

RECONSTRUCTION AFTER DISASTER:

The Importance of Place Making

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ABSTRACT

The event of disaster makes people lose their 'Homes' and 'Places', and not mere buildings. Homes at a micro level and Places at a macro level are the reflection of people's cultural beliefs, social and economic practices and aspirations, as well as their relation to the community and the environment.

Reconstruction after disaster is found often, geared towards the mere replacement of lost houses and buildings as 'Objects'. Post disaster situations not only make people lose their physical properties but also seizes their links to their immediate surrounding, lose the kind of 'Places' they had cherished as the part of their life and make them lose their individual and communal identity. Since these problems are not catered to, in these 'Objects' which are given to them as a product of reconstruction, people find it difficult to live in them or quite often reject them. Therefore it is vital to understand that the whole idea of reconstruction of the built environment is to help people to recover from the trauma and tragedy, by giving priority to 'place them back' as close as possible where they belong to and replace the networks of those lost 'Places' that were cherished and celebrated. In other words the built environment that is produced through the process of reconstruction, has to 'heal' the pain caused by the event off disaster. This rises the issue of 'Place Making', which would help in recreating the built environment familiar to the affected community, placing back its identity, to ensure continuity. This is the issue, everyone involved in the process of reconstruction should necessarily put forward and deal with.

Therefore this study 'Reconstruction after Disaster', tries to establish the importance of a 'Place Making' design approach in the process of reconstruction. It involves learning lessons from the past unsuccessful experiences, highlighting the major problems. The process of reconstruction in terms of basic principles and also the design process are examined and analysed as an effort to highlight the importance of 'Making Places' as products of reconstruction and not as mere 'Objects'. It also tries to highlight the vital stages in the design process in reconstruction, which could take the issue of Place Making into account, helpful for any designer involved in the process of reconstruction. The study finally examines three post disaster reconstruction situations to highlight the issues raised in the study, the creation of 'Objects' as products of reconstruction and its failure, the need and the eager of the affected community to build back their own places cherished by them earlier, and the need to consider reconstruction as an opportunity to move forward along with the sense of 'Making Places', respectfully.

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