

(SELF-MANAGED) URBAN RESILIENCE AND MASS SOCIAL HOUSING

ABSTRACT

The outlook on urban resilience has gone through significant evolution. Its concept has been broadened from an emphasis on endurance of functions, through a focus on adaptability of systems, towards transformative capabilities in the face of uncertainty of events. Most notably, new visions acknowledge both short-term ‘shocks’ (e.g. hurricanes) and longer-term ‘stresses’ (e.g. inequality), recognising crises as intrinsic to the complexities of the world we live in, and actually necessary for our progress. To encompass the uneven and unpredictable circumstances we experience, it is essential that we acknowledge the empowerment of citizens, along with their tangible and intangible assets (e.g. infrastructure and education, respectively), as the main drivers of change (which I refer to as ‘self-managed resilience’).

Social housing programmes present a great opportunity to build on this new perspective on resilience. They allow the transformation of a set of issues (including shocks, e.g. natural disaster, and stresses, e.g. poverty) into an opportunity to embrace change and evolve from it. However, they often cause a big disruption in the city fabric and, in the long-term, even replicate the problems beneficiaries faced before it. This article shows how the application of new urban resilience perspectives in social housing, particularly via self-managed practices, can minimise the occurrence of these issues. Drawing on experiences in Brazil, it describes the positive effects in social, economic and environmental resilience derived from beneficiaries’ engagement in all project phases. Moreover, it provides a forward-looking conclusion including recommendations to further improve self-managed resilience and housing practices.

Key words: urban resilience, self-managed housing, social housing