

There's No Place Like Home

Resilience and the Absent Role of Architects in Disaster Relief

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Introduction

After a natural disaster, survivors feel devastated and incomplete, as if they've just lost one or more pieces of the puzzle that once was their lives. The loss of family, friends, and places where memories were once nurtured plays an immense role when recovering from a disaster.

Architects cannot bring the past back, but they have the tools to help affected populations rebuild and retrieve their feelings of comfort and safety, and should enable these persons to build their 'new' futures.

The scope of this research is to evaluate the performance of architects in the humanitarian realm, and how envisioning shelters and home-making practices as one can result in better and faster recovery.



Methodology

In order to evaluate the acknowledgement of home in temporary shelters, two case studies were analysed:

The principal case study chosen for this research is the recovery of **Haiti** after the **2010 Earthquake**.

It is paralleled to the **Gorkha Earthquake in Nepal (2015)**, a relevant comparative case as it reflects the issues of urban spaces and the role of the urban in their reconstruction, as based on **critical urban theory** and Pierre Bourdieu's theories.

Results

Haiti

- No investment on education on resilience
- Only relying on external aid
- Architects have not been present before, and they do not understand the needs of Haitians
- Disaster treated as a design competition
- State of the art solutions were introduced, not respecting Haitian cultural practices

Nepal

- Identified consistency of earthquakes and constantly improving infrastructure
- Constant funding on education and technology to create resilient structures
- Architects are always present, improving their built environment strategies
- Cultural practices are based around disaster proneness, so relief is a key tradition

Is Recovery Achieved?



Conclusions

Home-making is key in shaping resilience, which leads to better recovery.

Cultural practices are strongly linked to architecture, and failure to strengthen this connection results in a critical imbalance within a population's culture. Understandings of socio-cultural contexts allows for architecture to succeed.

Successful architecture is not about what it is, but about what it enables through its existence – it is what happens inside a shelter that makes it a home.

We shall aspire to make **homes** and not just dwellings, and we should always keep in mind who we are designing for, as we have the responsibility to enable cultures to flourish in our designs.
Let us prove to the world that architects can be key figures in disaster relief.



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