdem, 2003). In this way, the opportunities can be seen in a perspective of social justice. in according to Harvey, the right to the "just city" "is not morely a right of access to what the property speculators and state planners define, but an (common) active right to make the city more in accord with our hearts desire, and to re-make ourselves thereby in a different image" (Harvey, following Mar 2013: p.42).In the case of Solidere the disaster has been caught as a "windows of opportunity " to rebuild a beautiful city center for a great city. The beautiful city center is in reality as an exclusively island isolated by the city. In this direction, it did not take account the impact generated by the war. The plan helped to perpetuate the economic and social inequalities by moving these issues in the other part of the city.

In the case of Lower Ninth ward neighborhood the People's Plan grasps these opportunities. Infact, it has double objective of making a city accessible to all and creating a city where residents are committed to have control over their living environment. The consideration is this was been possible because the plan aimed at the reduction of social vulnerability increasing the quality of social network. Social vulnerability and social network of a community destroyed are some of the key processes affecting the level of impact of disaster and as such should be considered as main components in the efforts of the reconstruction.

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