



# COMMUNITY RESILIENCE: A CROSS-CULTURAL STUDY

Revitalizing Community Within and Across Boundaries



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COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars

One Woodrow Wilson Plaza

1300 Pennsylvania Avenue NW

Washington, DC 20004-3027

[www.wilsoncenter.org](http://www.wilsoncenter.org)

ISBN# 1-933549-96-3

Cover images: Lauren Herzer

Additional images: David Hawxhurst

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## Introduction: A Learning Partnership

In December, 2008, the Comparative Urban Studies Project (CUSP) of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and the Fetzer Institute of Kalamazoo, Michigan, held a seminar examining “Community Resilience in the Twenty-First Century.” The invitational seminar was held at the Wilson Center in Washington DC, for a day and a half, followed by a public forum the afternoon of the second day. Twenty-three scholars and practitioners gathered from eleven countries; representative of South America, North America, Africa, Asia, and Russia. Their experience, insight, and participation were compelling and exceptional. The seminar was the first in a three-year series of meetings to explore *Revitalizing Community Within and Across Boundaries*.

The Wilson Center, with its long history of convening dialogues and research into how communities and nations create and uphold policy around the world, and the Fetzer Institute, with its commitment to individual and community transformation, embarked on this project as learning partners. The project was conceived as an inquiry into what it might mean to live and work in community in the twenty-first century. The aim of this initiative is to combine scholarship, public policy and local practice to articulate and support global transformation and reconciliation in communities throughout the world.

From the beginning of time, when events have made life difficult, individuals have galvanized communities and communities have given rise to leaders. Given the complex world we live in and the global reach of our problems and resources, the first gathering of scholars and practitioners set out to examine one of the greatest human resources—resilience.

This publication was produced from seminar papers and discussion designed to foster a greater understanding of what community resilience looks like today and how it works in contemporary life.

In preparation for the meeting, John Paul Lederach, University of Notre Dame, and Jill Simone Gross, Hunter College of the City University of New York, were invited to write convening thought papers that reflected broadly upon community resilience and set out a framework for the examination of these issues. Seminar participants were then asked to draw from their own extensive work and personal experience to write a brief paper that reflected on the two thematic papers. A complete list of seminar participants and their papers can be found on page 102. Each paper is available on the Wilson Center website.

At the December workshop, activists who have devoted their lives to organizing slum dwellers and other poor communities joined together with other practitioners and academics representing a range of disciplines and sectors to exchange insights and share lessons learned from experience on the ground. There is a growing literature on community resilience which focuses on flexibility and adaptability in the face of adversity or complex and sudden change. The goal of the meeting was to encourage cutting edge conversations that add to the working knowledge of community resilience, raising critical questions and identifying areas for further research and exploration. The discussion centered on how to foster conditions that promote resilience and examined compelling examples of community resilience worldwide through consideration of the following questions:

- *How do different cultures around the world describe and define successful, healthy communities?*
- *How can local communities promote urban inclusion and reconciliation?*
- *What is the role of the individual in community transformation and the community in individual transformation? How do they shape one another?*
- *In what situations is resilience transformative and in what situations is resilience “a bouncing back” to an untenable life?*

- *How can successful examples of community resilience inform global consciousness away from fear and violence?*
- *How can governance structures and policies created to promote democratic civic culture create a common sense of belonging and foster community resilience in an increasingly globalized world?*
- *What key elements need to be present for community betterment to take place?*

What follows is a “conversation” between the two commissioned thought papers, the participants’ essays, the seminar discussion, and the public session – a brief exploration of the major themes that were shared through this remarkable process and gathering.

We hope this publication gives you a sense of the wide-ranging experience and perspectives of the participants and the stimulating and informative discussion on the concept and reality of community resilience around the world. We offer these insights, stories, and questions as an opening into a conversation that this project is only beginning. We invite you to continue and add to this much-needed effort to enliven meaningful communities around the world.



# Welcoming Reflections

by Mark Nepo

Thank you for coming to this table; for bringing your experience and insight and questions to this table. The basis of this conversation is the timeless assumption that we are more together than alone. Our theme, as you know, is community resilience: What does it look like? What is its DNA? Is it the water that quenches the thirst? Or the thirst itself? Or both?

In the Hindu Upanishads, there is a passage that speaks to how those who become wise lose their names in the Great Oneness, the way rivers all flow into the sea. In this transformation from the solitary to the communal there is a mysterious physics that each generation has to relearn and advance regarding *how* we are more together than alone. In that hard-earned experience of Oneness, we all have the chance to discover, through love and suffering, that we are at heart the same. To honor and understand this timeless process in our own time is why we have gathered.

In her book tracing the history and meaning of heart, Gail Goodwin asks:

What would a communal heart be like? What would have to happen to bring such a thing into being around one conference table or in a single committee meeting—or in a single church? What would have to be left outside the door?<sup>1</sup>

What comes to mind (and heart) are two compelling stories as a way into this conversation. The first takes place in the winter of 1943 in the Kovno Ghetto in Lithuania where the high city of Eastern European Jewish culture had been encamped by the Nazis for eighteen harsh months. Word came through the city walls that the Ghetto was to be liquidated. After days of shock and with no way out, Dr. Elkhanan Elkes,



MARK NEPO

the elected elder of the Ghetto, convened the ablest remaining musicians of Kovno to rehearse Beethoven's *Ode to Joy* as a gift to their own community and the world. As Goethe says, "When in pain or anguish, man sings." What enables such resilience of spirit?

The second story comes from Sierra Leone where a project called *Fambul Tok*, which is Creole (Krio) for *Family Talk*, was recently initiated. In the aftermath of the brutal civil wars that took place in Sierra Leone from 1991–2002, the people – maimed, wounded, orphaned, and widowed – were ready to talk and to listen, and under that, to heal. So on March 23, 2008, on the very day the war started seventeen years earlier, in the village of Kailahun where the first shot was fired, thirty villagers gathered in a circle of chairs out in the open. After a significant silence, a man with one arm began by telling his story and was asked if the man who cut off his arm was there. He nodded and pointed across the circle and the man who lived near him came over, fell to his knees, and asked for forgiveness. Then, in their own way and in their own time, they began to ask each other, *What went wrong?* Such a simple and indispensable question, *What went wrong?*

What leaps up in the human heart to make such moments possible? Surely this is worth our attention and study. And thankfully, inquiries that matter can't be sustained alone. It seems we must journey into the heart of things together; like the antelopes in the South African saying, who travel in pairs so they can blow the dust from each other's eyes.

One last analogy as we begin. The historian Howard Zinn suggests that:

When you have models of how people can come together, even for a brief period, it suggests that it could happen for a longer period. When you think of it, that's the way things operate in the scientific world, so

**We are here, in great measure,**

**to keep the true being of community in view, no matter how briefly seen; despite the long, darkened periods we encounter. We are here to try to understand what happens between people that makes communities rise in compassion and strength greater than before.**

—Mark Nepo

why not socially? As soon as the Wright brothers could keep a plane aloft for 27 seconds, everyone knew from that point on that a plane might be kept aloft for hours. It's the same socially and culturally... We've had countless incidents in history where people have joined together in social movements and created a spirit of camaraderie or a spirit of sharing and togetherness which have absented them, even momentarily, from the world of greed and domination. If true community can stay aloft for 27 seconds, it is only a matter of time before such a community can last for hours. Only a matter of time before a beloved community, as Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke of, can come into being.<sup>2</sup>

We are here, in great measure, to keep the true being of community in view, no matter how briefly seen; despite the long, darkened periods we encounter. We are here to try to understand what happens in those 27 seconds of resilience between people that makes communities rise in compassion and strength greater than before.



DEBORAH HIGGINS, WILLIAM MORRISH



# Beginning a Conversation about Resilient Communities

by Blair A. Ruble

The stimulating papers by Jill Simone Gross and John Paul Lederach have generated an exciting initial round of responses, providing an excellent basis for our collective conversation about a set of very important issues. Indeed, the papers as a whole indicate that the group shares a sensibility in how we think about questions of community that provides common ground for that discussion. While all of the participants do not agree upon an understanding of “resilience,” or even of “community” – and we approach these issues from quite different backgrounds ranging from peace building to post-disaster recovery – the papers prepared for this project reveal a set of shared questions. Here, I will try to provide a framework for understanding the common themes that emerge from the “seed paper” prepared by Gross and Lederach and the compelling response essays.

As with many concepts drawn from the natural sciences by social scientists (“sustainability,” to cite just one example), the term “resilience” has a high degree of indeterminacy. This isn’t necessarily bad, as terms that are fuzzy around the edges frequently gain acceptance because people from different positions attach different meaning to them. No matter how the concept is being defined, the growing literature on community resilience fundamentally shares a focus on adaptability in the face of complex and sudden change, though with a particular focus on community responses to natural disasters and violent conflict. We need to be careful not to try to impose a definitional straight-jacket on the one hand, and not allow indeterminacy to run amok on the other.

The ambiguous role of “culture” and “identity” within the context of community is one important reason for such indeterminacy. Moreover, “culture” and “identity” are dynamic, evolving and changing over time. Both phenomena are shaped from outside as well as from within a given community. They are tied to a number of cues including the visual

## “Community resilience,” no matter how we

eventually refine the concept, demands that residents both old and new are heard, and not pushed aside. The human beings who make up a community need to gain “voice,” in the parlance of contemporary social science speak. Whether we use an older discourse of “empowerment,” or speak of “voice” in the language of the moment, the message is clear. People can’t plan or speak for others; and people must participate in meaningful ways in resolving the challenges of disruption – either from conflict or from nature. Solutions must be inclusive, not exclusive. –Blair Ruble

as well as the auditory (physical shape, linguistic accents, etc.). Natural scientists do not necessarily need to think through the issue of culture, common practice, and social organization. Therefore, their concepts do not always fold easily around social reality.

To illustrate this point I draw on one observation from the era of segregation in the United States. One observer of the period commented that studying medicine was an easier task for African Americans than studying law because bodily functions are much the same among all human groups. American law at the time had different concepts and definitions for whites and blacks. We may find this statement a bit naive today, but the point remains clearly framed. American attitudes towards race – and the laws and social sanctions which those attitudes produced – must be included in any discussion of U. S. law during the Jim Crow era. The United States has changed as well, making such an observation less relevant than it was several decades ago. Within this context, do we need to think of “culture” and “identity” as independent variables that are at times working at cross-purposes to “resilience?” This project was conceived to explore how different cultures around the world describe successful, healthy communities.

Catastrophes – especially natural catastrophes but, in different ways, conflict as well – reveal deficiencies which already exist (poor infrastructure, weak governance structures, economic decline, etc.). Communities endowed with resources – material and non-material – are better placed to avoid catastrophes in the first place. Therefore, the concept of resilience needs to be thought of in a longer time frame than simply what is happening on the ground at any given moment. “Resilience” – and the



JILL SIMONE GROSS, BLAIR RUBLE

resources which make it possible – is a process more than a material fact. Additionally, how can we think about communities becoming resilient if resilience depends on resources while the very fact of a catastrophe reveals a deficit of such resources? Resilience following armed conflict can be limited by the continuation of violence in other forms – such as high crime rates, gang-dominated neighborhoods, and so forth. How can communities maximize the resource of resilience within the context of pernicious – if less dramatic – violence? What are successful examples of community resilience and how can they shift global consciousness away from fear and violence?

“Community resilience,” no matter how we eventually refine the concept, demands that residents both old and new are heard, and not pushed aside. The human beings who make up a community need to gain “voice,” in the parlance of contemporary social science speak. Whether we use an older discourse of “empowerment,” or speak of “voice” in the language of the moment, the message is clear. People can’t plan or speak for others; and people must participate in meaningful ways in resolving the challenges of disruption – either from conflict or from nature. Solutions must be inclusive, not exclusive. As a result, resilience depends on thinking about the world in organic, incremental, bottom-up terms rather than in overarching, top-down abstractions. It is about accommodation and accumulation of small-scale change. This sensibility is especially important within the context of an inter-dependent world in which the impact of unintended consequences grows exponentially. We can, from this perspective, begin to explore how local communities promote inclusion and reconciliation as well as the role of the individual in community transformation.

Other questions emerge from the papers and commentaries. For example, to what extent do we need to include economic catastrophes within our discussion of community resilience? Might not systemic economic failure present equally complex challenges for community survival? These would seem to be extremely timely questions given what is going on in the world right now. Are different community resources required for communities to respond with resilience to different kinds of catastrophes? What skills can be nurtured? Taught? Should the way we think about education reflect these different challenges? How can governance structures and policies aimed at promoting democratic civic culture create a common sense of belonging and foster community resilience in an increasingly globalized world?

As this final observation suggests, a large number of questions remain on the table as we approach this project. Is the resilience exhibited after a natural disaster different from that following armed conflict? What is an appropriate level of analysis? What is a “community?” How precise do we need to be in defining “resilience” in order to have a shared conversation? Is a shared sensibility enough? How can the lessons and achievements of incremental change be “scaled up?” How much does economics matter? Governance issues? Some larger metaphysical sense of community? How can thought inform action? And vice versa? We have more than enough to launch this important conversation.



SÍLVIO HUMBERTO DOS PASSOS CUNHA, LÁZARO CUNHA, ROBERT ADAMS

## Resiliency suggests the character

of personhood and quality of community that faces, moves through, and bounces back from difficulty, damage, or destructive experience with a spirit that pursues and stays in touch with purposeful life and meaningful relationships.

—John Paul Lederach



ARIF HASAN

# Resilience and Healthy Communities

## An Exploration of Image and Metaphor

by John Paul Lederach

If I make the lashes dark  
And the eyes more bright  
And the lips more scarlet,  
Or ask if all be right  
From mirror after mirror,  
No vanity's displayed:  
I'm looking for the face I had  
Before the world was made.

*W. B. Yeats*

The topic of these Fetzer-Wilson Center discussions aims ultimately toward the question, “What makes for healthy communities?” Clearly there exist a wide variety of ways to talk about what might be meant by “healthy.” Some would be inclined toward “harder” quantitative measures and indicators when comparing communities, like employment or poverty rates, access to education, clean water, housing and healthcare. Others may argue that in spite of an indicator like high poverty, people may still be “happy” and would be inclined toward the notion that having good or even the best access to material wealth has rarely in fact translated to healthy communities. Within the wider debate the qualifier chosen for this particular discussion focuses around the concept of *resilience* that when observed across settings and cultures suggests a capacity to build and sustain healthier communities.

Rather than discuss empirical comparative evidence this brief introductory paper will take a step back and down in order to explore the ways in which we organize our thinking around the concepts of “health” and “community.” This purpose requires that we engage the metaphoric language that surrounds the discussion. As a professional I work as a scholar-practitioner in the fields of conflict transformation and international peace building with a particular focus on communities facing deep-rooted conflict and seeking ways to creatively respond to violence. While these communities may appear to represent the polar opposite phenomenon of this wider initiative, I suggest that in exploring the challenges and realities faced by local collectives struggling with cycles of sustained violence we paradoxically may locate, in their response to adversity, insights into the deeper significance of resiliency.

#### COLOMBIA: RESILIENCY IN THE MIDST OF VIOLENCE

As a peacebuilder I have had the opportunity to accompany local communities as they seek ways to respond to the impact of war on their lives in places as diverse as Nicaragua and Northern Ireland, Somalia, Mindanao in the Philippines, and Nepal. However, most notable in this list has been a longer-term relationship with local communities in Colombia, the land of sustained half-century wars. In particular during the past five years, my involvement has been in the explicit effort to develop peacebuilding initiatives with and by so called “victim” communities heaviest hit by violence. On top of historic structural injustices, poverty, political exclusion, and a lack of basic services that many of us would take for granted, these communities have found the very fabric of their lives assaulted by cycles of open violence and physical displacement.

Our attention would not normally be drawn toward these contexts as holding the promise, potential, or lessons for “healthy” communities. Yet in my experience these settings and people hold seeds, buried and unnoticed, but pregnant with life-giving energy that instructs our inquiry. The very nature of a seed, a living-dormant container that simultaneously is fruit and promise, draws our attention toward the hidden characteristics of collective well being and the qualities of resiliency that contribute to health.

Colombia reaches most of our daily newspapers through the images of violence, cocaine and narco-terrorism. The chronological reporting of their national journey and ethos does not stretch before us an appealing



canvas: sustained open warfare dating back to the 1950's, the proliferation of armed groups battling for territory and allegiance; a narcotics trade that sustains the war capacity; continuous human rights abuses; kidnappings; massacres; and millions of people forced from their homes.

Much less visible and rarely making the news is the web of people and communities whose life stories vibrate with courage in the midst of these sustained challenges. Often referred to as “victims” and “victim communities” those most hard hit by the violence represent instructive processes that while primarily seen from the outside as a narrative of survival contain important elements of resiliency and flourishing. In a word, to survive the waves of violence that pound over the mostly invisible yet ever present sea-bed of structural injustice, poverty and exclusion, local communities must be enormously creative. As described in a number of books, the keys to those communities' abilities to transcend cycles of violence come from their willingness to risk responding to such violence in innovative ways, exemplified by how they united in solidarity to undermine the law of silence imposed by armed groups, how they sought engagement through dialogue within and outside their communities, how they mobilized around a deep sense of belonging, and how they creatively brought into existence spontaneous nonviolent processes of change.<sup>3</sup>

What does the challenge of violence feel like from within these communities faced with such overwhelming odds? What does it feel like to face this level of violence? How might the experiences of communities so hard hit by violence in Colombia be instructive for understanding the topic of community resiliency?

I am always impressed by how the answers to these questions emerge in the everyday language embedded in the stories from places like Colombia. They are evident in their everyday expressions that rise time and again from their fundamental search to survive and in the requests they place before anyone who will listen. Most mentioned are three lived experiences that shed light on the nature of what they face and feel as their primary challenges: displaced, insecure, and voiceless. To recast these concerns positively, their daily search is this: How to locate a sense of place? How to feel safe? How to find a voice? As metaphor, these words – place, safety and voice – provide insight into both the deep reality of violence and the nature of resiliency, and I believe point us to important aspects of what a healthy community might entail. Each merits a brief exploration.

## To not have a place means that a person

and often an entire community is lost while still being in a place, as in a “country,” that is familiar but no longer known. In other words, to be “displaced” means you do not know where you are or what “your place is.” You have no place to belong.

—John Paul Lederach

### PLACE: LOCATING ONESELF IN THE WORLD

Literally and figuratively violence displaces people. When discussed in the shorthand of international lingo and statistics, Colombia is a country with millions of people labeled as “IDPs” – *internally displaced people*. Bantered about and taken for granted as an organizing category for counting the number of people forced from their homes and communities, the phrase IDP carries meaning at more than one level, particularly if we penetrate the hidden caves of lived experience. To accommodate the categories of reference where resources are delivered to victims, people who find themselves forced off their land and out of their homes often make use of the term IDP to call attention to their plight: “We are displaced. And we are people” read a recent sign carried in a street demonstration in Bogotá. I would suggest however that the category “internally displaced people” metaphorically provides much more than a useful way to count demographic numbers. It functions as an archetypal metaphor with numerous and simultaneous levels of meaning reflective of the experience faced by those affected by violence. Consider at least three levels of meaning.

First, as a phrase “internally displaced people” connotes the literal *loss of place*, the physical experience of being forced out of their homes and off their land. As they say in Colombia, this creates forced “human mobility.” People flee. They run. They walk. They try to find a “place” to settle, often at considerable distance from their homes of origin.

At a second level, often beyond words to express it, *displaced* connotes the lived experienced of feeling *lost inside*. It is a paradoxical experience. To not have a place means that a person and often an entire community is lost while still being in a place, as in a “country,” that is familiar but no longer known. In other words, to be “displaced” means you do

not know where you are or what “your place is.” You have no place to belong. By its very nature then, to be displaced forces a journey of discovery. People must find their way. They must locate themselves and their “bearings” in a land to which they belong but in a geography that is unknown and without maps. In this sense, “displaced” provides a metaphor about *locating* oneself, a process that literally requires people to find a place to “land and live.”

Figuratively, belonging functions at another level, one that searches not just for a physical accommodation but, more importantly, a sense of purpose. “Finding a place” symbolizes the journey to locate “bearings” or “coordinates” that permit people to “land on” and attach meaning to their lives. In this sense, people search for the significance often in pursuit of finding an answer to the question: “Who are we in this unknown social landscape?” “Where” we are, then, is always intimately tied up with figuring out “who” we are. Inevitably, health and well being are intimately tied up with the idea of *place* in both the literal and figurative senses of the word. When we have our bearings we know where we are and have a sense of who we are. Finding place in this deeper sense represents the life-long journey toward health as belonging, having a place, and sensing purpose.

Finally, the word “internal” poses a double meaning in this journey. On the surface, “internal” means that people are physically displaced *within* their own country. At a deeper level *internal* captures the lived experience displacement as feeling lost *within* oneself: “I no longer know who “I am” in large part because “I cannot locate myself” in this experience. Physically, psychologically and spiritually the inner and outer journeys through uncharted geographies are reflective mirrors. In the poem cited at the start of this essay Yeats captures the deep and eternal

struggle to find ones true self.<sup>4</sup> “Mirror after mirror” he wrote, is not about “vanity.” Rather it is about looking to find “the face I had before the world was made.” I am on a search to find, to locate myself. On the outer journey, the displaced must locate a physical place to live. At the same time this search reflects the inner, deeply spiritual search for finding meaning and place. The journey to find oneself – *place as metaphor* – represents the archetypal journey of health: When we find our place we touch, in and out, a sense of location, purpose, and meaning.

#### SAFETY: FEELING AT HOME

People living in contexts of open violence watch constantly for their personal and collective security. They search for ways to feel and be safe, to find protection. Violence produces enormous insecurity and requires hyper-vigilance. As metaphor the search for *safety* and *security* creates more than one level of significance.

On the surface, in settings of violence the most immediate meaning of security emerges around physical safety vis-à-vis the presence of violent threat. People look for physical spaces and mechanisms that provide them protection.

At another level insecurity creates the permanency of feeling uncertain. Uncertainty goes hand in hand with the experience of unpredictability. Insecurity produces both internal and external uncertainty. Seeking safety, people suspend trust in what is happening around them. Insecure means I no longer have a clear sense of myself and must for my own safety suspend trust in others. Deeply suspicious for my own good, I no longer can take at face value even the most common things around me. At the level of metaphor, insecurity then poses a challenge of how to recuperate any basic sense of trust in my social landscape and myself.

At its deepest level insecurity produced by violence signals the loss of everything that was understood and known. What was assumed, taken-for-granted as “normal” on a daily basis has disappeared. In a word, people suspend, or outright lose the capacity to feel *at home*. As metaphor, at this level, those things that at one point *surrounded* a person with a sense of wellbeing, shelter, and unconditional acceptance are gone. Notable again in the language of violence and war, we find the word “disappeared” used as both verb and noun. People *disappear*, meaning they have been kidnapped or perhaps killed. They were *disappeared* means they were killed but nobody knows when, where or how, creating a surreal suspension: presumed dead without conclusion. A category captures this state of animation: *The disappeared*. In these contexts,

“at-homeness,” a warm blanket that once held us, evaporates, like a fog burnt off suddenly. In the blink of an eye, we find ourselves exposed, visibly naked without protection or shelter.

The archetypal search and hope for security points to another key aspect of health: Safety is not only locating oneself but is expressed in the search to find a way home, to reconstruct the capacity to feel “at home” in the world, to feel once again a sense of being surrounded by love and acceptance, that we can trust ourselves, others and our social landscape.

#### VOICE: CLOSE ENOUGH TO BE HEARD

In settings of protracted conflict the most common thing I hear from local communities when they talk about “the peace process” is expressed through a simple observation: “Nobody listens to us. We do not have a *voice*.” As metaphors, *voice and voiceless* function simultaneously at different levels of meaning.

At a first level, the dominant concern of most victims of violence is that they do not have a voice in the processes happening around them even though these are often portrayed officially as being conducted on their behalf. Their primary point of reference rises from the feeling of being left out: They experience a profound sense of exclusion. They are *talked about* but not *talked with*, giving rise to a feeling deep powerlessness; this is especially true in political processes purporting to deliver peace to a conflicted country.

At a second level, voice as metaphor evolves in a spatial and sonic context. Voice infers a proxemics of space and relationship. It means that people are within hearing range, the shared space of a conversation. A conversation requires a spatial distance wherein the words – sound externalized – are accessible and interactive. As such, to have a voice suggests that people and significant processes affecting their lives are proximate, close enough that the vibrations of sounds touch each other, create echoes that bounce and resonate. Metaphorically, the sensation of “being voiceless” always refers to finding oneself in a space too expansive, too distant and remote to *feel* the vibration. What is happening “out there” is so distant that sounds formed and sent, hoping for a “bounce back” and “reverberation,” fall into an abyss, never reaching the other side or returning with any sense of meaningful connection. Voice requires a *localness* of context and space within which people feel the vibration of sound.

At the deepest, perhaps most complex level, voiceless refers to losing touch with our very personhood. When we no longer feel our voice, we

no longer feel human. As metaphor, voiceless at this level suggests a falling out of touch with meaning, the disappearance of significance. Being voiceless creates the experience of being numbingly speechless. This is particularly true of violence that silences life itself, the loss of which reaches below and beyond words. Here we enter the terrain of the unspeakable, the search for finding ways to touch and re-feel the naming and meaning of things experienced that defy and are never adequately expressed through rational explanation and words.

In these levels of meaning voice as metaphor suggests other key aspects of health found primarily in the need to feel *close enough* to processes that affect daily personal and collective life so that a sense of meaningful conversation is actually possible. Voice necessarily requires a context of community, a localness of spatial distance where participation and dialogue create direct experiences of connection, exchange and responsiveness. We feel the vibrations, the bounce back of echoes, and the internal sensation of feeling our sound rise, enter a space, touching others and returning to touch us, and in the process we participate in creating meaningfulness in and around us.

#### RESILIENCY AS METAPHOR

We turn now to a brief exploration of resiliency. As a scientific term, resiliency comes to us from the descriptive language of physics and metallurgy. It is applied to a special family of metal that when placed under extreme heat will lose shape, soften and meld, but when re-cooled has an amazing capacity to find its way back to its original form. In the study of plants, this capacity has also been noted, particularly in crops or grasses, that when beaten down by winds or the weight of trampling feet, find the way to rise back to their original purpose and form.

Resiliency describes the ability to survive extreme conditions yet retain the capacity to find a way back to expressing the defining quality of *being* and the essence of *purpose*.

Crossing over into the social sciences resiliency has primarily been studied as a phenomenon in developmental psychology and social work.<sup>5</sup> Here, researchers were interested with the study of children who while unavoidably living in vulnerable and high-risk situations – parents with mental disorders, conditions of poverty, or violence – still found their way toward expressively healthy childhoods and eventually a balanced, responsible adulthood. In discussing the characteristics within the child and the environments that nurture this journey, authors often include

key ideas like adaptability, resourcefulness, and a capacity to face and creatively negotiate risky situations.

When applied to the community level, particularly those local collectives who experienced life-damaging events or contexts – natural disasters, human generated traumas such as war, or social, economic or political structures that produce poverty and exclusion – resiliency describes the capacity to forge solidarity, to sustain hope and purpose, and to adapt and negotiate creatively with the challenges presented. In a word, the local collective becomes pro-actively engaged in purposeful ways that help them recuperate a sense of place, at-homeness, and voice. Their life journeys represent a quality of positive deviance that defines the very essence of resiliency: against the odds these people and communities flourish. In identifying what contributes to this transcendent quality researchers chose the word resilient because it describes this capacity to “bounce back.”

By its very nature, *resiliency as metaphor* suggests a journey that is both internal and outward bound that rises from a quality of character and spirit. To place the term in a life journey, resiliency suggests that no matter the difficulty of the terrains faced by the traveler, s/he stays in touch with a core defining essence of being and purpose, and displays a tenacity to find a “way back” as a “way forward” that artistically stays true to his/her very being.

We could say the defining quality of resiliency is the capacity to *stay in touch*.

To return to the words of the poet, Yeats refers to this as “looking for the face I had before the world was made.” In this sense, resiliency, as applied to the challenge of the life journey requires finding a way back to humanity, the sense of personhood and community that creates authenticity and purpose. In a word, health as viewed from resiliency suggests the character of personhood and quality of community that faces, moves through, and bounces back from difficulty, damage, or destructive experience with a spirit that pursues and stays in touch with purposeful life and meaningful relationships.

## CONCLUSION

The above metaphor discussion suggests a number of key ideas that may be useful for thinking about guideposts for community health. Perhaps most significant is the basic notion found in the idea of resiliency that “community health” may not exclusively nor primarily be found in

comparative quantitative advantage but rather correlates with the less tangible dynamics of how people and communities locate creative and pro-active capacities for responding to challenges they face. Resiliency is seeded in the capacity of response to challenges based on character, interaction and space found locally. Those who face great challenges in terms of violence, poverty or exclusion in fact provide insight into some of these intangibles. As guideposts they may include:

- The process of finding place as both an inner and outer journey that fosters the capacity to locate place and purpose as mechanisms that nurture and solidify a sense of belonging. The inverse is the sustained experience of displacement ultimately creating a sense of *being* lost while living in places that are known.
- The dynamic search for security as ultimately fostering and re-building trust in self, others and the lived social landscape, creating a feeling of community as *at-homeness*. The inverse is the experience of being *disappeared*: the quality of being lost and unconnected, living in a constant vigilance driven and governed by fear.
- The development of local social spaces that encourage and sustain a quality of dialogical interaction wherein people feel they can touch, shape and be shaped by accessible conversation. This suggests a combination of localness and proximity that helps people stay in touch, while reaching from the local to more distant less accessible space as collectives. In such spaces, people feel a sense of voice that reverberates and creates resonance with events and processes that affect their lives. The inverse fosters spaces of voicelessness defined by distance and experienced exclusion translating into isolation and a pervading sense of powerlessness.





ROSE MOLOKOANE

## How we educate communities

to understand that what they are doing for themselves  
by themselves is very important.

- Rose Molokoane



LAKE SAGARIS, GUILLERMINA HERNANDEZ-GALLEGOS

# Sustainability versus Resilience:

What is the global urban future and can we plan for change?

Jill Simone Gross

*When communities begin their planning processes, groups from the community often get together and begin talking about change in terms of what needs to change, and how they are going to make those changes...Once community members are excited about what they have to work with, they can begin to think about an even brighter future...<sup>6</sup>*

As a scholar of comparative urban development and governance in cities in the Global North and South, and a community development practitioner and educator working with New York's urban populations (with origins in both the Global South and the North), I have been struck at both an abstract and concrete level by the challenges and the opportunities that globalization poses for people living in urban areas. I view globalization in the abstract, as a process of increased interdependency, connectivity and mobility – of people, resources, ideas, and capital. At a concrete level I see globalization as producing rapid, often unpredictable, uncontrollable economic, political, social and environmental pressures affecting communities (geographic, interest-based, virtual and transnational).

Place-based communities for example, experience the effects of the influx of new populations and mobile capital in relation to the availability and affordability of housing, jobs, education and services. The interdependency of markets and mobility of capital can have immediate impacts on the agendas of interest-based communities. The transmission of ideas and information can virtually generate movements and political action on an international as well as a local scale overnight. A natural disaster in one place creates ripples in the lives of people in distant locations. Transnational migrants can live lives in multiple communities simultaneously, creating situations in which changes in the north can leave families in cities in the south with no food on the table. How can

communities manage growth, development and governance in what can only be described as increasingly turbulent and changeable times?

While globalization processes offer the possibility of a wondrous vibrancy in the urban arena, as new populations mix with the old, as ideas commingle and produce innovation, as new forms of governance are tried, and new models of development are pursued, globalization processes can also generate conflicts and unrest that threaten the urban environment – particularly during periods of resource scarcity, or at moments of crisis. Given these shared urban realities, I would suggest that the promises can only be realized so long as there are salient mechanisms in place to hear these new voices, so long as the political will exists to enable equitable change, so long as we develop institutions with the capacity to transcend scalar boundaries, and so long as stakeholders are able to accept that our urban future can no longer be based on monolithic – one size fits all models, but rather on crafting systems that are adaptable.

I would suggest that the lessons (policy and practice) learned from community development efforts globally, reveal that urban resilience may be most achievable through communities operating as both agenda setters and implementation partners. However, given the scope and scale of changes, and the inevitable resource needs that are likely to be required, models of resilience also require the support of governments, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations.

It is with this in mind that I approached the questions posed by the Woodrow Wilson Center and the Fetzer Institute on “urban resilience” – and it is with this in mind that I ask you to consider not the one best way, but rather to join in a discussion of lessons learned from community based development efforts that might enhance our ability to adapt in light of globalization, and to consider the critical need today for institutions and policies that enable flexibility and adaptability, perhaps, even more so, than sustainability.

In my own research on cities, globalization and governance, I am increasingly pulled away from monolithic top-down models of development based on externally defined standards to understanding communities needs, and drawn instead to approaches which start at the bottom, with an emphasis on building upon the assets and capacities of communities. In my understanding of community, I find myself pulling away from traditional views of the community as purely place bound, to ones that recognize the importance of networks, and interconnections that

transcend space. In my work on governing cities I find myself promoting policies that can be sensitive to difference, through the creation of multiscalar institutions that can offer the capacity for variable policy responses to the diverse needs of diverse communities. And across all of these realms I find myself looking for answers beyond the boundaries of my own academic discipline – political science – into a much wider pool of ideas in ecology, geography, sociology, planning, public health, education and the environment.

Fetzer asked us to consider the concept of “urban resilience” through the lens of a variety of community development approaches including healthy cities/communities and social inclusion/exclusion.

Healthy Cities/Communities projects are community-based approaches to managing health issues. The broad goals of these projects are to bring community stakeholders to the table to address the social, economic and environmental determinants of health. The expectation is that the community itself would be responsible for running the projects, with the support of government.<sup>7</sup> A healthy community, according to this development models, underpins the creation of economically, politically and socially sustainable community.

Social exclusion/inclusion programs are quite diverse, broadly they seek to shift the focus of social policy away from poverty as material deprivation and towards the view that poor people are poor not due solely do to economic deprivation, but rather due to an inability to fully exercise social, economic and political rights. From a community development perspective programs here are likely to vary widely depending on context, but all are likely to focus upon strategies which seek to empower and give voice to ‘excluded population.’ As with healthy cities, these programs also require linkages to the larger political system.

In what follows I will first discuss theories of sustainability as distinct from resilience. I will then explore what happens when we try to actualize those theories by consideration of: how these theories look in practice through a brief discussion of healthy cities – healthy communities projects, and social inclusion projects operating in the Global North and South. Following this broad and inevitably simplified look at global practices, I will ask you to consider a surprising and for me, unanticipated question: Can sustainability stand up to the pressures exerted by globalization or is it time to jettison that notion and replace it with models premised on a pursuit of “resilience?”

## SUSTAINABILITY VERSUS RESILIENCE

The concept of “sustainability” has been on the agendas of environmentalists for well over three decades, emerging initially at a UN conference held in Sweden in 1972, over discussions of the relationship between the natural and social environment, and a growing concern about the importance of cultivating a globally accepted vision and set of principles for global stewardship. But it was not until the 1987 Brundtland Commission Report, “Our Common Future,” that the principle was defined: *Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.* The report identified sustainable development (SD) as encompassing three interrelated elements – environmental protection, economic growth and social equity. The report asserted that development efforts that addressed single prongs of sustainability inevitably produced “unsustainable” development, evident in particular in communities in the Global South.

Since that time, the concept has spread widely to communities in the Global North and South. It has also been applied to efforts to conserve a much wider range of interrelated assets – economic, environmental, physical and social. The problem with the expanding definition of SD is that application in one area often had costs in another. Thus, finding a clear and appropriate balance between goals has proven to be highly problematic. A sustainable environment may in the minds of some be unsustainable from an economic perspective; likewise, social sustainability might preclude the development of projects perceived by municipalities to be important for the development of sustainable physical infrastructure. From this perspective SD inevitably takes on a “competitive” posture so long as the goals are pursued as a zero-sum-game, and when the goal is not zero-sum, then all goals must be dampened.

While environmentalists, and subsequently planners, policy-makers, sociologists, political scientists, public health professionals, activists, administrators and others were busy expanding the parameters of sustainable development to their own disciplinary needs and realities, and seeking to balance these sustainability value sets, ecologists were pointing to another critical problem with the concept itself as it related to ends – or rather the ability to control ends.

C. S. Holling’s article “Resilience and Stability of Ecological Systems” published in 1973, was amongst the first to raise this red flag. He asserted that when we look at ecological systems – organisms (plants and animals) and their environments (biological and physical) – “we are dealing with a system profoundly affected by changes external to it, and con-

tinually confronted by the unexpected, the constancy of its behavior becomes less important than the persistence of the relationships.”<sup>8</sup> To some degree, he saw in the language of sustainability a hidden bias towards system “equilibrium” – “the maintenance of a predictable world...with as little fluctuation as possible.” In the process he points out, that this could result in a systematic loss of flexibility. Static systems he suggested may under conditions of sudden or dramatic change, lose their structural integrity – they might collapse!

In response, Hollings suggests that a more laudable goal should be resilience rather than sustainability.

The resilience framework can accommodate this shift of perspective, for it does not require a precise capacity to predict the future, but only a qualitative capacity to devise systems that can absorb and accommodate future events in whatever unexpected form they may take.<sup>9</sup>

The missing element found in the concept of “resilience” was the capacity to change.

Given our increasingly interconnected world, one in which a ripple on one side of the globe can produce profound changes on the other – I would suggest that the lessons of Hollings should be taken seriously as we begin to explore better methods through which communities in the urban arena are able to adapt. That we must begin to refocus our attention on methods to help communities develop capabilities to respond to unanticipated changes – in values, the economy, in society and in the environment. Globalization makes us more interdependent, and interdependency means that we cannot ever fully control our environment unless we choose total isolation. While developed for communities in crisis, the idea of resilience in the community system is highly relevant to the concept of sustainable development.<sup>10</sup>

“Resilience” theory is growing in use amongst policy makers and analysts, dealing with crisis management and disaster mitigation (natural and human). I would suggest that it must now be deployed in a more overarching way to the question of how we build “resilience” in the urban world, how we plan for the un-plannable, and how we develop assets that enable populations to ride the waves rather than be pulled beneath them.

By shifting focus away from an ultimate end goal of sustainability, to an ongoing process of enhancing resilience managers, planners, council members, and residents can examine the community in its entirety,

## A natural disaster in one place creates

ripples in the lives of people in distant locations. Transnational migrants can live lives in multiple communities simultaneously, creating situations in which changes in the north can leave families in cities in the south with no food on the table. How can communities manage growth, development and governance in what can only be described as increasingly turbulent and changeable times?

– Jill Simone Gross

the interrelations among the various elements within a community, and how these elements collectively enhance community resilience.<sup>11</sup>

A resilience model might include the following elements:

- Capacity to absorb (create openings for the inclusion of new – populations, ideas, values)
- Capacity to change (create mechanisms to allow institutional change to occur more easily)
- Capacity to accommodate the unexpected (planning and policy frameworks that allow room for the unexpected, and that enable regular review in light of these unexpected factors)

The question however is: Can these elements be actualized in practice, can they be realized through the lens of sustainability? A quick look at two “sustainable” community development programs reveals that the problems of sustainable development identified above – conflicting goals, stasis and breakdown are very real in practice. Which leaves us with the question can sustainable development be “resilient?”

### SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN PRACTICE

#### *A. Healthy Cities/Communities*

The World Health Organization (WHO) has been at the center of many of the initiatives that can be grouped under the contemporary rubric of “healthy cities and healthy communities.” But the roots of the urban health movement can of course be dated back to the late 1600s in the United Kingdom when rodents carrying the plague infected 100,000 Londoners. Polluted water in urban centers later led to the deaths of an





JILL SIMONE GROSS

estimated 15,000 due to cholera in 1849. In fact, it was health concerns that led to the creation of the Metropolitan Board of Works, London's first municipal government.

More modern notions of “healthy cities and healthy communities” can be dated to the mid 1980s. The concept received global attention in 1985 at a conference titled “Beyond Healthcare” held in Toronto, Canada, and was the organizing theme of a conference held in Ottawa in 1986. While it is not my intent to offer a detailed history of the movement, the dates are important in building an awareness of the difference in approach taken in the 1980s, from earlier efforts. The 1980s efforts moved away from issue specific approaches to narrow aspects of urban health, and began to look at health comprehensively. Lack of resources meant a shift away from funding streams exclusively controlled by governments to partnerships between government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and communities. By the 1980s, community participation was often legally mandated. Thus the healthy cities movement that emerged in the 1980s was a significantly different from its predecessors.

The contemporary application of the idea to policy and programming came in 1986, in European cities in the Global North. The first United States initiative can be dated to 1994, with Healthy Boston and has subsequently been promoted in localities across the United States, with California being the first state to apply the program at a state level. Then in 1995 projects were initiated in cities in the Global South (Bangladesh, Egypt, Tanzania, Nicaragua and Pakistan were the early adopters). Today there are well over 4,000 initiatives emerging directly from the WHO and many more that have been adopted based upon the principles developed therein.

Healthy Cities (HC) was premised on the idea that “good health” in the urban world was not simply an individual challenge, and that solutions often required thinking outside traditional medical or clinical frameworks. The concept of city health reflected an effort to build awareness of the relationship between the built environment and health.

While medical care can prolong survival and improve prognosis after some serious diseases, more important for the health of the population as a whole are the social and economic conditions that make people ill and in need of medical care in the first place.<sup>12</sup>

What was central to the concept was the recognition of the importance of place, rather than behavior as the starting ground for understanding the forces shaping healthy communities. At the center of the Healthy Cities movement was an effort to put health on the policy and planning agendas of cities. Projects promoted by the World Health Organization for example, required a partnership between local government, community based organizations (CBOs), and NGOs, who in concert were expected to identify priority health issues, promote awareness and build ongoing collaboration among stakeholders.

The major tasks associated with a healthy city initiative include establishing an intersectoral committee or coalition; conducting visioning, assessment, and planning activities; engaging in good models of practice that promote public participation and creative collaboration; assessing progress with the goal of continuous quality improvement; and creating linkages with other participating cities.<sup>13</sup>

The underlying sustainability agenda in HC revolved around efforts to create ongoing collaboration among stakeholders, and to meet both the current and future health needs of the community. The explicit sustainability agenda is the goal of creating “an ecosystem which is stable now and sustainable in the long term.”<sup>14</sup>

The method of using community stakeholders however, seems to have encountered some roadblocks – particularly under conditions of rapid, ongoing and at times unanticipated change. HC is premised on anticipating change, with partner collaborations revolving around a set of shared objectives. The efforts to put these issues on government agendas is of course critical, in that the long term goal is in essence to institutionalize HC policies, to ensure that they are sustainable over time. The problem that researchers are finding in some of the European cases is that this process may instead become mired in preservation, when pro-

professionals rather than community interests dominate stakeholder groups, and the agendas they promote revolve around of a set of pre-defined professional objectives that reinforce the status quo rather than facilitating adaptability.

Cross-disciplinary collaborations around healthy cities [in Europe] have been a challenge due to divergence in professional practices, organizational cultures and politics. In essence, in the search for a more sustainable community health initiative becomes more rhetoric than reality, while the reality is status quo.<sup>15</sup>

Another challenge that the HC programs face relates to their ability to absorb new voices and ideas, and incorporate those voices into new understandings and policies regarding a healthy city, both at a community level and within government. There are currently some 1,200 HC programs, operating in 30 countries. The European Healthy Cities initiative “defines a healthy city not as a city that is now healthy, with standard medical statistics to prove it. But as one that is health aware... the program [in Europe] is about changing the ways in which cities think about, understand and make decisions about health.”<sup>16</sup> Trevor Hancock points out, for example, that what characterized these projects was that they were utilized primarily in large cities with populations in excess of 100,000. As a result, these projects had difficulty in mobilizing high levels of citizen participation. Cooperation across geographic scales was difficult. Success was also conditioned by the local economic context, wealthier communities could apply more resources in support of the projects than poorer communities, and similarly communities that lacked long term planning traditions, were less successful. In the successful projects, it was found that there was:

Strong political support, effective leadership, broad community control, high visibility, strategic orientation, adequate and appropriate resources, sound project administration, effective committees, strong community participation, cooperation between sectors, and political and managerial accountability.<sup>17</sup>

Healthy Cities Programs in the Global South encountered other challenges. Here researchers found that often project success was contingent on the existence of political stability of the system, which allowed political leaders to support the locally defined health agendas. In the absence of stability, high levels of community participation and mobilization offered a counterweight, such that the community could carry the HC

project even in the absence of the support of local leaders. Thus interestingly, the Global South experience, perhaps due to both its smaller scale, and its less stable environmental context, led to the emergence of more resilient communities. The longer history of strong community initiative, particularly in the South American cases, led to more success in HC than was true in the African context.

As one can begin to see, a more nuanced look at context can help us understand the challenges inherent in sustainability. In the Global North entrenched institutions and a lack of community involvement create problems that can lead to program breakdown due to stasis. In the South, a lack of institutional support in some cases prevents such projects from succeeding, and in other cases strong communities can act as a counterweight. In both instances, the questions remain: Can programs, governments and communities adapt? Can they be resilient, and if so, how?

### ***B. Social Exclusion Programs***

The modern use of the concept of social exclusion (SE) has been credited to the Former French Secretary of State for Social Action, Rene Lenoir, who in 1974 “used it to refer to individuals and groups of people who were administratively excluded from state social protection systems.”<sup>18</sup> The concept took center stage in European policy discourses during the 1980s and 1990s, in response to economic downswings, which resulted in growing pressures on many European welfare systems. In its most simplistic form, the concept reflects an alternative understanding of poverty. SE is multidimensional – in that it can be experienced due to a lack of housing, education, work, health, political rights, or access to social networks. It is a dynamic process in which disadvantages are linked, relative and at times reinforcing. SE is understood to be experienced in communities that are resource poor. However, the causes stressed are based on one's ability to participate, one's access to rights, and the nature of redistribution. Thus, those who are excluded are “cut off from the benefits enjoyed by full citizens.”<sup>19</sup> The programs seeking to respond to these challenges, as one might imagine are very diverse – given the variable nature of exclusion by locality.

My focus here is specifically on those programs operating at the community level and thus can be most easily understood as falling within the realm of “community development.” However, because the causes of SE are beyond the control of communities, these programs, like Healthy Cities, often involve partnerships between actors at different geographic scales (neighborhood, local, regional and national).

Research suggests, that as was true of HC programs, social inclusion (SI) programs suffer too from a lack of attention to “resilience” issues. An evaluation of 78 community-based social inclusion initiatives in Canada for example, found that projects faced “an enormous challenge in the permeable, complex adaptive systems of communities... made even more difficult when organizations are faced with the instability and transition created by short-term project funding, multiple evaluation criteria, and an overall lack of organizational capacity due to under-funding.”<sup>20</sup>

Across Europe, social inclusion has been promoted at a regional, national and community levels, however recent events in Europe – most notably the riots in immigrant enclaves in France, would suggest that social inclusion programs in many European cities are less successful. Here, as was true in the Healthy Cities cases, a lack of institutional support and the sense that the supports that were provided were not meaningful or salient to the communities meant less success at achieving outcomes. In Scandinavian countries, slightly more success occurred when local immigrant councils were given policy making powers – generating salience.

A critical aspect of social inclusion (SI) projects is the effort to think comprehensively about community based development challenges, thus inclusion programs demand multi-pronged approaches to community development in which activities are carried out simultaneously. A successful SI experience can be found as we shift attention to a project in place in the Global South. The Sonagachi Project is a community development program launched in 1992 in India to minimize vulnerability to HIV/AIDS among female sex workers. Initially, the program took a more traditional single sector focus on addressing the issue through efforts to promote condom use and HIV testing in “red light” districts across West Bengal.

Just a year and a half after the project began, the percentage of prostitutes who said they used condoms had risen from almost nothing to 70 percent. Something less tangible had also begun to happen. The prostitutes hired by the project were turning into a force to be reckoned with in the power structure of the red-light district.... The literate prostitutes in the project began teaching the others to read in makeshift daily classes held on plastic sheeting spread on the bare ground in the clinic’s courtyard – classes that continue even now. By 1994 they began demanding things that went way beyond the project’s mandate. They wanted police protection from hoodlums.... They have since formed

## What is the tradition that is worth saving to make the community more adaptable to the global changes?

—Emil Payin

their own financial cooperative to escape the clutches of money lenders who charge interest rates of at least 1,000 percent a year.<sup>21</sup>

While the project initially focused upon altering individual behavior, over time it morphed into a social inclusion project in which sex workers themselves work within their communities to educate and empower peers and their children in partnerships with CBOs, NGOs and government. Today the project addresses identity and self-esteem issues, autonomy and mobility needs, violence and discrimination, access to and control over material resources, and social and democratic participation.”<sup>22</sup> This project might be considered to be a successful example of community led development that is achieving social inclusion. Its success relates to the ability of all stakeholders to adapt to changing agendas. Responsive governmental support here was critical.

While the concept has received wide play across Europe and Canada, others point out that it does “not translate easily... in late developing countries [where] the vast majority of people are already excluded from formal labor markets and are never in their lives likely to benefit from state welfare or formal social security.”<sup>23</sup> Thus again, these programs may encounter challenges when systems lack permeability, and when they are unable to sustain community support. For example, in The Fight Against Social and Economic Exclusion Project implemented in Gambia (UNDP and ILO supported) the initial focus was to strengthen community responses to poverty, promote the participation of the poor in their own development and to develop nationally. After its initial implementation, however, the project focus shifted away from empowerment broadly conceptualized towards the development of capabilities to promote sustainable income generation. The agenda in this case was



EMIL PAYIN

changed by government, not community participants – thus, not surprisingly, stakeholder support diminished and the program no longer sought to address inclusion comprehensively. This is an illustration of the challenge of balancing goals in many sustainability efforts.

***Some Concluding Thoughts, and Points to Discuss:***

Community development programs encounter significantly different challenges in the Global North and South. In the North, institutional stasis characterized by an inability to absorb new ideas presents challenges to sustainability. In the South a lack of institutional stability can prevent the successful implementation of these programs and by extension make such program unsustainable. In all cases, finding a balance between conflicting goals remains a challenge. Though with concerted ongoing efforts these may be overcome. In both cases, the existence of a stronger community base may enable programs to sustain in the absence of other governmental supports. In all cases, experience would suggest that programs premised on sustainability, might not be able to easily survive in the face of rapid and unanticipated changes.

Given these realities, the questions that I pose to discussants are the following:

- Is sustainability compatible with resilience?
- Can sustainable development incorporate “resilience” strategies? And if so in what ways?
- Or, do we need to jettison sustainable development, and begin the process of constructing new models of development premised on resilience?



MARGARET KECK



# Voices Around the World: A Conversation on Resilience

## WHAT DO WE MEAN BY COMMUNITY RESILIENCE?

*Our perception of resilience is clearly shaped by where we sit. Do we sit in the eye of the storm? Do we flounder in its aftermath as we attempt to find our feet? Or do we live in a perpetual storm?*

– Jill Simone Gross

Jill Simone Gross opened the dialogue with a synthesis of the key ideas in the thought papers that she and John Paul Lederach prepared and the seminar participants' written responses. She noted how the world's highly visible disasters have led to increased interest in the concept of community resilience and pointed out how the different experiences of the seminar participants had a significant impact on their receptivity to the notion of resilience.

When discussing resilience in the *Global North*, the frames of reference are cities that have experienced decline, deindustrialization or disaster, natural and manmade. And the concepts of resilience on the surface seem more easily applied because in these places there seems to be a collective memory of a physical place to return to.... The memories of the past help those communities find resilience in the present. But when the topic of resilience was broached in many parts of the *Global South*, the notion of going back seemed to have very little meaning.... One can't bounce back to a place [where] one has never been.

Collins Airhihenbuwa (Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pennsylvania) also addressed this theme noting that while resilience implies a return to normal, normal is a relative term.

Central to the *raison d'être* of the word resilience is the assumption that those who now survive in unlivable conditions in communities

once experienced a more “normal” living condition and therefore can emerge from the present conditions and regain the normalcy they once knew. History and experience has shown us that exposure to today’s extreme conditions is what many communities consider to be normal. In fact many people, particularly young people, in these communities know of no other condition but the extreme condition to which they are exposed.

Given this, Airhihenbuwa wondered if resilience was the most appropriate “gate through which we should examine the community and the city? If not, is sustainability an acceptable approximation?”

Participants reflected on the difficulty of individuals and communities to rise above their circumstances and be resilient. As Silvio Passos (Steve Biko Cultural Institute, Bahia, Brazil) said, “Poverty is not just a lack of things but a lack of self-esteem.”

Tim Campbell (Urban Age Institute, Washington, D.C.) described how the stigmatization of the residents of Brazil’s poor neighborhoods impacts their ability to be resilient.

When a favela resident applies for work, the job interview, indeed if one is arranged at all, does not last long. Once the place of residence is known to be a favela, employers no longer show interest. Interviewees recount stories of discrimination in many forms, from refusal of mundane requests for delivery of purchased goods, to refusals by taxi drivers to enter favelas, denials of credit in stores, reluctance on the part of friends to pay visits inside the favela.... In turn, it may be that the perception of residents to this rejection and to their own surroundings – like the proverbial hall of mirrors – is a critical factor in shaping their own understanding and strategies in life.

Silvio Humberto Cunha (Steve Biko Cultural Institute, Bahia, Brazil) spoke from his personal experience: “I consider human resilience to mean the capacity of the individual to withstand the hard blows of everyday life without, however, losing sight of the possibility of overcoming these obstacles and imagining better days ahead.” The key to resilience is “to believe that you can promote change in your reality,” but as he pointed out, Afro-Brazilian students are “continually told that they do not have a way to contribute to society – not currently and not in the past. The community and the community’s history are left out. So it is difficult for them to have heart and hold on to the belief that they can make a difference in their life.”

## Reflecting upon the occasions in my life when

my own resilience was put to the test, I observed that to show my resilience it was important that I first develop a “culture or tradition of achievement,” or to have lived among achievers whose successes inspired me. In this regard I must emphasize the essential role played by my family that, despite the typical difficulties that blacks in Brazil face, my parents always gave me a sense of success, to the point of my attributing a divine quality to a successful life experience.

Confronting the world outside of my family obviously forced me to ponder much having to do with this capacity to change the world as it is. At this point, though, I had already taken stock of a “history of achievement” that shielded me from the adversities of Brazil’s extraordinarily racist and inequitable social reality.

Situations in which blacks become targets of special vigilance in shopping centers, restaurants and on streets are routine in Brazil. To this offense I would add a general disregard for the intellectual potential of Brazilian blacks. This is the typical situation faced by blacks in our country: a life that gravitates between discrimination in its more explicit forms and prejudices that silently impede their social and economic advancement.

In 1992, after recognizing this condition of prejudice and adversity, I joined a group of young blacks who essentially sought to contribute to the effort to increase the number of black students at universities. Along the way, we realized that we were in a position to promote many more changes. We then established Brazil’s first college-examination preparatory course for blacks and formed the Steve Biko Cultural Institute ... if the concept of resilience has anything to do with a belief in better days ahead, certainly this belief will be the foundation of our activities in the Steve Biko Cultural Institute. The belief in the justice of our cause has brought us heretofore unimagined results. An example of the Institute’s achievements is a program promoting interest in the sciences and technology among black youth called Oguntec. To my surprise, this initiative was resisted even by my own colleagues on the Institute’s board who, at the time, were skeptical of yet another program of this kind

given the difficulty of maintaining already existing underfinanced and understaffed programs. However, my vision of the program's future and the urgent need for an initiative of this nature far exceeded the pessimism engendered by a pragmatic accounting of scarce funds. ...

The apparent difficulty of relying upon domestic sources of funding for affirmative action programs represents one of many obstacles in the path of militants within the black movement such as myself. The social cost is great, and the resilience that is part and parcel of my social dealings is constantly put to the test. As I have said, however, I developed the ability to surmount disappointment and frustration chiefly thanks to my family. This advantage is becoming increasingly less common given the great number of families that are dysfunctional (especially poor black families), systematically victimized by alcohol and drugs, and who do not offer children a nurturing example in a context of social achievement – an ingredient necessary for the development of resilience needed to face social challenges and nurture hope for a better future.

– Lázaro Cunha

Pablo Lopez (Red Wolf Band of Indigenous People, Albuquerque, New Mexico) linked a community's capacity for resilience to the existence of a fundamental sustainable core.

I believe all urban communities need a gyroscope/directional guide to sustainability in order to conceptualize a particular direction needed or anticipated. If we accept the idea that resilience is “a quality to survive extreme conditions yet retain the ability to find a way back to expressing the defining quality,” what happens when a community does not have a fundamental core and defining quality to return to? I believe that the community will reflect a non-sustainable and destructive quality. However, a sustainable community as its defining quality will lead to a resilient community that includes all its members, and “adapt to changing agendas.”

Others cautioned that calls for community resilience might imply that the burden for recovery be shifted onto the back of struggling communities. Richard Stren (University of Toronto, Canada) elaborated, “If you stress too much communities being self-organizing then you’re also saying that communities have to be almost self-reliant. I don’t think you really want to say that too much because we want our government which represents us to take responsibility for many of our issues.”

While there were unresolved issues about the term resilience, there was no doubt that many of the participants came from or worked with communities which faced dire poverty, eviction or worse yet managed to organize, fight for their rights, and sustain their land, homes and communities. Their journeys are inspiring examples of the possible – the essence of resilience.

Most of my work has been with communities affected by violence in various parts of the world... particularly in the last decade or so in Colombia [with those] who have found themselves displaced by various forms of armed and open violence and structural violence. While these people are at the receiving end of everything that is unhealthy I found over and over again that they have extraordinary capacity to survive which, in the context in which they live, is a form of flourishing. – John Paul Lederach

Rather than spending the seminar on the difficult, if not impossible, task of defining resilience, Mark Nepo (Fetzer Institute, Kalamazoo, Michigan) suggested that the participants “talk about how we might promote self-organizing communities that nurture meaning and opportunity.... We are less interested in debate and more in what we see together, in what all our experience points to, and the deep listening that might uncover any useful wisdom along the way.”



CAROLINE WANJIKU KIHATO

## The Rise of Community as a Self-Organizing Entity

*It's an adaptability that isn't described in books but it's described in the action of people.*

– Pablo Lopez

While resilience is not an easy concept to define, coming to terms with the multiple meanings of community can also be a challenge. Communities are impacted by high mobility, migration, economics, changing governments and policies, and natural disasters. Arif Hansen (Urban Resource Centre, Karachi, Pakistan) described the changing nature of community in our modern times: “The concept of home has been replaced by the concept of dwelling. There is so much mobility that the home and the neighborhood to which one belonged is now not the same thing as it used to be. There is constant change and movement.”

While the participants did explore these larger forces and their global impact, the primary focus of the seminar became their own personal knowledge and experience of community. As Caroline Kihato (University of South Africa, Johannesburg, South Africa) observed, “The local community seems to be the predominant focus in this room.”

The participants reflected on how communities experienced resilience – what a resilient community looks like, what supports it and what works against it. As participants shared their experiences, stories and thoughts on community, there emerged a collective sense of community as a self-organizing entity drawing upon internal resources and capacities to respond to the hardship of daily life. High mobility and migration, particularly in urban settings, have weakened traditional networks of family and tribe, giving rise to the increasing importance of community.

Hanmin Liu (Wildflowers Institute, San Francisco, California) spoke from his own experience of the transition from family to community as the key organizing unit.

If I think back to when I grew up it was really the family, my relatives that helped me be who I am today. ... But I don't think that's the case now. I think we need a broader context, we need a broader organizing unit.... Community really is about social assets. It's about social capital, social formation, relationships, such as the neighbor taking care of my child when I can't afford daycare. It's about watching the street, watching the block, feeding some of our children whose parents aren't able to be there for them, helping them, supporting them, loving them.

Davinder Lamba (Mazingira Institute, Nairobi, Kenya) added that there is an extra challenge for urban communities as they must create the backup systems that have long been provided for by families, tribes or local governments in rural areas.

In a rural area when you run into trouble you have all kinds of ties to give you backup. It's like having a generator when you have a power outage.... But people lose these ties when they migrate into urban areas. Then when they have a real crisis and there is a failure, they have to use some kind of safety network. But to build a safety network in an urban situation takes much longer because these others have developed culturally. And often the government has given up its obligation of having resources that are to be employed under those circumstances. I don't think you can detach the whole idea of governance and talk about resiliency without talking about social equilibrium and political stability.

Lake Sagaris (The Living City, Santiago, Chile) offered a definition of community that resonated with many of the participants.

The essence of community, then, involves inclusion and exclusion, rights and responsibilities, a unique combination of people and identity, nature and place, past and future. Community is much used – and abused – often it is romanticized as a nice cuddly space that rarely, if ever, exists in our modern world (and probably never existed in history). Community, what are we really talking about? The simplest explanation for what turns a group of people into a community is a shared narrative. When, for whatever reason, we choose to work with others we start to grow a common *historia*, a word in Spanish that, in a simple, lovely way, means both history and story.



## We started out fighting a highway project and

we were vilified by the National Transport Authorities and everyone else. Ten years later, we're training the National Transport Authorities in sustainable transport policies and its importance for equality. We published the first green map of Santiago which is a map of where we are today and how we can get to a more sustainable city in the future. We've rescued several of our neighborhoods from a serious decline into crime. But I think that probably the most successful thing about our communities was what happened inside us and among us.

When we started we were twenty-five different organizations from very different realities... All twenty-five or thirty leaders would sit down together and say "Hey, this highway project is going to wipe us out. What are we going to do about this?" At first the people from the upper middle-class neighborhood were fighting because the project was going to destroy the Hill, a big park they loved. In Bella Vista Arts Community, we were fighting because they were going to destroy our neighborhood. The market people were fighting for survival and so were the people from Independencia. They were fighting for their right to remain in the center of the city. We just stood together because we felt that for a minimum of dignity we had to, we couldn't just let our neighborhoods be destroyed just because someone wanted to put a highway through the middle of Santiago. At first, we didn't believe in ourselves No one believed in us.

When we had a meeting set up with national authorities, they said you can only send two people. And we said, "No, no, no. We asked for the meeting. We will decide who will go. And actually twenty-five people are going to go because there are fifteen organizations who want to participate in this meeting and we also want to take along a few advisors."

So through this whole process each community, each organization, each leader would present their perspective. And by the end of the process we had all listened to each other and debated together so often that we were all fighting for everything together. It was that spirit that led to the founding of Living City in 2000.

– Lake Sagaris



DAVINDER LAMBA

# The Emergence of Community Identity and Efficacy through Conflict

*In the cities and the rural areas of the country that I've worked ... people have been able to resist through conflict. Without conflict they have not been able to resist. Negotiations do not work unless there is conflict attached to it [to generate] this resistance. So much for peace.*

– Arif Hasan

*So conflict is a motor of change.*

– John Paul Lederach

To help identify some of the characteristics of resilient or self-organized communities, John Paul Lederach asked participants to consider “where they have actually seen communities do something significant that kept them in touch, provided meaningful conversation and changed something.”

Many participants had seen how conflicts had helped people identify their common interests and come together as a unit to fight against a threat to their well being, even survival. Caroline Kihato described how this happened in the Dudley Street Neighborhood in Boston which had been devastated by years of poverty and neglect.

A group of people decided to self-organize and in that process they empowered themselves, demystified this whole process of policy. They created a community development corporation on all of those lands that had been taken by eminent domain and created residential, affordable housing and shifted that whole ethos around [the negative view of the community]. The community took ownership of what they wanted to stand for. It's a process of relationship. It's a process of dialogue. It's a process of allowing yourself to let go of the negative statement and seeing yourself in that positive light. Within ten years,

this group of people transformed the lives of everyone in that community by having created a different future and living into that future every day.

Christopher Doherty (Mayor of Scranton, Pennsylvania) described how residents can define and shape a city.

I am a Scrantonian. I live in the city. I am defined by this location but I am also defining this location... it says something about who we are that we were willing to invest in ourselves. Is it important to have clean streets? Yes, because that defines who we are. We care enough about ourselves that our streets are clean. We are building a train line from New York City to Scranton. And there's this fear, "Who is going to get off that train?" And I always say, "We define who gets off that train. If we are a clean city that respects and cares for ourselves then that's who is getting off that train. If we don't care about ourselves and our streets are filthy, if we have a high crime rate and our education is poor, well, guess what, that's who is getting off that train. We define ourselves."

And Pablo Lopez described how his community, the Red Wolf Band of Indigenous People, had begun to create the structures and principles to fit the urban realities and needs of its people.

Traditional society had leaders, speakers, medicine people, bundle carriers, staff carriers, and people who represented the ideas of indigenous society. We came up with these ideas and principles to guide ourselves because we didn't have anything else that operated within the urban context. ...What we see is a very organic way of doing things. It's a direct response to situations that happen within a city. Nowadays when people lose their jobs, right away they're forming committees among themselves to be able to sustain themselves through certain periods, through extended family.

## **I'm from South Africa. I come from a community**

that was five kilometers away from town and the government wanted to move it twenty-five kilometers away. But because of the community coming together we fought that eviction. Little things that people are not aware of brings change to the communities or to the people themselves.... I became the first woman from the poor community to sit in what they used to call the national housing board in our Department of Housing in South Africa. For the first two meetings I was so shy and quiet. I didn't talk at all because I couldn't understand what these people were saying. I waited for lunch, to eat nice food, and I waited for the meeting to get finished and take all the sweets that were lying on the table back for my poor community. But on the third meeting, I said, "I'm from the poor community, the people who are not educated, who don't know how to read and write. I'm part of them. I can't read this. Create an agenda that will make me able to participate in the discussion." Because I translated the language of the community into the formal world, it influenced my Department of Housing to create what we call the people's housing process.

Visiting India in 1992, looking at the living conditions and seeing the love and togetherness of those women created a big change in me because I identified the issues that made them love each other. Through the knowledge that I gained from India, I was able to build myself an eight room house where I am living in right now. Communicating to each other as communities raises our voice. When I speak alone people see me as an individual but when we are organized as a community and speak with one voice then people see change within the people themselves.

Shack Dwellers International is a network of different countries that has established federations that deal with issues of poverty, homelessness, and landlessness through what we call exchange programs. When we organize ourselves, we look at the issue of changing the mind-set of a peasant, then changing the mind-set of the family, changing the mind-set of the community and at the end of the day, changing the mind-set of the entire society globally.

I am sitting on the other side of the road addressing the issue of the global informal agenda. There are people who are educated who are drafting the policies, sitting on the side of the road addressing the issues of the formal global agenda. If these two voices can listen to each other then the marriage between the formal global agenda and the informal global agenda will get together and will come up with a policy that will address the needs of the poor on the ground. Having the very important skill of listening, we will be able to change the world to become a better world for all.

– Rose Molokoane

## Characteristics of an Empowered Community

- space for civic engagement, horizontally and vertically
- relationships and dialogue over time and across networks and perspectives
- authentic partnerships based on the interests of the community rather than relationships of patronage
- focus on education, information gathering and knowledge to build community capacity, enhance identity, and set common goals
- multiple scales of operation from the neighborhood and city, to the provincial, national, and ultimately global level
- the capacity to bring hope and the opportunity to offer a different future through civic engagement





JANIS CLAFLIN



# Community Based Leadership: Leading in a Different Way

*We exercise a kind of leadership that isn't usually identified with being leaders. One of them is admitting when we're wrong or admitting we can't do this, we need help. If you're a leader and you're strong you're not supposed to admit that. But admitting that you need help and bringing people in is really strengthening.*

– Lake Sagaris

As the participants shared their insights on how communities can coalesce in times of conflict, they also began to describe the changes that can take place for individuals within these communities and how community leaders begin to emerge.

I think individuals transform communities and communities transform individuals. I think the two things generally go together. Almost all communities have activists in them and these activists have some common characteristics. First of all, they are individuals who have come under attack or some aspect of themselves has come under attack... They mobilize people for purposes of demonstrations, for purposes of lobbying the government. ... So there is this feeling of being wronged that identifies itself. – Arif Hasan

Sonia Fadrigo (Philippines Homeless People's Foundation, Iloilo City, Philippines) recounted how her own life was transformed after learning that her community had been served with an eviction notice. Fadrigo was propelled into action – a surprise to her community, the organizations around her and perhaps even herself.

Through the participants' stories, a picture emerged of remarkable community leaders who often faced great odds and made significant achievements. These leaders' strength, authority and purpose were deeply embedded within their community. Hanmin Liu, in studying the Lao Iu Mien community of the San Francisco Bay area, identified the informal leaders of this immigrant group as those who often worked quietly but powerfully behind the scenes.

## We began to discern the individuals of the

community whom others go to for help, advice, and direction. We identified such individuals as informal core leaders. They work closely and collectively to establish a leadership formation that is the backbone of the community. They initiate activities that strengthen certain core values such as intergenerational and extended families, a spiritual way of life, and self-sustainability. They generally do not work for nonprofit community-based organizations and are not paid to do community work. But they are available 24/7. Such individuals are modest, humble, and helpful to others. They do not seek media attention and political positions. Their cooperation transcends organizational and political boundaries. By virtue of their moral actions for decades in the community, they have demonstrated their credibility and thus hold considerable authority and power...

We came to see and understand the innate power of the Lao Iu Mien community. We learned that a group composed of Lao Iu Mien elders, the grand priest, and community leaders took it upon themselves to develop a strategy—rooted in their culture—that helped individuals and families to adapt to local environments while maintaining and strengthening their identity...

This community strategy has been remarkably successful in bringing different groups of people together, and this in turn has led to a resilience and a greater self-sustainability.

The story of the Lao Iu Mien community highlights the courage and astuteness of Lao Iu Mien Leaders to bring their diaspora together. It is a story that could likely be repeated by other immigrants and indigenous diasporas as well as more heterogeneous communities. What we think should be widely shared and discussed is the following:

First, the Lao Iu Mien had an active leadership group that was involved in the overall development of the community. They were involved in such activities as the building of the temple and the implementation of the district structure. They made sure that certain values such as their spiritual practices, extended and intergenerational families, and harmony were at the core of all of these developments. They were also

involved in solving difficult problems that inevitably surfaced. Second, the members of the Lao Iu Mien community had a core of shared objectives that served as a collective voice for action. Third, there is a commitment to ongoing improvements in the community.

Our experiences [with the Lao Iu Mien community] lead us to think that resilience and community well-being happen when an intentional process of community formation led by an active leadership group and anchored in the culture of the community exists. When there is authentic cultural leadership and collective will and action, everyone in the community will benefit. And when communities reach this stage in their development, they have the foundation for being self-sustainable.

– Hanmin Liu

Leading from within a community means leading in a different way, as Lake Sagaris described:

I once saw Inti Illimani, a Chilean group that was exiled for many years. Every member of the band played and was in the spotlight. Horacio Salinas, who had written the music, was just sort of sitting in the background. Every once in a while he'd nod or he'd just say "good." He was leading from behind. His role as a leader was to bring out the strength and the leadership in each of the members of the band, not to shine the light on himself. I think that's a new kind of leadership that communities need.... They know when it's their turn to just sit back and let other people lead. It's an empowering leadership. A leadership for change.

The participants stressed the importance of making alliances and learning from other leaders and other communities. Caroline Kihato shared how the Dudley Street Neighborhood "worked with individuals who might be allies in other institutions, in other neighborhoods. They built the depth of their networks outside of their own community with universities like Boston University and Tufts." Tim Campbell observed

## **I'm also like other people who are just sitting**

inside the home, a housewife knowing nothing outside. I'm just contented of being a mother. I want to cook for my children. I want to do the laundry. I want to do the housekeeping. But when eviction comes to our house that's a time when I started to wake up and decide that I should do something, not for me but for my children because I'm living in the land where for a hundred years it was occupied by my in-laws. So one day the eviction notice came because this land is owned by a private landowner and they want to evict us. There are 600 families living there. So I realized that in the beginning I know that something should be done.... So we started organizing ourselves. We started with the community savings but it's very hard on my part because as a housewife I don't know anything. Just even looking at the piece of title of the land I don't know that piece of document because I have not touched that in my whole life.

But the issues that keep me going is being a mother, as a woman, I have to do something for my children. When we began the organization in 1997 I am the one who takes the lead to organize these people around me. And they don't believe in me because, "Who are you?" They relied too much on the organizers and I am not a community organizer. I said, "We should do something. We should do savings, one peso a day, five peso a day." They said, "We cannot buy land with this one peso a day."

People around us, the NGOs, some of the professionals don't believe in what we're doing. But even given all the struggle and the hardship we had monies to form an organization and we started with that and we tried to link ourselves with the local government's program of housing and buying land.... For six months we do all this documentation just to have a loan from the government to buy a piece of land because we

know that our savings is not enough. But then because of this political situation the government, the National Housing Authority suddenly decided that no, all the money now is being frozen so we cannot move the money. So I just ended up crying and then I said what do we do now? The experience taught us so much about how we can mobilize our own resources.

We decided to buy land from the bank, it is a foreclosed property. In the beginning the bank doesn't listen to us, doesn't believe in us that we have that money. We have only 1,000,000 pesos, the cost of the land is 3,000,000 pesos. The 2,000,000 we have to borrow from other part of the region who is also doing savings. Poor people, we have this inter-lending among ourselves. So the bank just said okay, we can sell the land to you.

When we have this 3,000,000 in hand and we handed it to the bank they don't believe that we can buy that piece of land so they were very surprised. We signed the contract with a bill of sale that the land will be transferred to our name as an organization, not as individual. The manager said, "You know I have to do some confessions. From the very beginning we don't believe that you can buy this piece of land from us." They are now saying they are very sorry for their impatience with us.

Now the bank calls us and say, "Come, you come." I said, "Why?" "Because we have this foreclosed land again and there are at least forty families living there and we want to sell this land to them. Can you help them do savings?" ...

So we are the living example of all these things and they believe it... We help them organize and we tell them you know you can do this. We have to stand up. We are very happy to see other people have houses and land. That's the satisfaction that we feel.

– Sonia Fadriago

that this ability to reach out and learn from others was a common characteristic of the individual and community transformations discussed at the seminar.

Those who have managed to improve their lives have a very different pattern of relationships with others in and outside the community, particularly outside the community. They have a different pattern of network exchanges. Almost every single story we've heard here today has had something about crossing a boundary. [These leaders went] to another place and saw something interesting, brought it back, interpreted it and tried to make it happen and implement it in their own circumstances.

Richard Stren confirmed the importance of these opportunities to exchange knowledge and experience, "Local leaders hardly ever know what's going on in cities of other countries unless they're lucky enough to go to one of these international conferences where they would meet other mayors. And that's often a revelation because they've never actually thought of what could happen in other places. Then they begin to imagine and that's the beginning of often very, very powerful change that takes place."

Chris Williams (UN-HABITAT, Washington, DC) described the power and possibilities that can come from such collaborations:

Just as when Rose Molokoane was attending for the first time the sessions in South Africa, she was looking for what could help her community when she came back. She thought she'd just take home the candy at the tables. But through that three-day process she came to understand that in fact she had enormous power, representing a huge constituency to a group of people that had no access to that community.

As a UN official, I've come to realize that if we attend a meeting with a minister or a municipal official and we have with us someone like Rose, the dynamics of that meeting change profoundly. We're hitting that government from two angles, as a large multilateral agency representing all member-states and as a constituency representing urban poor movements. The two of us together constitute a baffling experience for that official. They don't know how to navigate and it puts us in a very strong position to move forward.

I have only so much power as an individual, as Rose has only so much power as an individual, but the two of us working together have enormous power that is greater than the sum of the parts.

Richard Hansen (Union Institute & University, Cincinnati, Ohio) highlighted the role education can play in providing a deeper perspective in social justice:

Education framed in the context of social justice, ethics and social and global perspectives, creates an opportunity for action that positively impacts our communities. Colleges and universities, when outward facing, have an opportunity to provide graduates with a social justice grounding that can positively impact healthy communities.... Healthy communities are influenced by individuals that bring a perspective of social justice and ethical behavior to the task.

Margaret Keck (Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland) pointed out that even the best efforts and alliances are not guarantees of success. “I agree that alliances are absolutely necessary. But sometimes the alliance that you make doesn’t have the same impact as it might in another case. There are elements of luck that are involved in this whole process.” Keck believes it comes down to dedication, commitment and persistence.

People have to be remarkably persistent and keep on trying even in the face of a lot of failure. People get disappointed, people get discouraged. Other people eventually have to take up the process. In the processes that have been the most successful, there have been at least a small group of incredibly dedicated people who essentially bust their butts every day to keep making things happen against really very difficult odds. And they have been building relationships both inside organizations and between organizations. So there’s a lot leadership and dedication – in the sense of people who are truly dedicated to keeping the effort going and to keeping it together.

Emil Payin (Centre for Ethno-Political and Regional Studies, Moscow, Russia) pointed out how the traditions, culture and experience of a populace can impact their ability to self organize. He wondered, “What are the key factors which support communities to establish conversation and peace? What is the tradition that is worth saving now to make the community more adaptable to the global changes? In the communities among the ethnic Russians, the majority of Russians, and the communities among the ethnic minorities mostly in North Caucasus which is historically connected with Muslim religions, we see absolutely different dynamics and what is good for one type of community could be very bad for another. ...So there are different tasks for different regions within only one country. So could you imagine what it is like for the whole world?”



PABLO LOPEZ



# Conditions that Foster Community Resilience

## Voice: To Speak and Be Heard

*In my language we have a saying that being listened to is half of justice.*  
– Arif Hasan

As many pointed out, it is difficult to identify a specific set of conditions that foster community resilience. Yet the participants continually returned to the following themes: the importance of civil society **voice**; the creation of **space**, physical and political; the assurance of **safety** and **time**, as well as the galvanizing aspects of **conflict** and **leadership**. These themes echoed and expanded the three metaphors that John Paul Lederach used in his seminar paper for understanding a healthy community: place: locating oneself in the world; safety: feeling at home; and, voice: close enough to be heard.

The importance of having a voice, being heard, both as an individual and collectively as a community, was felt by all as key to the resilience of a community and its sense of identity. Having a voice meant that people have a way to participate in the decisions that affect them and their community, allowing them to define their own future.

Caroline Kihato noted how photographs depicting refugees are often used to raise awareness of their plight, but an unintended consequence of these images can be a loss of voice and agency.

The ways in which displaced or refugee communities are represented tends to *erase their agency* and *homogenize* their experiences in ways that limit our understanding of displacement and our ability to develop appropriate policy responses.... Contemporary iconic images of refugees and displaced populations represent women and children as victims – malnourished, violated, and weak... these images deny refugees any agency, any action contemplated is outside the refugee.

According to Lederach, having a voice also means that people “feel that they have some way to participate meaningfully in decisions that are

being made about their lives ... they have access, points of influence and conversation. And ultimately it points to...a very key element of this, which is meaningful conversation. The conversation means something. The words don't just disappear into an abyss but they actually are in a place where they interact."

The importance of being involved in meaningful conversations came through many of the participants' stories and experiences. Jill Simone Gross offered this example:

Small [immigrant] communities in New York, who had historically not used their voice through the formal channels, were using them in this election [U.S. presidential election of 2008]. I think that the key was that suddenly there was something salient to them, meaningful to them. So I would say that voice – with the perspective of it having meaning and salience to institute change – can itself be a motivator to produce change.

Davinder Lamba said, "Language and communication is key – we need to understand what we mean, not just what we say... communication and collaboration go hand in hand." Richard Stren emphasized that communication between people and the government must be a two-way street.

The more they participate and the more that those lines of communication and those points of access to the local political system are kept open the more likely people are to be able to look after themselves in different ways.... There is a lot of discussion in the development literature about how important democracy is and how important it is to have openness, responsiveness, and the involvement and engagement of communities. There must be a two-way street between government and local people. This is key to improving people's lives in a positive and measurable way.

Jill Simone Gross described how certain cities were trying to create policy mechanisms and political space for their citizens' voices to be heard:

In the case of places like London and Paris, the governments were creating opportunities, were trying to intervene to engage populations, but the populations didn't have the language, knowledge or the ability to maneuver through the system. The avenues were created, but people didn't walk down those avenues because they lacked meaning and salience in terms of their daily existence....

## A new challenge is how to create

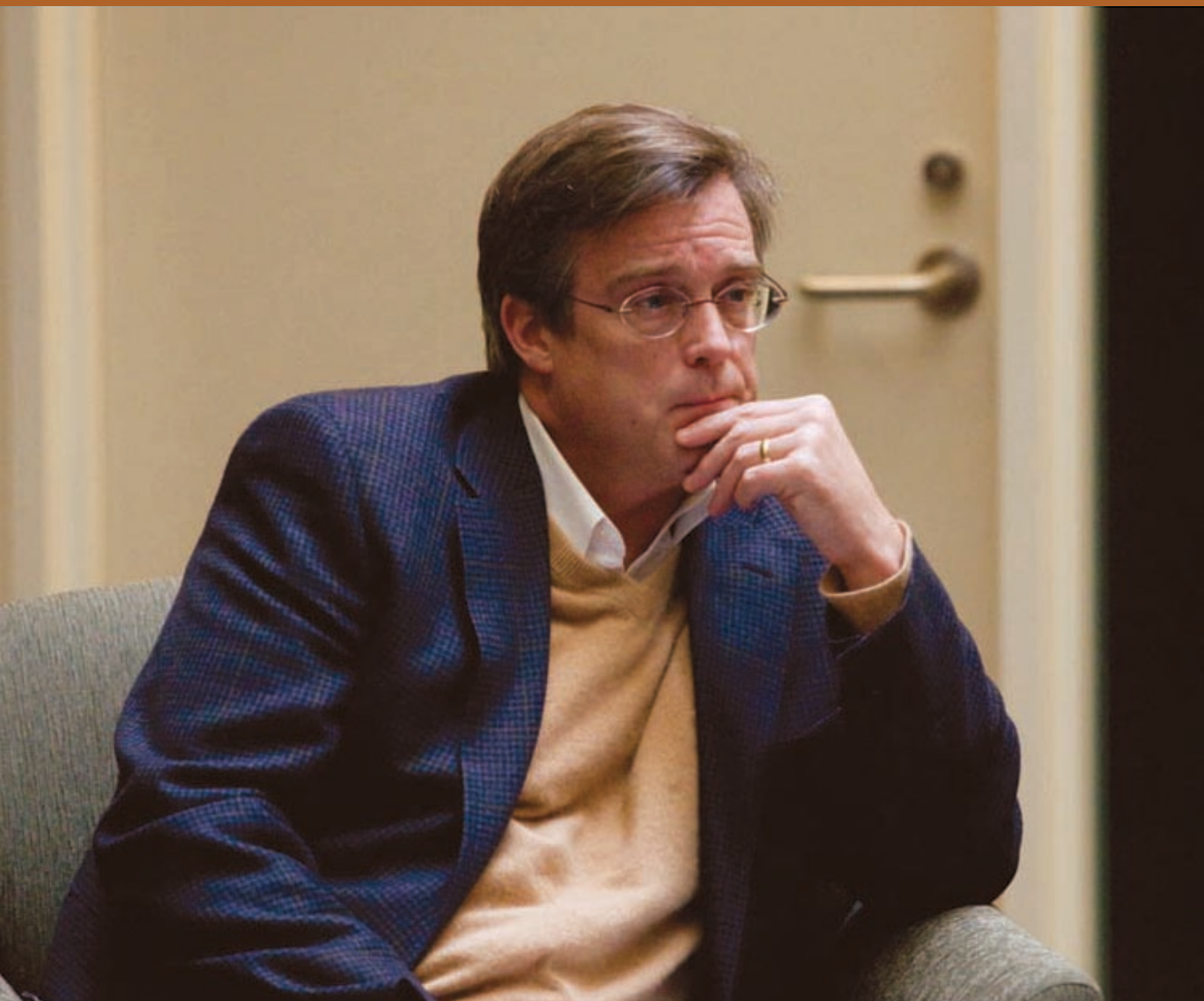
those democratic spaces, legitimate spaces at the local level within which you can participate, your voices are heard and you have some say in the making of decisions.

—Arif Hasan

Copenhagen is one of the growing number of cities that allow migrant residents the right to vote in local elections. ... When they first instituted residential voting rights the system didn't work. .... people couldn't understand or talk across the system. So now when you establish residency in Copenhagen, the government is mandated to provide you with language training and civic education to understand how to work through the system. That gives a very diverse population an opportunity to talk to each other when they may not be able to talk under other circumstances. In Copenhagen migrant populations are voting at higher proportions than resident populations.

And Caroline Kihato reminded the group that “expressing one's voice” can take many forms.

At the University of Nairobi a group of women were fighting for the release of their children who were prisoners of the government. No amount of shouting and talking brought any attention or shifted the powers that be. Then they stripped naked in public. That for them was the point of resistance, the point of saying to power that this cannot go on.



CHRISTOPHER DOHERTY

# Conditions that Foster Community Resilience: Creating Space, Physical and Political

*You have to create spaces at the local level where people can come together; can hear each other; can be safe to express and listen.*

– Davinder Lamba

Participants shared how the existence of social and political space where parties, disparate and alike, can interact was crucial to community resilience. Arif Hasan described the need for this space.

You need to create a space for interaction between different groups so that you can deal with the new system, otherwise that system cannot deliver. You need to create and nurture the space, and you need to institutionalize the space eventually. A space where people can get together, where politicians, planners, communities can get together to discuss and talk.... It's that space in between that becomes really critical to the success.

Richard Stren also described the emergence and importance of this political space, "There are more NGOs and more civil society groups of every kind operating in this space, in what we can call local space. And that's the space where the so-called resilient groups are becoming more resilient or newly defining their own missions and boundaries."

Lake Sagaris related this notion of space to the figurative and literal sense of being able to sit at the table.

I think governments have to start thinking about governance. They have to start thinking about participation, not as a moment or process related to specific policies but in structural terms, in terms of planning and implementation. People have to participate in the full cycle of decision-making. Why? Because deliberation is really important and deliberation means you have to be sitting at the table. You have to be sitting having a coffee afterwards or sitting at the bar because most things are worked out in informal not formal spaces. And if citizens don't have access to those spaces we don't have real participation in decision-making.



SONIA FADRIGO

William Morrish (Parsons the New School of Design, New York) linked the resilience of a city to a healthy infrastructure that provides spaces for community voices and avenues for citizen participation.

For me, the term “resilience” demands the development of a distributed infrastructure that enables citizens to operate more independently, sustain themselves during service disruptions and assist the recharge of the larger systems upon return to normal conditions. This way, citizens become the first responders and more active and effective agents in recovery and the revival of the local economy. . . . The systems are environmentally sustainable, equitably networked, and resilient or accommodating to cultural and ecological succession, because they provide the public realm or spaces of community voice.

Christopher Doherty also saw a role for local government in aiding communities to establish space where they can define themselves.

A community’s amenities, particularly its parks, communicate to residents and visitors what we think of ourselves. If our parks are flourishing, so is our sense of who we are as community. These renovations reestablish pride in our city and give people a sense of place. Crime also needs a “sense of place” and dilapidated buildings and run down blocks in our neighborhoods attract crime and criminals. By demolishing these properties and rebuilding and/or greening these spaces, crime cannot take hold as easily. . . . Scranton offers an interesting example of a resilient community. As Gross and Lederach indicate, this characteristic does not happen by chance or mistake. And it does not happen solely through political leadership. But I am confident that government can be an active contributor to encouraging resilient communities through

laissez-faire investments and intentional targeting of those areas that give communities their sense of place.

Davinder Lamba also spoke of the challenge of creating those spaces, particularly in the age of globalization.

A new challenge is how to create those democratic spaces, legitimate spaces at the local level within which you can participate, your voices are heard and you have some say in the making of decisions. For the last five years, after the experience of working with the community at different levels, we have set up a separate space in a project that deals with solving problems of collective action. ... We did a national study and as of 2003, we created the Nairobi Food Security Agriculture Livestock Forum and this forum is dubbed as a sacral mix and a cooperation model. It has the community, the market and the government sector working in it. It convenes three times a year. It runs training programs and tries to have open discussion of conflicts.

Silvio Passos described a “both/and” framework for conceptualizing space:

Maybe what we should say is [we want] self-organizing communities that nurture opportunity in areas of globalization but that also have the capacity to make governmental structures responsible to them.... So you have networks and citizen groups and grassroots organizations but then you have a space between that and the larger [entity] like the local government. It's that space in between that becomes really critical for success. So that in reframing we've got to have a both/and framework. A framework that has local (meaning grassroots, informal network) as well as formal governmental systems or national regional systems.

## **I was born in Delhi, in India. At the age of four,**

I migrated to Karachi where I've lived ever since, apart from when I studied architecture in the UK and worked in Europe. When I went back home it was a period of considerable turmoil and political upheaval. I think what I subsequently did had a lot to do with becoming part of that political movement and thinking. I was trained conventionally but that convention and training went out the window when a community whom I was advising in a development project was evicted. That was my first experience of the land issue, how it operated and how unjust and unfair it was. Soon after that there was another big eviction. These two things brought about a big change in my life.

I had a sizable architectural practice and my work increased in issues related to land, its ownership, community struggles. I wrote more and more about this. Subsequently a very unjust and inequitable inner city project was taking place in my city, I challenged it. That brought me to the forefront of the sort of work that I do now.

Ultimately a very well known Pakistani social scientist, Akhtar Hameed Khan, initiated the Orangi Pilot Project. Orangi is one of the eighteen towns of Karachi. Karachi has a population of well over a million people almost all in informal settlements. The large part of the informal settlements program of the government of Pakistan was funded by the Asian Development Bank. It did not work, it was far too expensive and far too top-down. Khan wanted a program that the people could finance and manage. We reduced costs considerably by questioning engineering standards and the processes through which development was delivered. The engineers were furious.

We have been able to show that communities can build internal sanitation (latrine in the house and the sewer) slowly, incrementally over time with their own resources, through their own management, provided they are given technical advice and managerial guidance. Today in Orangi over 100,000 households have built their internal sanitation systems and the government has supported them in building the external sanitations (transfer and treatment plants). The program has moved out of Orangi into fourteen Pakistani towns and into approximately 136



other locations outside of Karachi. The replication of the project has been done by local governments and by communities.

Finally, after all the conflicts and disagreements we had with the government, we came to a good understanding with them and we were asked to frame the national sanitation policy of the government of Pakistan. We did this two years ago and it was accepted by the Cabinet last year.

The most important thing that has happened through the Orangi Project is that communities from all over Pakistan have been able to organize, come together. We formed the Community Development Network which brought all these communities together under one banner. It's a huge network. It meets every three months. Our big problem is that we don't have space for such a big network to meet but we manage somehow. We meet in a different location every year. So this has become a fairly big voice.

We understood that the problems of Orangi and the informal settlements were also the problems of the city. There was a direct link of how the city developed, managed land, implemented projects, nature of projects and these settlements. You could not divorce the two. They were very closely related. So we created the Urban Resource Center about eight or nine years after Orangi was established as a research and advocacy center. Through the Center we were able to bring in the Orangi communities and link with other communities in Karachi.

Bringing together of all these separate interest groups is what is creating a very important space in the case of Karachi. This is the space where interaction between all these different groups can take place. Now that it's expanded, we have good relationship with the government. Although they don't listen to us all the time and we don't always listen to them, but we talk which we did not do before. I think it's a big change to talk, to discuss. We invite them over to explain their policies. We invite them and everybody comes. Sometimes four or five hundred people get together from different walks of life.

— Arif Hasan



COLLINS AIRHIENBUWA, HANMIN LIU

# Conditions that Foster Community Resilience: The Assurance of Safety

*The conditions of the urban poor require a transformation of wider physical, social, and economic circumstances starting with improvements in security and sense of place.*

*- Tim Campbell*

Without safety, and the certainty and predictability it brings, people lose their capacity to feel “at home” in the world, wrote John Paul Lederach. To Davinder Lamba, Lederach’s pairing of safety and voice, was “combining the language of well being and power.... I include health, safety and comfort as well being and voice to me is the language of power. So therefore what we’re asking here is to combine not only the language of power and well being but to also to combine the language of wealth.”

Tim Campbell describes what happens to a sense of voice or advocacy when one can not escape from violence:

For most still exposed to daily lethal violence in the favela, the hardening of the arteries of social exchange may be a contributing to a downward spiral. Voice in these places stays confined to narrow, somewhat insular channels. Policy interventions may help if they open new opportunities for change from outside the favela.... For most urban squatters in the world, the issue is not so much resuscitating lost sense of self as much as it is having the resources to cope with adversity. ... The challenge is to assemble many kinds of help, not merely social capital mentioned in this note. The conditions of the urban poor require a transformation of wider physical, social, and economic circumstances starting with improvements in security and sense of place. One key step on the way out for the poor would be to have clearer channels through which contacts and messages—both outward and inward—are able to travel far and wide.

# Conditions that Foster Community Resilience: Allowing Time for Change

*There are a lot of experiences that we want to share but we cannot finish in one day or in one week.*

– Sonia Fadrijo

Time is yet another element critical to understanding community resilience. The participants at the seminar often referred to the fact that change takes time. None of the issues they worked on were resolved in a day, a month, or even a year. Many had dedicated their lives to their communities and causes. Chris Williams pointed out the importance of time:

In terms of the capacity to participate this is about taking time. Not just communities and their organizations but also international professionals. At the U.N., we have to go through a huge learning curve to recognize these tactics, these shifts, to come to terms with the politics of what we're doing. That takes a lot of time. So this capacity is not just about poor people trying to organize themselves, it's about professionals, bureaucrats, and academics, who have to come to terms with their place within the power framework and understand how to move forward on it.

Almost every example I've heard today is something that's taken twenty to twenty-five years to pull together. The Orangi Project, we're talking twenty-five years. Slum Dwellers International network, twenty years and growing. Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, from the mid-80s. So not only do you have to understand the power of politics, not only do you have to understand the alliances, strategic and otherwise, not only do you have to gain the capacity to participate, but you have to have a sober realization of the length of time that you're trying to introduce with these kind of changes. Davinder Lamba's work is unbelievable. This is a thirty year exercise in Kenya, a thirty year exercise

## I think governments have to start thinking

about governance. They have to start thinking about participation, not as a moment or process related to specific policies but in structural terms, in terms of planning and implementation. People have to participate in the full cycle of decision-making. Why? Because deliberation is really important and deliberation means you have to be sitting at the table.

—Lake Sagaris

to build to the point where it can construct a task force that's not going to get hammered.

Participants discussed the difference between the ability of communities to understand this concept of change over time, and the inability of governments and the donor community to operate with this understanding. As one person reported back from their small group discussion,

In resilient communities you could think about it in terms of formal and informal structures. Life in communities requires the gestation of ideas that get initiated and then have a process by which they become formalized. There's also an opportunity to think about things in the long term rather than in the short term. The contrast was pointed out that the formal systems generally think about what's expedient, what's a quick fix versus what is the long-term view of this particular issue.

Arif Hasan reflected on the truth of this as he looked back over his long service to his community.

And what I have learned in these thirty-five, almost forty now, years of being associated with this sort of development is that ultimately it is institutions that matter. Vibrant, strong institutions rooted in the sociology of the country. How you achieve them, that's another discussion. They matter. It is crucial to have this understanding and to take the time necessary and not be tied to artificial deadlines.

The [Orangi Pilot and Urban Resource Center] projects did not have any targets. They were open-ended... They had rather long periods of gestation without which I do not think projects can consolidate. Programs can not develop without gestation.



MARK NEPE, BLAIR RUBLE, ARIF HASAN, CHRISTOPHER WILLIAMS, PABLO LOPEZ, ROSE MOLOKOANE

# How Do Governments Support or Thwart Community Resilience?

*Decentralization and democratization are not the same thing.*

*– Richard Stren*

After exploring community resilience, local leadership, and the conditions that foster individual and community action, the group discussed the role of governments and donors in supporting or inhibiting community resilience. Richard Stren launched the dialogue with a presentation of his thoughts on governance. He posed the following questions:

Was your local government a good partner for you?

What are the steps toward creating a more sustainable and a more systematic policy approach to your problems?

Have you looked at the characteristics of the leaders of the governance process? Are there characteristics that stand out? Are they successful or not?

The conversation then focused on whether the movement toward decentralization was a help or hindrance to communities, whether governments were now more or less effective in responding to and supporting the work of communities. According to the participants, government structures can both aid and impede communities. The agility and skills of the communities and the sincerity and ability of the government in wanting to hear and empower communities have a lot to do with the success of government interventions. Jill Simone Gross spoke of the importance of having an authentic two-way street between government and communities.

Often governments can invite communities in to participate but if the conversation is in a one-way direction rather than a shared direction,

...the notion of building community and creating stakeholders really begins to fall apart....the decision of populations to organize outside the system in an informal way or to participate formally inside the system through traditional channels had a great deal to do with their perception of the system itself. The communities that felt that their voice was not meaningful or not taken seriously by the government were much less likely to be interested or to take a position forming a part of formal power structures and they were much more likely to stand on the outside participating in informal ways.

## Democratization has happened in many countries

across the world, particularly in the developing world. In India, for example, there were two major amendments to the constitution which took place in 1992 and that opened the system at the local level to much more democratic ways of operating. Among other things, it mandated that one-third of all local members of municipal boards had to be women. South Africa had a new constitution in 1996 which had a whole chapter on local government. Out of that came a number of different laws which defined how government ought to work in very participatory ways at the local level. There are many countries that changed their constitutions, began to change their laws. Brazil had a new constitution. Mexico made a number of changes in its constitution so that local governments had more power. I can go on and on...

So where is this all going? First of all, it reflects the fact that there is quite a bit more involvement of local people in the political process. This political process is not only national, it is local. People know that if they need to get water, electrical connections, to regularize their land tenure so that they have more security, they may need to use the national law but they will have to get some support at the local level to do this. And they need to have some representation on local councils...

The opportunities and the points of access have definitely increased quite significantly over the last twenty years. This should have produced,



and probably has produced a cultural change toward more involvement of citizens and communities. This is partly the kind of cultural change which many sociologists talk about when they talk about network culture as opposed to the culture of authority which used to be the only way to go in local politics or in politics in general. Those networks and those new political spaces which are being carved out very often are only a result of struggles. They are not always successful. People need to dig their heels in and they need to make major efforts. There are powerful forces that try to impose that top-down rather than a bottom-up perspective and structure....

Whatever people do, they have to be aware that there is a whole institutional complex and they would be well advised to understand how it works, to engage themselves with it if they can and to try to use opportunities in that system to their best advantage. They don't always do that and often there are many many constraints and many reasons why they're prevented from doing so but nevertheless the possibilities are there. The world is not just nation-states, the world is very rich at the local level and there are many different things going on. Collective solutions to their personal problems have to somehow be developed and they are often developed through these formal institutions at the local level....

Davinder Lamba and Amartya Sen created a comic book, *Development and Freedom*, where they reinforce the idea that development is freedom. It's not only about local governments giving people certain rights but it's about how people can access the very basic services and community organizations that need to represent them in a collective way.

This is the environment within which so many of these initiatives operate. We like to use the term local governance, not local government, because we see it as an interactive process. We see it as a relationship between people and governments and civil society and private sector groups, faith-based organizations. There is more and more a kind of a relationship with local government through different kinds of boards and different structures which have been developed over the last twenty years than used to be the case before.

– Richard Stren

Jill Simone Gross found governance a useful concept, “Instead of looking for specific traits of governments or civil society, it allows us to think about the traits of the relationship in terms of the flows of information, in terms of transparency, access and dialogue.”

Participants also shared their frustration with the slow and cumbersome decision making processes.

Now there are a number of actors in the decision-making drama whereas previously decision-making was fairly simple. In Karachi, you had a bureaucracy. Today, you have eighteen mayors of the city of Karachi and they all have a say in things. So you have a very difficult negotiation taking place... previously community groups were wooed by the bureaucracy. Today they are neglected by the mayors who say, “Who are you? We have been elected, we decide. We don’t need to go through this process.” – Arif Hasan

Margaret Keck described how decentralization has impacted community groups:

Since the fiscal crisis of the 1970s, the degree to which governments were going to be able to do everything sort of fell apart. They fell apart in the developed world and in the developing world where they may never have actually gotten up to speed in the first place. In some cases things became privatized and in others things moved into a kind of limbo land where nothing happened at all. In some cases private non-profit groups ended up taking over services that everyone really believed ought to be public services. But since nobody is doing them, neighborhood groups end up taking on things that aren’t really their job. But on the other hand if they don’t take them on then nothing will happen. ... You no longer have that sort of clear line between who’s supposed to make the decisions and who’s supposed to do the action.

William Morrish explained how decentralization in the United States has led the government to defund services and infrastructure that it used to support, and leave it to private companies or communities to pick up the pieces.

I think the increase of neighborhood organizations, especially in the review process, started in the 1980s when the form of decentralization meant that the government was not going to pay for anything. At that point, the federal government got out of the urban business. ... And the failure that’s fallen through is any sort of systems development: water, roads, power, transportation, schools. Ever since we’ve privatized the

public dollar, we've had an increase in community organizations. So decentralization in the U.S. is public in one respect but it's a brilliant way of atomizing any sort of collective urban movement.

Decentralization has also led to the rise of private sector actors who are not governed by the same rules of access, openness and information. Morrish described how this can lead to the privatization of information which works against community organizers. "So as we go to privatized water systems, privatized power, and since it is privatized we're told that we have no rights to understand the information. So there's a huge, huge question here of so-called decentralization and how it's been co-opted in many sort of elegant ways."

Isabel Studer (Tecnológico de Monterrey, Mexico City, Mexico) offered another perspective on decentralization:

I think for a very long time there was this perception that the nation-states were quite effective in delivering services. Perhaps this applied mainly to the developed world and that was the goal to which many developing countries would aspire to, to become democratic. What we are witnessing in this context of globalization, is how these institutions are not effective in delivering the services that are very much demanded by local communities. There is this devolution but there is no capacity for the local actors and governments to act... They lack not only the resources in terms of the money, but the resources in terms of people being able to participate or the "know how" that is so necessary for communities or just regular people to participate in this very complicated process.

This devolution of authority to decentralization is romanticized. Somebody has to have the responsibility to act when the market fails or where there is conflict. Somehow this idea that you're a devolving power, sort of takes away the responsibility of national governments to act. It's very easy to say, sorry globalization has really limited my ability to do something. I think it's important not to miss that point.

To me this idea that the local response or local governance is much better than the nationally democratic institution puzzles me because when you look at some of the failures it's pretty much systematic. I think the key issue should be how you make the national institutions really democratic. How can you make these national institutions more efficient? How can they become more representative of the interest of the people? How do you build in that capacity in these institutions?

Blair Ruble (Wilson Center) summarized what he had heard the participants say about the impact of devolution and decentralization:

What has become clear is that for most of you, and perhaps for most of the people in the world, devolution and decentralization appears to be a shell game and a sham. There are three reasons for this that you all touched upon which seem to be happening everywhere. The first is a shedding of capacity. Not a transfer of responsibility and assets but a transfer of responsibility without assets. So what decentralization did was to weaken government capacity rather than transfer that capacity elsewhere.

Secondly, it led to a certain kind of fragmentation which meant the act of trying to obtain a response from authority became more complex. This I think cuts two ways. It creates many more opportunities for entrance into the process but it makes that process more time consuming, more complex. But clearly as one thinks about governance one has to begin to think about how to empower the citizen by providing the resource base for that citizen to have a meaningful interaction with government bodies.

And the third is a general sense that one reason why decentralization is a sham is that government is in cahoots with people with a lot of resources. There are very serious issues of crime and accountability. ... One of the issues is to try to view the devolution that has happened as an opportunity to somehow increase accountability. Then this could be a reality that could work in favor of resilient communities.



CHRISTOPHER WILLIAMS, MARK NEPO, BLAIR RUBLE

## The world is just not nation-states.

The world is very rich at the local level. We like to use the term local governance, not local government, because we see it as an interactive process. We see it as a relationship between people and governments and civil society and private sector groups, faith-based organizations. There is more and more a kind of a relationship with local government through different kinds of boards and different structures which have been developed over the last twenty years than used to be the case before.

—Richard Stren



ISABEL STUDER

# Going to Scale: Communities and Governance in the Age of Globalization

*How do you retain that community-based approach, maintain community resilience as you become more popular, as your initiative grows?*

*– Christopher Williams*

Globalization was seen both as a pressure and an opportunity. Blair Ruble noted this tension, “As I reflect on the conversation this morning there is a lot of uncertainty. I think basically everybody around the table in one way or another expressed a concern at the way in which globalization is changing a community you know.”

Once a community or group is successful, there is a natural inclination to want to replicate the experience and share it with others, to scale it up. The communities were well aware of how their power increased when they joined with others. As Arif Hasan stated, “When the state sees such a large group of people it is forced to negotiate with it.” Rose Molokoane described the rationale and success of Shack Dwellers International.

We realize that if we are organized we identify common issues and come up with strategies on addressing the issues that are affecting our lives. That is why we have this organization, Shack Dwellers International, that is connecting the communities from different countries. The aim of doing that is not just connecting and networking but to try and influence the policies that have been drafted in order to address the issues of development to different communities. We are doing it successfully because we are engaging ourselves with the formal world. We are showing the formal world that we are changing and we only need support for us to do our things in a scaling manner and become sustainable at the end of the day.

## We live in a world that is different

from that inhabited by our ancestors in many profound ways.

According to the United Nations, the global urban population in 2008 has reached 3.3 billion people, more than half of all humans living on the planet. This reality stands in contrast to 13% a century ago; and 3% a century before that.

—Blair Ruble

But they also reported that despite their home grown successes, the formal world often steps in to take over rather than recognizing the strengths and capabilities of the local communities.

Do we really recognize the sustainability that the communities themselves are creating? Or do we say, they don't know what they can do or they don't know how to do it. So it means we, as the formal world, we have to impose ideas on them. Do we think that if we impose ideas on the communities that are just there, it will fit the needs that these communities have identified for themselves? How we educate communities to understand that what they are doing for themselves by themselves is very important. — Rose Molokoane

The participants discussed how globalization adds another challenge to fostering community resilience and good governance.

It's now common knowledge that global and local governments are interconnected in a globalized world. What happens globally is turbulence for what goes on locally and what happens locally is turbulence globally. I think it's both the local and global that form the institutional contexts which affect the everyday life of people everywhere. That's becoming more and more obvious when you see that a wave starting in place X influences all kinds in different ways in many other places. — Davinder Lamba

Mark Nepo spoke of the paradox inherent in taking things up to scale:

Throughout history, the efforts that transform communities and make a difference, the things that matter, are found in the local; in the small





TIM CAMPBELL, THOMAS BEECH

irreducible acts of caring between human beings. Recognizing that these atoms of human care keep us going, we are faced with the need and the great desire to share these acts of caring and replicate their effect; to bring them to scale.

Time and time again, we find that at some point along the way in scaling up, the magic is dispersed, the healing gone. The irreducible act of caring doesn't transfer at a certain point. Though that point of dispersal differs, we find repeatedly, despite the very real need to replicate acts of caring faster, that it is not a matter of scaling up; but mending at the level of specific relationships in many localities at once. Just as the body heals at the cellular level—there is no escaping this biological fact—perhaps this is a social-communal fact as well. Try as we will to scale up quickly, haven't we found that social-communal healing takes time; that the tissue of community must knit in each locality until a larger human skin appears? Is this then how we face the perennial paradox of scaling up, one relationship at a time?

## How Communities, Governments, and Donors Can Work Together

*The more citizens are integrated into your governance systems the more you can handle change and the more really positive changes you can get.*

– Lake Sagaris

The seminar participants had many suggestions for how governments and funders could better foster and support communities. It is worth noting, that even though many of the participants came from very poor communities, the conversation was not about money. In fact, they reported how the influx of funds could undermine their work and reputation.

In the case of the Urban Resource Center, we've been offered big money on all sorts of terms both by the government of Pakistan, local government, academic institutions, and foreign funders. We have not taken it. The moment we take this money and we do what they want us to do, three things happen: 1) We will have to hire posh planners and architects that will completely change the nature of this institution that is rooted in the community. It will all be about figures, facts, details that don't really matter to the sort of work we are doing. 2) We will have to run after that money every year or every two years with no surety that we are going to get it again. 3) You cannot take the stance that you would normally take based on principles of equity and justice because you are committed to something for whom equity and justice does not really matter. What does matter is that the money is spent in a particular period of time and certain program targets are achieved that can form a report.

I think an important factor in these projects is that there is a culture of austerity, there is a culture of transparency, a culture of accountability. There is nothing that is hidden from the community and there is nothing that can be done without the agreement of the community. That



DEBORAH HIGGINS

**Almost every single story we've heard here has had something about crossing a boundary. [These leaders went] to another place and saw something interesting, brought it back, interpreted it and tried to make it happen and implement it in their own circumstances.**

—Tim Campbell

is just simply not possible. Austerity makes this possible. If it was lavish you could not do it. — Arif Hansen

Rose Molokoane described their desire for partnerships based in relationships and trust, rather than patronage and handouts.

It's not that our organizations don't want to have money. But before you give us money, [we need to] create the partnerships that will come up

with the system that will satisfy both parties. For instance, we are saying who is dancing to whose tune? It is my development, it is your money. Even if I don't have money I can maybe manage to do something with my development. You can bring lot of money but at the end of the day if it's got strings attached... So you see that's all we are fighting for, to have partnerships with governments and all these funding agencies. So that when they give money they should not give money according to how they want. They should give money according to how we want to use it because we are already prepared, our systems are on the table, our development is prepared. We only want to implement it.

There is a lack of trust among the donors and the communities. I would like to say that on the side of the organization where I belong, we want the donors to trust us. But they don't have trust in the poor communities.... With our government it is the same, they don't have trust in the communities. They say we are suffering the consequences of the people who have done the mistakes. We are not those people. We have learned from those mistakes to put our systems properly. So why can't they test the systems that we have come up with?

Lake Sagaris added how this lack of trust leads to rules and structures that penalize community organizations.

Governments and laws should make it easy for people to form organizations and run them properly. Quite often there's a tendency to say, "Oh, someone ran off with money." Let's face it, Enron ran off with the money. All kinds of people run off with the money. But suddenly you get one little citizen's organization where someone ran off with the money and it's a national scandal. They make it really hard to handle money with so many rules that you can't effectively apply them. And we're discriminated against in most banking systems. Citizens organizations, no matter how much money you manage or how well you've managed it for the past five or ten years, cannot have a credit card. A credit card makes travel and controlling money very easy and transparent. But no, we're children under most laws and most places.

One of the criticisms of governments and funders was that they tended to view communities as static. Guillermina Hernandez-Gallegos (Fetzer Institute, Kalamazoo, Michigan) pointed out how communities are increasingly diverse and dynamic:

I'd like for us to explore this notion that identity is really a dynamic concept. As you think about your own personal life, your identity has

transformed from the time you were born to the time you are now. As we think about our own identity we are capable of imagining ourselves in very different ways. I'd like for us to consider identity as not being static, predetermined and fossilized because it does change. What we're evolving into as humanity is having the capacity to have multiple identities and traversing those different contexts in which our identities need to take over.

Ironically, as Arif Hasan pointed out, communities can sometimes be negatively affected by past successes. "One of the reasons for this fossilization is that the world is increasingly viewed by those who make policies and run governments and the world through the eyes of successful projects." Hasan stressed the hazards of this point of view: "I feel that whereas society has changed, our approach to development projects and programs and our concept of what constitutes a community or should remain wedded in the past."

Mohamed Halfani, UN-HABITAT, reflected upon the key principles of the Habitat Agenda to foster sustainable human settlements that "generate a sense of citizenship and identity, cooperation and dialogue for the common good, and a spirit of voluntarism and civic engagement, where all people are encouraged and have an equal opportunity to participate in decision making and development." Halfani saw "in-built tension" in the agenda's dual commitment to *enablement* through policy reform, legal instruments, and institutional frameworks that facilitate the delivery of services and access to land and shelter and *participation* which entails creating space and capacity for intended beneficiaries to be involved in decision making processes.

Halfani underscored the need for greater understanding of the notion of community and clarity on "the intervention points for gaining impact on the ground and the necessity for delineating the locus and linkages of human agency to the lowest level." Current approaches to development and revitalization are overly functionalist, instrumental and connected to specific deliverables, externalizing the potential of micro-level social formation and linking it to the larger system. To ensure that community is more than a mere appendage of society, attention must focus at the operational level on internalizing potential to foster resilience.

According to Halfani, efforts to harness the endogenous attributes of community and deploy its latent energy have most successfully occurred in post-disaster and post-conflict reconstruction where emphasis

has been given to reinforcing the internal fabric of community, which in the process has led to building trust, solidarity, collective vision, and leadership. Over time, organic capacities are built within the community to be able to absorb external support and to channel it to their prioritized needs. The reconstruction model of community development has also demonstrated a more effective means of establishing the linkage between community and sub-national systems of governance. “In this way, not only can resilience be enhanced but also dynamic sustainability can be ensured,” concluded Halfani.

In essence, the participants want communities to be part of the decision process. They want the unique perspective and the skills of community members to be valued by governments, businesses and funders.

Many participants spoke of the creative and innovative leadership resources and individuals in communities. In communities, unlike governments and bureaucracies, there can be a willingness to try different ways of approaching a problem or issue. They are not as bound by failures or successes.

There are many reasons why citizens’ spaces are ideal for innovation, much better than bureaucracies. In bureaucracies there are great strengths and great weaknesses. They make things happen the same way over and over. Societies need that for stability. But they also need spaces that are capable of assuming risks, experimenting, trying things out, and making “dangerous” decisions from a bureaucrat’s point of view. That’s civil society....The more citizens are integrated into your governance systems the more you can handle change and the more really positive changes you can get.... How you build decisions can be as important as the decisions you actually make... if we want to change the world or save the world, we have to really profoundly change not only how decisions are made but even the questions that are asked. In that sense I think citizens’ organizations are fundamental.  
– Lake Sagaris

In the following excerpt from “The Challenges of the Twenty-first Century City,” Blair Ruble summarized the trials of our times and the promise of leaders such as the participants in this seminar:

We live in a world that is different from that inhabited by our ancestors in many profound ways. Among the most important changes in our existence from all who have come before us is that most human beings live in cities for the first time. Cities not only are growing, but

they are producing more and more of the world's wealth. At the same time, global poverty increasingly is becoming an urban phenomenon. The absolute number of poor living in cities has increased faster than those living in rural areas for nearly two decades. Urban poverty and slums are nearly always treated as local problems, even as their spread is a global phenomenon requiring responses that are similarly global in their nature and scale.

These profound demographic and economic transformations are accompanied by geographical changes that are of no less import at a time of global climate change. Moreover, the present is one of most active periods for human migration in history. Vibrant migration systems can be found on every continent and in every global region. People not only are migrating across borders, but within countries as well.

These global trends mean that the "urban age" isn't ending; it is just beginning. Cities worldwide are becoming larger, more diverse, more fluid, and less manageable. In addition to sheer size, the sprawl being created everywhere by declining density necessarily means that the "city" as it has been understood no longer exists. The traditional city has taken steroids and has grown into the sprawling urbanized region.

Formal arrangements of government and administration must reflect the organizational complexity of local life. Community wellbeing must be viewed as a process, a verb; and not as an object, a noun. Wellbeing in a hyper-urbanized world requires that humans think about social problems in organic, incremental, bottom-up terms, rather than in overarching, top-down abstractions. Now an urban rather than a rural animal, all of humankind must learn from those who already have been facing the disruptions of urbanization in their every-day life.

Fortunately, grassroots community organizers are having significant impact on how this new wave of hyper-urbanization affects the lives of millions of people. Shack/Slum Dwellers International brings together the poorest of the poor from nearly three-dozen countries across Africa, Asia, and Latin America to exchange experiences, to organize to secure land tenure and sanitary living conditions, and to support micro-finance initiatives. The Karachi-based Urban Resource Center, now two-decades old, integrates community organizations, businesses, entrepreneurs from the informal sector and low-income residents into local and national planning processes. The Living City Association in Santiago, Chile, links two-dozen grassroots market and community organizations in the Bellavista neighborhood near downtown to stave off large-scale displacement.

The leaders of such groups – such as Rose Molokoane in Western Pretoria, Arif Hasan in Karachi, and Sonia Fadrijo in Iloilo City – epitomize millions of leaders in neighborhoods and communities around the world who are struggling each day to meet the challenges of the new urban age. They remind everyone how the challenges of everyday life can be converted into opportunities; they personify the necessity of finding balance at a moment of profound change.

Mark Nepo offered the following closing remarks:

We are delighted to be partnering with the Wilson Center on this three-year inquiry centered on revitalizing communities within and across boundaries. I'd like to acknowledge gratitude for this partnership and especially to Lee Hamilton and Mike Van Dusen for receiving this initial idea more than a year go very enthusiastically.

In summary, not conclusion, we are not the first to consider community or resilience. As such, we yearn for the sum of our knowledge more than the entrenchment of our differences. Our whole intent is to see meaningful dialogue in action in a growing community. We hope that this community of inquiry will become its own resilient community. We see this very much as an interactive process. So we hope and expect that our being together would impact all of our thinking and it certainly has impacted ours. We welcome your reflections about what you've seen or heard. Thank you very much. Thanks to everyone.



## Questions for Consideration

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The organizers of this initiative did not assume that questions would be resolved in the course of a two-day seminar. They hoped rather that a rich conversation would further the thinking and lay the ground work for more discussion in the next two years of joint Wilson Center-Fetzer Institute seminars and in the world generally. The following questions are those that were raised, and some initially addressed, at the seminar.

### DEFINING AND UNDERSTANDING RESILIENCE

What do we mean by resiliency?

What are the conditions that we live in and how does that help us understand resilience?

Is the concept of resiliency something that we can use in building strong and healthy communities?

If so, how can we cultivate resiliency?

### THE URBAN CONTEXT

What is different about the urban context when talking about resilience?

How do communities organize around an issue in the urban context as opposed to how they do in a rural community?

## COMMUNITY

What is the relationship between communities and organized groups within communities?

Does an urban context uniquely shape community?

How do we capture processes within communities and make that experience available beyond the limits of the communities?

How do communities develop the capacity and knowledge to address the root causes of the challenges they face?

Can resilience at an individual or community level be scaled up?

## FOSTERING RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

What are the key factors which support communities to establish conversation and peace? What is the tradition that is worth saving now to make the community more adaptable to global changes?

What is the relationship between sustainability and resilience?

Can sustainable development incorporate 'resilience' strategies? And if so in what ways?

Do we need to jettison sustainable development, and begin the process of constructing new models of development premised on resilience?

In the alchemy of social change, should our focus be on resilience or on something more like transformation and adaptation?

What materials or processes would you choose to enhance the resilience in your own community?

How can policy be meaningfully developed and transferred?

How can we respond to the challenges that communities of place or of the displaced face not only at moments of crisis but in the everyday struggles they face globally to survive?

What are the criteria for identifying the level of usefulness and success of traditional communities in contemporary world?

## GOVERNANCE

How has decentralization contributed to or undermined democratization?

How do we find a way to organize, to build a community in the absence of a common language or a common frame of reference?

What is the role of government in facilitating communication and fostering a common sense of belonging?

## Participants and Seminar Papers

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The seminar papers were written in response to the two convening thought papers by Jill Simone Gross and John Paul Lederach. Each of these papers can be found in full on the Wilson Center website.

**ROBERT ADAMS, JR.** is a Program Officer with the Individual & Community Transformation program team at the Fetzer Institute.

**THOMAS BEECH** is President of the Fetzer Institute.

**COLLINS O. AIRHIHENUWA** is a Professor and Head, Department of Biobehavioral Health, the Pennsylvania State University and the Director of Penn State AESEDA Center for Global Health and Georesources Management. Seminar paper: *Resilience and Healthy Contexts: The Location of Culture*.

**TIM CAMPBELL** is the Chairman of the Urban Age Institute, Washington D.C. Seminar paper: *Which Way Out? Favela as Lethal Hall of Mirrors*.

**SONIA FADRIGO** is the President of KABALAKA Homeowners Assn., Iloilo City, a Board Member of Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI), and the Regional Coordinator of the Homeless People's Federation Philippines, Inc. (HPFPI) Seminar paper: *Reflection Paper on Community Resilience: Perspectives from the Homeless People's Federation Philippines (HPFP)*.

**JANIS CLAFLIN** is Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Fetzer Institute.

**LÁZARO CUNHA** is the Director of Social Projects and Program Oguntec, for the Steve Biko Cultural Institute, Salvador, Bahia in Brazil. Seminar paper: *Resilience, the Family and Social Activism*.

**SÍLVIO HUMBERTO DOS PASSOS CUNHA** is Executive Director and Founder of the *Instituto Cultural Steve Biko* (Steve Biko Cultural Institute). Seminar paper: *Some Considerations Regarding Resilience Strategies Taken from the Political Experience of the Steve Biko Cultural Institute*.

**CHRISTOPHER DOHERTY** is the Mayor of Scranton, Pennsylvania. Seminar paper: *Scranton, Pennsylvania: A Case Study in Resilience*.

**ALLISON GARLAND** is Program Associate for the Wilson Center's Comparative Urban Studies Project.

**JILL SIMONE GROSS** is an Associate Professor and Director of the graduate program in Urban Affairs at Hunter College of the City University of New York.

**MOHAMED HALFANI** is the African regional coordinator for the Global Urban Research Initiative (GURI), funded by the Ford Foundation. Seminar paper: *Revitalizing Community: Externalizing for Linkage and Internalizing for Resilience and Sustainability - Reflecting on UN-HABITAT's Experience*.

**RICHARD S. HANSEN** is the academic officer of Union Institute & University. Seminar paper: *Resilience and Education - A Link to Positive Results and Healthy Communities*.

**SALLY Z. HARE** is the distinguished Singleton Professor Emerita at Coastal Carolina University and the president of still learning, inc.

**ARIF HASAN** is the Chairman of the Urban Resource Centre (URC), Karachi. Seminar paper: *Resilience, Sustainability And Development: Some As Yet Undefined Issues*.

**GUILLERMINA HERNANDEZ-GALLEGOS** is the Senior Program Officer at the Fetzer Institute.

**LAUREN HERZER** is the Program Assistant for the Comparative Urban Studies Project at the Woodrow Wilson Center.

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**MARGARET KECK** is Professor of Political Science at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, MD.

**CAROLINE WANJIKU KIHATO** is a Senior Researcher at the University of South Africa. Seminar paper: *A Response Paper: Community Resilience In The Twenty-First Century*.

**DAVINDER LAMBA** is the Executive Director of the Mazingira Institute, Kenya. Seminar paper: *Reflections on Community Resilience: A Cross Cultural Study*.

**JOHN PAUL LEDERACH** is Professor of International Peacebuilding with the Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame.

**HANMIN LIU** is Co-Founder of Wildflowers Institute. Seminar paper: *Resilience and Self-Sustainability of the Lao Lu Mien Community*.

**PABLO LOPEZ** is Executive Director of e-merging communities (e-mc), Red Wolf Band of Indigenous People, Albuquerque, New Mexico. Seminar paper: *One Community's Orientation to Resilience*.

**ROSE MOLOKOANE** is Regional Co-ordinator, Federation of the Urban Poor, South Africa and Board Member of Shack Dwellers International.

**WILLIAM MORRISH** is Professor and Dean of the School of Constructed Environments at the Parsons the New School for Design in New York. Seminar paper: *After the Storm: Rebuilding Cities on a Reflexive Urban Landscape*.

**MARK NEPO** is a Program Officer for the Fetzer Institute and serves on the Individual & Community Transformation team.

**EMIL PAYIN** is General Director of the Centre for Ethno-Political and Regional Studies. Seminar paper: *Resilience of Local Communities and their Role in the Democratic Transition. Using the Negative Experience of Russia and Positive Experience of Other Countries as an Example.*

**BLAIR A. RUBLE** is Director of the Kennan Institute of the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars in Washington, D.C., where he also serves as a Chair of the Comparative Urban Studies Project.

**LAKE SAGARIS** is a writer, community activist and planner and one of a group of 25 grassroots market and neighborhood associations that founded Living City, in 2000. Seminar paper: *Community, Health and Resilience: Reflections from the perspective of Living City (Chile).*

**MEGAN SCRIBNER** is an editor of books and essays and a freelance evaluator who documents and evaluates projects for non-profits.

**RICHARD STREN** is Emeritus Professor of Political Science and the former Director of the Centre for Urban and Community Studies at the University of Toronto.

**ISABEL STUDER** is Founding Director of the Center for Dialogue and Analysis on North America, at the Tecnológico de Monterrey Campus in Mexico City.

**CHRISTOPHER WILLIAMS** is the Washington Representative for the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT).

## Gratitudes

This seminar and its deep conversation drawing on voices from around the world would not have been possible if not for the care and excellence of the Wilson Center and its staff; especially Blair Ruble, Allison Garland, and Lauren Herzer. Many thanks as well to Michael Van Dusen and Lee Hamilton for their open hospitality to learn together, and to David Hawxhurst for capturing the conference so beautifully with his photography. And thanks to the staff at the Fetzer Institute who helped imagine and bring this into being, including Deborah Higgins, Peggy Quinn, Robert Adams, and Guillermina Hernandez-Gallegos. This creative book and its web components draw heavily on the gifts of Megan Scribner, Lianne Hepler and Diana Micheli. To all of you, we are grateful.



## Notes

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