

Regional Resilience: Normative Frames and Narratives

Case studies were at the heart of the panel on “Regional Resilience: Normative Frames and Narratives.” Stephan Barthel of the Stockholm Resilience Centre led off with a plenary address that brought the complexities of resilience into focus with metropolitanism in mind. Indeed, Barthel aptly illustrated how management, design, planning, and infrastructure might come together in the creation of resilient spaces. Linda Langston of the National Association of Counties followed on to discuss how leadership can either facilitate or derail long-term efforts at resilience on the regional level. Detailing the tension between the short-term needs of communities and the long-term demands of resilience planning illustrates the complexities that are embedded for regional planners. For example, there are difficult issues surrounding politicians focused on getting re-elected, the need to deal with the immediate impacts of environmental disaster, and the problematic of translating long-term planning needs which are often littered with scientific language. The result, according to Langston, is that we end up limping from disaster to disaster with no real plan for resilience. This complexity was also highlighted in the cases that Mika Shimizu of Kyoto University and Deborah Brosnan of Virginia Tech presented. Shimizu highlighted the difficulties for local resilience in Tohoku, which is one of the most important examples of cascading disasters in contemporary history. Brosnan rounded out the panel by discussing the ethical issues surrounding disaster recovery. She commented that often people are able to survive the immediate disaster just fine, whether it be an earthquake, volcano, or hurricane, but the poor disaster relief efforts often create additional vulnerabilities that people have a difficult time with. In terms of functional resilience, we cannot fully anticipate cascading disasters but we need to take into consideration community needs, values, and priorities if we are to embrace normative dimensions of resilience.