

Risk, vulnerability and housing recovery after a natural disaster. The case of L'Aquila earthquake (Italy 2009)

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The introduction of risk and vulnerability concepts, at the same of that one of resilience, has represented an important turning point in the sociology of disaster. In particular, the so called vulnerability approach has highlighted how socio-environmental risks and socio inequalities within the population can influence the ability of individuals to face the social and material destruction in the aftermath of a disaster.

In the light of a such theoretical framework, the paper takes into account the case of L'Aquila earthquake (happened in Italy in 2009) to analyze the process of housing recovery, taking to account the more general and deep urban changes occurred after the quake (shut down of the historical city centre; delocalization process). The destructive event has been a moment of break and strong discontinuity in the territory use and in the urban and rural space planning. In particular, the acceleration of the urban sprawl process has given rise to a proliferation of "new monofunctional centralities" (administrative, economic, commercial etc.) dispersed throughout the territory and distant between each other.

Starting from the analysis of these urban changes, the paper focus on the process of housing recovery and, more specifically, on the temporary re-localization's phase of displaced people in the so called "Project C.A.S.E." – 19 new settlements through which the government coped with the housing emergency. The C.A.S.E. settlements presents themselves as new residential centralities, isolated and distant between each other. Moreover, these new residential centralities are lacking of any kind of activities able to satisfy people's staple and social needs.

The analysis of 22 in-depth interviews with C.A.S.E.'s residents highlights how this temporary relocation phase seems to shaped new social risks and involved some groups of the population (in particular women, old people, foreigners) in a process of vulnerabilization never experienced before. The new distances that separate the different points of interest seems to influence in a significant way the ability of individuals to access and make use of basic services, to carry out aggregating, recreational and associative activities, to participate to public and political life and, more in general,

to rebuild the everyday structures of their life in light of the discontinuity produced by the disaster. This concerns issues that articulate and interest in different ways the C.A.S.E.'s residents, according not only to the individual socio-demographic characteristics but also to the different housing position that they previously occupied and that used to ensure they could avoid the risk of social exclusion and marginalisation. The paper's main goal is to underline how the management of the housing recovery process can represent itself as a critical factor with negative consequences. It can generate an amplification and a chain of a vast range of old and new vulnerabilities and from which emerges the necessity to put more attention to the urban and socio-relational aspects in order to avoid risks connected to a strategy that reduce the complex issue of housing to a mere provision of "giving a roof".

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