



# EDITORIAL NOTE

## Planning for Resilience?

*Well, I'm not excusing the fact that planning and preparedness was not where it should be. We've known for 20 years about this hurricane, this possibility of this kind of hurricane.*

Michael Chertoff on CNN Late Edition with Wolf Blitzer  
Aired Feb. 19, 2006<sup>1</sup>

Theoretical concepts in academic and professional circles can seem to ebb and flow, as interest in an area gathers and dissipates. Judging from the recent number of conferences and special issues devoted to the subject (as well as the considerable response to our call for papers), resilience is having its moment. From its roots in ecology and the work of C.S. Holling in the 1970s, the concept has since been applied to such diverse fields as psychology, social welfare and disaster management. For our seventeenth volume of *Critical Planning*, we have assembled a collection of papers that not only deepen traditional understandings of resilience, but also inform urban planning theory and practice.

Recent macro-economic crises, from the American subprime mortgage collapse to the global financial meltdown, together with projected ecological catastrophes, have all raised a crucial question: how might urban systems accommodate future shocks and crises in whatever (un)expected forms they might take? With increasing global interconnectedness - be it economic, political or environmental - our collective vulnerability to large-scale shocks also multiplies, demanding more sophisticated, critical approaches in theory and practice. The papers that follow seek to engage our theme as both a theoretical concept and as a model for shaping planning practice. How can planners best prepare our cities to be “resilient”, to “survive”? In addressing the tensions between practice and theory, the contradictions inherent in working with resiliency in a field such as planning are exposed. The question then for us, as planners and scholars, is how can we reconcile resiliency models with our desire to better our built environments, if “surprise is inevitable” (Holling 1993)? Is it possible to integrate a perspective that presupposes uncertainty, heterogeneity and collective entanglement? In this volume of *Critical Planning* our authors question whether the idea of resilience can inform urban research and if so, how it can become an integral part of planning practice.

The first half of this volume is dedicated to the development of urban resiliency scholarship from a variety of perspectives. We start with **Kevin Fox Gotham and Richard Campanella**, who draw on an extensive critical review of the existing scholarship to engage transformative resilience as a valuable conceptual and heuristic tool for post-trauma urban ecosystems. **Cathy Wilkinson, Libby Porter and Johan Colding** extend the reach of

scholarship by actively engaging with practitioners in Glasgow, Stockholm and Melbourne, and explore the opportunities for resiliency to provide a framework for metropolitan planning analysis and governance.

Our next two papers assess the application of resiliency concepts to complex ecological and urban systems. **Majed Akhter, Kerri Jean Ormerod and Christopher A. Scott** argue that the centrality of social processes and political conflicts is lost from consideration when ecological resilience concepts are translated into planning discourses, as in the debates of water scarcity in Tucson, Arizona. In the last paper of this section, **Yoichi Kumagai, Robert Gibson and Pierre Filion** discuss the application of resilience to Tokyo, where varied success in adapting to societal and demographic changes have drawn attention to issues of scale and focus.

The second half of the journal is purposely broad in engaging prior research on resilience and pushing it beyond its ecological roots. **Ying Zhou** introduces an innovative definition of the term *loophole* to conceptualize stability and economic liberalization in four urban vignettes from Damascus. On a similar theme of economic resilience, **Susan Christopherson** defends the capacity of older American industrial regions to respond to change in the context of the recent 'great recession'. Moving to Haiti, **Tisha Holmes** constructs an insightful analysis of the significant challenges facing the country in building a resilient governance system in the wake of the recent earthquake.

The articles that follow help blur the boundary between scholarship and practice by successfully engag-

ing the urban environment they study. Looking at Los Angeles, **Per-Johan Dahl** critically re-evaluates single-household zoning and strategizes how to challenge the post-suburban landscape through the development of shadow housing. Then, in what we hope will be a recurring theme, **Nan Ellin and Kelly Turner** integrate practice and pedagogy through the example of vacant lots in Phoenix, Arizona. Finally, through an insightful review of Phil Steinberg and Rob Shield's book "What is a city? Rethinking the urban after Hurricane Katrina", **Garett Ballard-Rosa** examines the role of shock in reassessing what constitutes a city.

As always, this volume of *Critical Planning* was crafted through the dedication and energy of our staff. Our editorial board - Imge Akcakaya, Jonathan Bell, Jennifer Goldstein, Yogi Hendlin, Nicholas Lustig, Deirdre Pfeiffer, Tristan Sturm and Elise Youn - were instrumental in guiding the development of this volume's content. They spent numerous hours engaging in debate, working with individual authors, and guiding the direction of the journal. The members of our large review board were invaluable in carrying out a rigorous double-blind review process. A special note of thanks goes to our Design Editor, Francis Reilly, who was integral to the production of this year's volume.

*Critical Planning* would not be possible without the substantial institutional and individual support provided by UCLA and the Department of Urban Planning. Stacey Meeker and Evelyn Blumenberg have been especially encouraging of our work. I am also pleased to report that in addition to our worldwide individual and academic subscribers, *Critical Planning* also has a network of friends and supporters that

help sustain the journal's activities. Lastly, we would like to extend our sincere appreciation to the UCLA Graduate Students Association, the Dean's Office in the School of Public Affairs, the Lewis Center for Regional Policy Studies and the Urban Planning Department for generously funding the journal.

As scholars continue to debate, as well as integrate, concepts of resilience in their own research, I hope this volume will provide a framework for an engaged, critical perspective on urban resilience.

Orly Linovski

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Interview with Michael Chertoff, February 19, 2006. See CNN Late Edition with Wolf Blitzer, "Interview with Michael Chertoff". Transcript from <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0602/19/le.01.html> (accessed July 25, 2010).

## Lead Photograph

Informal housing community on riverbed. Tijuana, Mexico. Photograph by Goyo Ortiz.

## References

Holling, C.S. 1973. Resilience and stability of ecological systems. *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics*. 4: 1-23.

Holling, C.S. 1993. Investing in research for sustainability. *Ecological Application*. 3(4): 552-555.