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RESILIENCE AND JUSTICE

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Abstract

The term resilience has become the popular formulation for plans that deal with preparedness for disaster. It implies adaptation rather than returning to a pre-crisis state. Its use has been extended from environmental events to social and economic crises. Its fault is that it obfuscates underlying conflict and the distribution of benefits resulting from policy choices. Development of resilience policies is cloaked in complicated models showing complexity and indeterminacy. Marxist analysis provides insights that cut through the failure of these models to assign agency, but it does not offer approaches short of revolution to assist present-day planning. The conclusion of the essay presents strategies that can lead to greater justice in planning to cope with the impacts of devastating events.

The term 'resilience' has become extraordinarily popular. A *New York Times* headline asserts: 'Forget sustainability. It's about resilience' (2 November 2012). According to this article, the purpose of developing resilience is to help vulnerable people adapt to unforeseeable disruptions: 'Where sustainability aims to put the world back into balance, resilience looks for ways to manage in an unbalanced world' (Zolli, 2012). Another journalistic piece on the recent widespread use of the term inquires whether it has just become one more buzzword like synergy or social capital (Carlson, 2013; see also Davoudi, 2012)—or, one might add, like creative cities or, long ago, comprehensive planning (a once discredited concept that has returned with the aim of planning for resilience). The surge of interest in resilience responds to the damage wrought by hurricanes and earthquakes in the last decade even while it is being stretched beyond natural disasters to encompass economic crisis and social misery.

The mandate for the 2013 joint meeting of AESOP and ACSP[1] illustrates the breadth of aims the term has come to cover. Resilience was the conference's unifying theme, defined as the means 'to sustain the urban and rural viability and improve the quality of life for their residents amidst the global economic and socio-political crisis and climate change'. Using the term to cover so many laudable objectives disguises the trade-offs involved and the resulting distributions of costs and benefits. For example, efforts to achieve resilience in relation to climate change through developing natural buffers against sea level rise will likely result in the displacement of populations. Who will be displaced and what measures will be taken to replace lost housing and community are crucial questions not captured by the term resilience. The issue becomes whether, by using this word, policymakers are, as with sustainability, seeking an innocuous label to justify controversial actions. The term has been deployed by elite groups to prevent development that encroaches on privileged territories, while at the same time progressive elements regard it as an appealing label under which they can press for more equitable outcomes. One can only wonder, though, whether the effort to, as it were, sneak in considerations of justice amounts to more than self-delusion. The argument for resilience mainly acts as a rhetorical device that fits with a bland language of planning in which every challenge produces a win-win solution. Strategies that aim at producing just outcomes, however, require clear statements regarding who benefits,

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1 These acronyms refer to the European and American associations of planning faculty members. AESOP stands for Association of European Schools of Planning; ACSP is the US Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning.

accept that some groups will bear losses, are not usually based on consensus and direct resources toward the most vulnerable as demarcated by their social situation.

This essay first examines how resilience is currently being defined, then discusses the way in which it obscures power relations, notes the strengths of a Marxist framework and critiques progressive attempts to circumvent power hierarchies through calls for participation. I argue that, in current usage, resilience derives from an idealist formulation of social processes that leads planners to propose responses to crisis divorced from reality. I further argue, however, that neither Marxism nor the conventionally acceptable approach of evolutionary resilience provides a guide to practice. As will be discussed below, efforts at developing resilient practices typically involve sophisticated risk analysis based on big data, justified within complexity theory. These exercises give practitioners much to do, but their results do not prescribe specific actions any more than do identifications of underlying conflicting interests.

What is meant by resilience?

C.S. Holling (1973) is generally given credit for developing the model of evolutionary resilience and arguing that resilience means not a return to a previous equilibrium but rather to system transformation. As Richard Forman (2008: 89) comments: 'Ecologists have basically dropped "balance of nature" and equilibrium community from their vocabulary. Instead they emphasize the *non-equilibrium* nature of nature, since the scientific evidence overwhelmingly highlights change as the norm ... Indeed the prevention of disturbance, rather than disturbance itself, is the threat'. In this view humans and the physical world are part of an interactive system rather than one in which nature is objectified and humans are the masters of it. D.E. Alexander (2013: 2710), citing the United Nations definition of resilience, notes that various meanings have been incorporated into the term and that 'it should be evident ... that some of the meanings are potentially contradictory, such as restoring equilibrium and getting away from it by moving to a new system state'.

The incorporation of evolution into planning for resilience undermines the assumptions of a steady state on which the linear extrapolations of planners often rely (Davoudi, 2012). In this interpretation, whether applied to nature or the economy, the implicit argument is that unavoidable events (earthquakes, storms, property bubbles, stock market crashes, etc.) will inevitably produce system change. Having resilience requires accommodating to these jolts not preventing them. Significantly, in terms of public policy, because they result from the interaction of multiple, uncoordinated factors, no agent has the power to control them.

This view of ungovernability, along with a faith that accepting risk is less harmful than attempting to avoid it, actually long predates the recent discussions of evolutionary resilience. Well before Holling's (1973) article, Norton Long, an American political scientist, published a widely cited article entitled 'The Local Community as an Ecology of Games'. In it he argued:

> Observation of certain local communities makes it appear that inclusive over-all organization for many general purposes is weak or non-existent. Much of what occurs seems to just happen with accidental trends becoming cumulative over time and producing results intended by nobody. A great deal of the communities' activities consist of undirected co-operation of particular social structures, each seeking particular goals and, in doing so, meshing with others ... As in the natural ecology, random adjustment and piecemeal innovation are the normal methods of response [to breakdown]. The lack of over-all institutions in the territorial system and the weakness of those that exist insure that *co-ordination is largely ecological* rather than a matter of conscious rational contriving (Long 1958: 252, italics added).

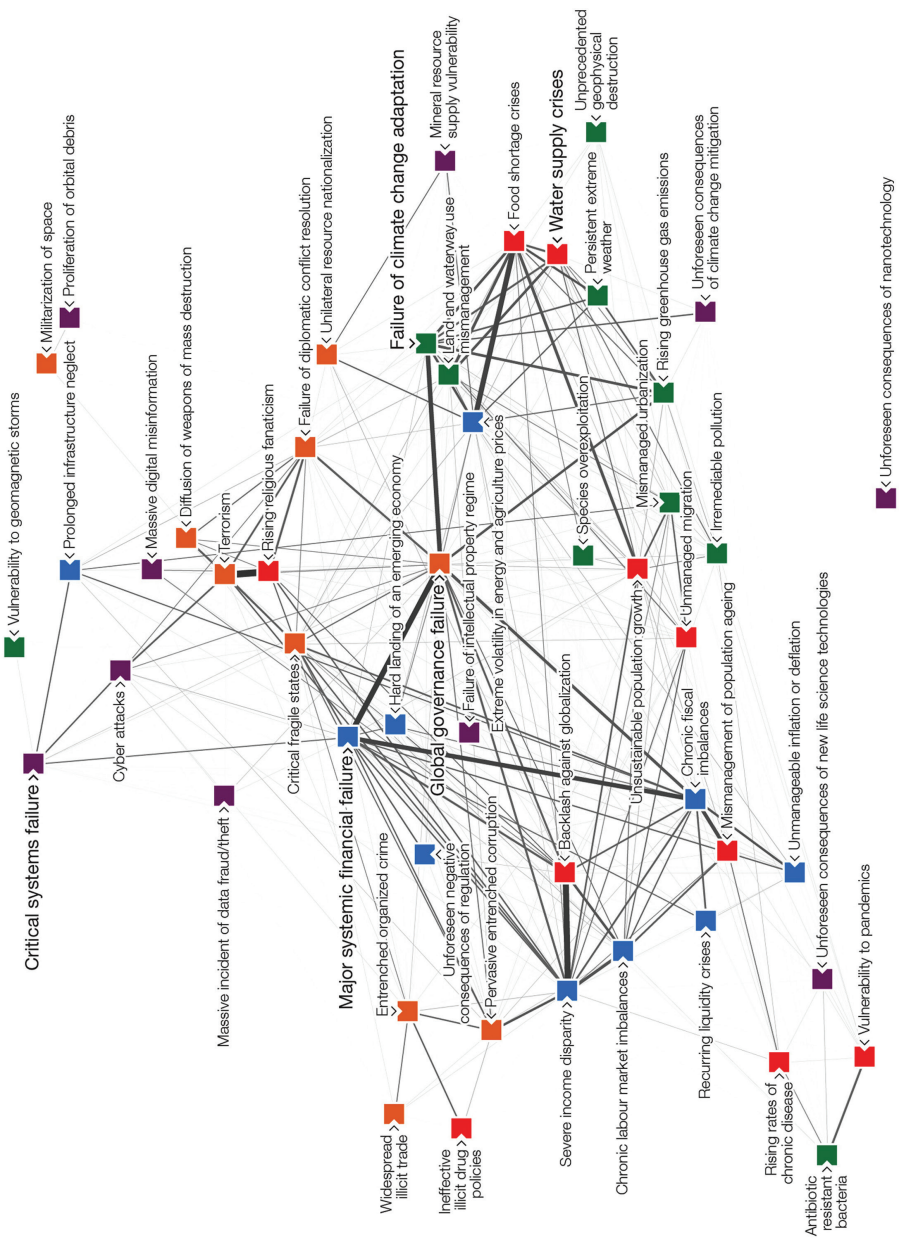

FIGURE 1 The risk interconnection map (*source*: World Economic Forum, Switzerland, 2013)

This analysis prefigures Gunderson and Holling's (2002) concept of panarchy; that is, non-hierarchically directed adaptation. Long's viewpoint reflects the sophisticated pluralistic analysis of his time, embodied also in the works of Robert Dahl and his followers. The thrust was to debunk those like C. Wright Mills and Floyd Hunter who identified power elites who could control development. The pluralists ignored the way in which capitalism sets the overall structure in which the social ecology exists and in which the relationship between society, nature and the built environment is formed and reproduced. Without fully adopting a Marxist framework, we can still glean from it insights into the theoretical questions raised by resilience scholarship and also see some of the obstacles to planning in practice more clearly. The two principal theoretical questions to be discussed in the next sections are: (1) the political question of power, and (2) the epistemological question of describing complex systems. They point to issues in using resilience as the basis for planning, including the danger that the terminology of resilience engenders either passivity or a favoring of the already advantaged.

Politics and power

A number of theorists, when discussing the paradigm of social ecology from which the argument for resilience derives, critique it for inadequately addressing the questions of political power and the role of the state, and for incorporating a conservative political bias (see e.g. Swanstrom, 2008; Wilkinson, 2012). When looking at the chart below, which maps the interconnections between various types of risks using an ecological approach, we can easily see how the issue of power is evaded. Developed for the 2013 World Economic Forum—the meeting of governmental and corporate leaders that occurs each year at Davos—the chart presents a view of crisis that will not discomfit these elites.

When interactive processes are portrayed in this fashion, whereby everything is connected to everything else, there appear to be no overriding logic, no agents and no targets for effective action. In the words of Brendan Gleeson: 'If left to natural interpretation alone, the tropes of evolution and equilibrium suggest a law bound urban ecology that makes social intervention meaningless or self-defeating … Naturalism, of course, disavows and therefore misrepresents human agency and social possibility' (Gleeson, 2013: 13).

Examining social phenomena through the lens of complexity leaves the analyst with enormous mapping jobs and model-building challenges but provides little in the way of decision rules. Eric Swyngedouw (2010: 303) comments: 'Unforeseen changes are seen either as the effect of "externalities" … or as a catastrophic turbulence resulting from initial relations that spiral out in infinitely complex and greatly varying configurations such as those theorized by Chaos or Complexity Theory'. For Swyngedouw, this perspective amounts to a denial of the socio-ecological relationships of dominance that are upheld by the hidden, conservative ideology of environmentalism.

Marxist analysis explains crisis through analyzing the logic of capital. Although Marx himself saw crisis in purely economic terms and accepted the view that humans could, and should, dominate nature (Harvey 1996: 126), more recent theorists working within the Marxian tradition reject that perspective. Instead, they extend the analysis to share with the complexity theorists an interactionist understanding of the relations between humans and the 'natural' world, but they interpret that interaction quite differently. Neil Smith (1984), for instance, asserts that nature is entirely a social creation produced within the capitalist mode of production. David Harvey (1996: 131) contends that eighteenth-century political economy (and, equally, contemporary neoliberalism) disguises the question of humans' relationship to nature as 'a technical discourse concerning the proper allocation of scarce resources (including those in nature) for the benefit of human welfare'. He argues that programs which are not profitable or protective of private property rights will be neglected, regardless of their

environmental or social impact. The American refusal to institute a carbon tax is a case in point.

Key to the intellectual outlook formed by the Marxian tradition is a focus on class relations rather than communication as the determinative factor in explanation. David Harvey critiques Habermas for treating communicative action 'as a linguistic discursive problem', thus providing 'a very weak understanding of how the discursive "moment" ... internalizes effects of power, of material practices, of imaginaries, of institutions, and of social relations' (*ibid*.: 354). A recent, highly publicized book by Bruce Katz and Jennifer Bradley of the Brookings Institution reflects this obliviousness to structural conflict, business domination and a Panglossian view of consensus building:

> Four years after the recession's official end, it is clear that the real, durable reshaping [of the American economy] is being led by networks of city and metropolitan leaders—mayors and other local elected officials, for sure, but also heads of companies, universities, medical campuses, metropolitan business associations, labor unions, civic organizations, environmental groups, cultural institutions, and philanthropies. These leaders are measuring what matters, unveiling their distinctive strengths and starting points in the real economy: manufacturing, innovation, technology, advanced services, and exports ... [They are] *using business planning techniques honed in the private sector*. They are remaking their urban and suburban places as livable, quality, affordable, sustainable communities and offering more residential, transport, and work options to firms and families alike. And they are doing all these things through coinvention and coproduction (Katz and Bradley, 2013: 3, emphasis added).

From this perspective there are no structural conflicts within metropolitan areas and cooperation among all the various interests—capital and labor, white and black, industrialists and environmentalists—will insure resilience, sustainability and economic development.

In sharp contrast, the Marxist viewpoint identifies contradictions in the capitalist mode of production that make environmental despoliation inevitable and points to the power of capitalists as the underlying cause of ecological crisis. This thinking accepts the argument, espoused by non-Marxists as well, that there is no such thing as a natural disaster, in that human activity always underlies environmental crisis (see Hartman and Squires, 2006). Marxists, however, differ from liberals in that they are much more willing to assess blame. Unlike complexity theory, Marxist thought is deeply political. Its weakness, from the perspective of planners, is that it offers relatively little, beyond political mobilization in defense of the weak, for responding to threat in the present. Furthermore, and with little supporting evidence, it assumes that under socialism contradictions resulting in environment crisis would be eliminated. It cannot, however, on these grounds be simply dismissed, since its depiction of the consequences of capital accumulation is largely valid. In fact, complexity theory, with its multiplicity of variables and numerous feedback effects, offers no greater practicality; rather its political acceptability and scientific trappings protect it from being disregarded or treated contemptuously.

Ideological frameworks and theories of change

Davoudi (2012: 302–3) comments that the concept of evolutionary resilience means that 'small-scale changes in systems can amplify and cascade into major shifts' in a process of creative destruction. This picture of what, in Hegelian thought, is characterized as the qualitative leap, captures also the understanding of social change within the Marxist dialectic, although for Marx the jump is materialist rather than

ideational. Within dialectical materialism nothing ever remains the same in history, and although changes may be imperceptible, eventually they result in systemic transformation. Thus, the accumulation of wealth by a merchant trading class eventually gave rise to the capitalization of industry, leading to the jump from a rural-agricultural mode of production to the urban-industrial one. Within the present epoch, the fiscal crises of the 1970s in the West stimulated a new international division of labor under which manufacturing moved to developing countries. Along with the outsourcing of production also came the outsourcing of pollution, as regulation in the West and poverty in the rest caused dirty industries to move to places where they could profitably continue their activities. Thus, reforms in the major industrial countries aimed at environmental protection and public welfare cumulated during the postwar years until they produced a crisis of profitability and a major transformation in the relations of production, characterized by a new international division of labor, the globalization of production and a new geography of environmental harm.

The term 'creative destruction' is frequently used by both Marxists and their critics to characterize processes resulting in new sets of ecological relationships. The difference between the Marxian and Schumpeterian understandings of 'creative destruction' lies in the normative evaluation of its effects. In the latter, the emphasis is on creativity and innovation as the driving forces of progress. In the Marxian view it is on the destruction of communities and ways of life. Thus, Marx laments the loss of independence of the skilled craftsman, and Harvey (2003) mourns the destruction of the working-class quarters of Paris under the aegis of Haussmann. At the same time the process is attributed to the logic of the capitalist drive for profit, and the set of interactions as a whole produces a dynamic that undermines the system. Consequently industrial production and high-level consumption lead to massive employment of energy and water sources with consequent global warming and depletion of water supplies. Similarly, the global financial crisis of 2007–08 can be interpreted through the lens of complexity theory as a consequence of unpredictable externalities and feedback effects flowing out of financial innovation. From this viewpoint it was the attempt to contain risk rather than accept it through the development of financial derivatives that exacerbated the crisis. From a Marxist perspective it resulted from the financialization of capitalist relations and increased reliance on debt leading to a crisis of accumulation.

Dialectical materialism allows the identification of new qualitative stages. It is part of a critical social science that regards social relationships as conflictual and inherently power-driven rather than consensual or the product of an invisible (and implicitly beneficent) hand. In the latter part of the twentieth century, theorists in the Marxist tradition developed regulation theory to explain changes in capitalism in response to crises of profitability. While not involving a leap into a post-capitalist stage, these changes nevertheless marked a substantial shift from the preceding years. According to this theory, the Keynesian welfare state, mass production for mass consumption and manufacturing dominance ('Fordism') characterized the wealthy countries of the West during the years immediately following the second world war. Under the 'post-Fordist' regime of accumulation that commenced during the 1970s, finance capital became dominant within a globalized economic system, a new international division of labor was imposed, and privatization and deregulation reduced the role of the state in maintaining social well-being (Amin, 1994). The labeling of the supportive ideology of post-Fordism as neoliberalism derives from this kind of approach, which considers that the continuing acceptance of capitalist accumulation results from its embeddedness in a system of regulation involving cultural, social and political conventions (Brenner and Theodore, 2002). Regulation theorists thus consider conventional thinking to be a mechanism that supports a particular regime of accumulation. The current attempt to use market mechanisms as the means for

environmental protection, as in the establishment of markets for the right to pollute (i.e. 'cap and trade'), illustrates the way in which neoliberal thinking limits the range of acceptable policy responses to ones that will benefit capital. Similarly the recapitalization of banks with government funds in response to financial crisis along with the failure to halt mortgage foreclosures represents a highly biased adaptation to the crisis.

Marxist analysis leads to the identification of the contradictions and crisis-prone nature of capitalism. The negative environmental effects of commodity production—what mainstream economists call market failures—arise from such contradictions, are inevitable and do indeed cause crisis. What is remarkable about capitalism, however, and not predicted by Marx, is its extraordinary resilience. Marx considered that the contradictions of capitalism would cause crisis, the breakdown of the system and the empowerment of the working class. And indeed, the crises of over-accumulation, environmental disaster and rebellion have occurred. Since its inception capitalism has been characterized by financial bubbles and their subsequent puncture, by the destruction of environments embodied in ghost towns and London fogs, by the spread of diseases engendered by poor sanitary conditions within cities and by inequality giving rise to antagonistic classes and nations. Yet there has been adaptation and the defeat of socialism as it really existed (and which suffered from its own contradictions). Dialectical thought allows the observer to see the relationships within a system, but it does not, any better than complexity theory, allow us to know the ultimate outcome—and in fact, in the absence of Marx's teleology, we should not expect any final outcome.

Ideology, resilience and planning

The depoliticizing character of standard ecological analysis legitimates the term resilience—hence, its appeal to defenders of the socio-economic status quo. Protecting bucolic suburban areas from high-density housing becomes justified as maintaining green spaces that will absorb run-off. These are the same suburban areas that feature mowed lawns and golf courses even while their negative impacts on the water table and water quality are widely known. What exists is seen as normal, and resilience is commonly defined as the creation of a new normality after a disruption. Normality tends to be what is in the interests of property owners: thus, the effort to re-create Berlin as it was before the Wall (expressed in the terms 'we are a normal city again') or to reduce social housing in Amsterdam (where the director of planning informed me that Amsterdam was finally becoming 'a normal city'). What appears 'normal' produces ontological security for many, even while exacerbating the insecurity of others.

Planning for resilience generally is conducted as an exercise in risk assessment followed by a calculation of alternative responses. Risk calculations, however, cannot tell us what level of risk is tolerable, nor do they break down the question into that of risk for whom? Instead, they aim at giving precise numbers, despite the actual uncertainty involved: 'The clearest message from the changing evidence base over the last decade concerns the dangers of false precision … With regard to flooding, the data appears to be particularly subject to rapid and fundamental change and raises questions as to the extent to which it can be distilled to a probabilistic figure or clear spatial delineation between "safe" areas and those "at risk"' (White, 2013: 110). These numbers, however, are demanded by insurers so that they can develop underwriting criteria and calculate premiums and by planners so that they can decide on desirable levels of density. They fit into the current fad of 'evidence-based planning'. Similarly, economic forecasters provide precise figures for expected growth and inflation so that national banks can adjust interest rates to accommodate them. But changed interest rates produce winners and losers (e.g. holders of variable rate mortgages) whose welfare is not taken into account.

Patsy Healey (2012) refers to 'traveling ideas' and warns us to be careful about applying models or best practices that work well in one place but may be inappropriate elsewhere. There are two such ideas currently prevalent in regard to making cities more resilient to natural disasters, one dealing with outcomes and the other with process: (1) going along with rather than trying to defeat ecological processes—for example making room for water, allowing forest fires to burn away undergrowth; (2) arriving at a participatory, consensual agreement on what is to be done. In conclusion, I address and critique these two ideas within the framework already laid out, then advance some modest proposals.

– Accommodating to natural processes

The Dutch have pioneered the approach of making room for water, which involves accommodating flooding rather than using barriers to protect low-lying land. Of course, there is really nothing new about this strategy except within the context of a country that previously relied on massive public works to fend off the surrounding seas. In fact, less developed countries have traditionally relied on annual flooding as the basis for agricultural productivity. Therefore, it is its social-historical positioning that makes the approach novel. We hear similar calls in the United States, where the Army Corps of Engineers is dismantling some dams and rebuilding wetlands in the Mississippi Delta. When we are speaking of unbuilt areas, little harm will be done, but even there some land owners will benefit while others will lose out. In cities the potential hardships are much greater when inhabited neighborhoods are marked for inundation. Moreover, even the Dutch will continue to rely primarily on engineered barriers to water flows and the use of high-technology-based emergency responses; they are modifying rather than leaving behind the mastery of the nature model.

Most notoriously, in New Orleans, making room for water was the basis for the 'green dot' map where certain impoverished parts of the city were designated by planning experts as appropriate locations to return to open space. The resulting furor caused the withdrawal of the plan and a willingness to allow any neighborhood to rebuild if its former residents could find the will and finances to do so (Nelson *et al*., 2007). The New Orleans case highlights the politics of making room for water in already built-up areas. Since the most environmentally challenged land is typically inhabited by low-income residents who initially had few choices, returning the land to its pre-inhabited state places the cost burden of relocation on those least able to sustain it. Where waterfront land has been colonized by upper-income residents seeking views, the effort has largely been to protect them and keep them in place. Hypothetically a poor community could be moved 'en bloc' to a more salubrious area, but this approach is very costly and seldom applied to marginalized communities. Simple compensation to individual households for the loss of their land would not supply the amount of money needed for former residents to settle in a decent home in more environmentally beneficial surroundings, nor would it reconstruct the community relations that had been severed. This situation, within the standard view of social ecology, is simply a dilemma of governance; within a more radical theory, it is the consequence of capitalism under neoliberalism, where the resources to support everyone in a decent home and suitable living environment are withheld.

A progressive approach would use the criteria of use values in determining strategies. If poor communities ought to move, then they should not have to do so until a new location is developed, and members should be able to move together. Dealing with environmental threat should not be considered in isolation from the broader question of producing affordable housing. Conventional thinking regards government production of housing as inefficient and limiting choice, but empirical investigation shows that only countries that have had large-scale production of social housing provide adequate shelter for low-income households. Just outcomes require a move

away from reliance on market processes and a return to a dominant state role in housing provision (Marcuse and Keating, 2006).

– Participatory processes: do they produce better outcomes than expert-driven ones?

The New Orleans example points also to the process issue. Participation led ultimately to a resolution whereby the city would be rebuilt pretty much as it was for those with resources, while many of those lacking in financial and social capital were unable to return or rebuild—although they were not prohibited from doing so. Participants at the local level, even while their participation resulted in their being allowed to stay in place, were unable to command funding in relation to need. Although considerable federal money did flow into New Orleans, calculations of property values were based on exchange values not use values, as was the case for private insurers as well. The hurricane was also used as the rationale for demolishing all the public housing in the city, leaving poor residents with even fewer options than formerly. Rather than top-down expert-imposed strategies determining the shape of rebuilding, a combination of participation and market forces produced a result as favorable to the well-off as the green-dot map. A few poor neighborhoods were able to muster sufficient organization and political resources to rebuild; most never recovered. The outcome shows that participation without financial resources is an empty promise.

In conclusion, I will illustrate my argument with the case of New York City. New York has been at the epicenter of three recent crises: the World Trade Center attack of 11 September 2001; the implosion of financial markets in 2007–08; and Hurricane Sandy in 2012. A book published in 2005 that analyzed the impact of the first of these events on the city's economy was entitled *Resilient City* (Chernick, 2005). Mayor Michael Bloomberg's plan for dealing with future storm threats was entitled 'A Stronger, More Resilient New York'. In truth, New York has proved resilient in particular ways, but these ways have strongly benefited financial sector executives and real estate owners and developers. Reacting to 9/11, the federal government poured money into the city in a fashion quite different from after the 1975 fiscal crisis, when it was begrudging in its response; in fairness, a substantial sum gave recompense to the families of those killed in the towers, and although the amount was calibrated according to the individuals' earnings, even low-paid workers received fairly generous sums. The big winner, however, was the developer Larry Silverstein, who was protected from any financial loss and given the right to rebuild on the site (Sagalyn, 2005). After the collapse of the secondary mortgage market in 2007, the federal government stepped in with the Troubled Assets Relief Program (TARP), to the benefit of the financial institutions headquartered in the city (Gladstone and Fainstein, 2013). Since then, New York's rich have become richer, and everyone else has become poorer (US Bureau of the Census, 2013). Bloomberg's proposal for a more resilient New York involves the construction of a giant new real-estate development on the East River adjacent to the downtown financial district. Allegedly this megaproject will simultaneously act as a buffer against rising waters and be an economic driver which will supposedly pay for itself (New York City, Office of the Mayor, 2013). A more just approach would focus on the areas of the city, primarily the barrier islands off of Queens and the Brooklyn waterfront, with large numbers of low-income households in fragile housing, retrofit that housing to the extent possible, or move the inhabitants to new construction on higher ground.

A proposal more sensitive to issues of justice, in both New York and elsewhere, would start with examining the situation of the most vulnerable populations and develop alternatives that would best protect them in the event of a major storm. In terms of financial crisis it would begin with figuring out how to make whole those who have lost their homes and jobs. I commented earlier that Marxian analysis offered

important theoretical insights into the causes of crisis but not much in terms of how to plan for it in the here and now. Marxist terminology is very unstylish; it sounds too radical and is unacceptable to the dispensers of social science grant money. It points, however, to important facts about how issues of disaster recovery are normally addressed—that without radical questioning they devolve into a consensual agreement to value growth over equity and to encourage growth by directly benefiting those who already are most advantaged. If, instead of starting with the question of how to normalize the situation and assuming that there are not underlying conflicts of interest in terms of a desirable post-disaster situation, we started with the question of how best to make the lives better of the most vulnerable, we would move toward different policies.

Local planners have limited capacity to force the redistribution of resources since the national level is the principal source of revenues. Nevertheless, the planning of capital budget priorities, mapping of transportation systems, and zoning are within their purview (Fainstein, 2010: chapter 6). A city that is more just would respond to rising water levels by moving low-income residents to higher ground or else investing in either raising their buildings or creating buffers to protect against inundation. If poor households agree that they need to move and accept that the likeliest location is a distance from the center, then transit systems to improve access, social services and local amenities have to be developed along with housing.

The Rockefeller Foundation recently put out a request for proposals (RFP) to city governments that stated: 'public and private sector leaders are expressing an increasing desire to build greater resilience, yet many have neither the technical expertise nor the financial resources to create and execute resilience strategies on a city-wide scale, in a way that addresses the need of the poor or vulnerable people' (Rockefeller Foundation, 2013). It is doubtful, however, that either technical expertise or financial resources are the primary explanation for the failure to address the need of poor or vulnerable people. Rather it is their lack of political power that explains why building a real-estate megaproject would be a priority for developing resilience.

Proposals that require spending a great deal of money on poor people are generally regarded as politically impossible and therefore are evaded. The discourse of evolutionary resilience, the apparent scientific precision of risk analysis, and the glamour of complexity theory allow conversations that fail to confront the real issue of which groups of the population will actually benefit from the expenditure of public resources. These conversations avoid divisiveness by assuming that everyone will benefit if resilience is enhanced, and the allusion to the great complexity involved in achieving resilience creates a cloud of obfuscation around the question of who is getting what. Planners can contribute to a more just city by using the information at their disposal to show clearly what are the stakes in any particular decision regarding environmental protection or economic development and advocate for policies that are more equitable. They may not succeed in overcoming the obstacles to more just outcomes, but by challenging the feel-good rhetoric characteristic of discussions of sustainability and resilience, they can contribute to enlarging the boundaries of the politically possible.

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