

Session 3: Urban Resilience: Normative Frames and Narratives

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Resilience and Social Justice: Learning from Post-Katrina New Orleans

Abstract:

Through exploring multiple contemporary conceptions of justice it can be demonstrated that justice matters when considering outcomes in NGO assistance. In environmental justice scholarship, for example, the term “justice” has been taken for granted as meaning the fair or equitable distribution of environmental harms. Using the rebuilding of two heavily damaged poor and minority neighborhoods in post-Katrina New Orleans as case studies, this article makes evident the different conceptualizations of justice embedded within the strategies and techniques of NGOs and community organizations. Examining both practices and outcomes, it can be shown that the definition of justice that NGOs implicitly or explicitly adopt in their strategies and technologies of assistance can lead to very different results in post-disaster neighborhood revitalization. This is important in thinking about equitable social change and allied policy---not only as it applies to NGO assistance but also to other federal, state and local interventions aimed at shaping more resilient low income and minority communities.



