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Post-disaster and reconstruction stories: a visual ethnography of L'Aquila's post-earthquake territorial transformations.

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Abstract text (max. 500 words)

Biography of a Reconstruction Process.

The abstract aim is the description of a situation in which a natural disaster such as an earthquake invests a city. Such description will carry out ethnography of the ways and cultures of production of post-earthquake spaces and seek to keep together both the immaterial and the material aspects of the city consequent territorial transformations.

The final goal is to produce a narrative tool able to give a complete framework of the territorial transformation of a city after a disaster that at the same time acts as a reference and indicator for future seismic risk mitigation policies and projects, as well as for urban vulnerability ones.

Normally a post-disaster city is addressed as a post-emergency situation, as a reconstruction process, or as a risk mitigation recipient separately: there are hundreds of complete and very helpful reports that have been produced afterward, architecture and urban planning tools as well as an updated national legislation carried out.

However, disasters are only those affecting humankind and its built environment. Consequently it becomes central the way in which a given territory answers to the catastrophe, which is its resilient character.

For this reason, it is important to investigate resilience as situated praxis and practices in post disaster cities that are the material production of their inhabitants.

Research hypothesis: the need for 'looking through'.

The present proposal starts from the assumption that something is missing in the way the post-earthquake situation is represented: the drawings, the mapping, the rules and guidelines are very specialized communicating and exchanging languages that miss to reach the general public, the developers, the administrations staff and other technicians. The story-telling and the restitution through a tale, with images but using a script as main tool, can reach individuals, associations, institutions and professionals and become more effective in transmitting what each and every decision and action mean in terms of spatial and built transformations in post-disaster conditions.

Beside the specificity and technical perspective of post-disaster conditions, there is the empirical evidence that in post-earthquake conditions space matters, especially with short terms reconstruction strategies that nevertheless affect the long term urban recovery. Two main conditions emerge from post-disaster reconstruction: the long-term urban transformations and the sudden/short-term transformations. They seem to be in opposition, they could work together.

The core case study: L'Aquila post-earthquake situation.

Given the above mentioned general objective - to intercept and describe the praxes with their initiatives, their actors and their outcomes (physical deposits), that are "gaining space" within a post-disaster city in a resilient perspective - the research investigates L'Aquila in Italy as a principal case.

L'Aquila is undergoing major structural changes due to the natural disaster occurred on the 6th of April 2009, almost 6 years ago, and even before that the city was already struggling. After the Messina and Reggio's earthquake in 1908, L'Aquila's is the first one to interest an entire city in Italy, involving its waste surroundings as well. Its conditions are "exceptional" per se and from different points of view: its post-earthquake condition;



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its socio-economical characteristics similar in some ways to Southern Italian cities; its economic situation prior to 2008 crisis; the pre-earthquake town plan (PRG) that goes back to 1975.

Roundtable theme

- Disasters in urban context
- Housing and beyond: reconstructing lives, reconstructing cities
- Linking a past, present and future: histories, urban imaginaries, urban design and its influence on urban recovery
- Supporting urban risk reduction through reconstruction
- Relocation from hazardous areas



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Author's Biography



Claudia Faraone (1976, Italy) is an architect (2004, IUAV Venezia), PhD in Territorial Policies and Local Project (2011, RomaTre, LAA|Paris Villette), post-graduated at [EMU](#) (2007, UPC Barcellona, TU Delft e KU Leuven). Since 2004 she has been participating and organizing several workshops, research projects, exhibitions and audiovisual productions dealing with urban and landscape explorations, cultures of production of urban space and its practices. In this perspective she dealt with description and design proposals for great urban landscape transformations, such as changing territories after natural disasters (Skopje and L'Aquila) and after socio-economic transformations (Veneto region and Rome). Since 2005, she has been teaching tutor/assistant in several institutions, among them IUAV Venice School of Architecture, Roma 3 University, Ghent University, at Advanced Course of Visual Arts at Fondazione Ratti in Como.