



International Conference on Geographies of Health and Living in Cities: Making Cities Healthy for All, Healthy Cities 2016

## Capital Building for Urban Resilience: the Case of Reconstruction Planning of Kesennuma City, Miyagi Prefecture, Japan

Yiwen Shao<sup>a,\*</sup>, Osamu Soda<sup>b</sup>, Jiang Xu<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Department of Geography and Resource Management, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong 999077, People's Republic of China

<sup>b</sup>School of Social Sciences, Waseda University, Tokyo 169-8050, Japan

---

### Abstract

Urban resilience is being increasingly recognized by scholars as the approach to healthier and more sustainable cities facing various challenges. Among the characteristics of urban resilience, there is a wide consensus that the capability of capital building for local areas is an indispensable attribute. Based upon this understanding, this paper takes the example of Kesennuma City, a small coastal town in Miyagi Prefecture of Japan that was severely damaged by the aftermath of the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami (EJET), to illustrate how the pursuit of building local capital was incorporated into the agenda of its reconstruction planning. The research relies on the on-site field work together with meetings of local stakeholders and the analysis of various documents and reports. Kesennuma City, facing problems of declining fishery industry, long-time depopulation and severe tsunami damages, has been vigorously exploring for new approaches of diversifying its economy and sustaining its future development, as reflected in the goals of the city's reconstruction plan devised in October of 2011, and other *machi-zukuri* projects. Besides, the evidence of capital building is also discovered in the planning process with high degree of involvement from and cooperation between various stakeholders, including the government, citizens, NGOs and incoming wisdoms, such as universities. In regard of this, this paper scrutinizes the agenda of reconstruction plans together with their functioning mechanisms. It finally concludes with the lessons from this specific case to similar cities with limited resources that face challenges of building local capitals.

© 2016 The Authors. Published by Elsevier B.V. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

Peer-review under responsibility of the organizing committee of Healthy Cities 2016

*Keywords:* Kesennuma City; Reconstruction planning; Urban resilience; Capital building; *Machi-zukuri*

---

\* Corresponding author. Tel.: +852-3943-1385.  
E-mail address: [yiwenshao@link.cuhk.edu.hk](mailto:yiwenshao@link.cuhk.edu.hk)

## Introduction

How to make cities healthy is an increasingly heated topic of discussion among concerned scholars from different fields. While there are many offerings that can come from urban scientists and engineers with various discoveries, social science researchers and practitioners such as urban planners and urban policy makers can potentially provide equally important answers. It is almost without doubt that sustainable cities are healthy cities. In fact, sustainability has been a buzzword for decades since its initial introduction. However, its goals for urban planning have often been criticized of being so generic that it sometimes loses its meaning of guiding development courses and agendas. In regard of this, the concept of resilience was introduced and it has quickly surpassed the popularity of sustainability in the urban planning field.

Urban resilience is now being recognized by a growing number of scholars as the approach to healthier and more sustainable cities facing various challenges. According to Ahern (2011), resilience follows a safe-to-fail discourse of sustainability, which means that cities with resilience can survive urban challenges and failures safely because of obtaining certain features, as opposed to the currently much practiced fail-safe mind-set. Among the characteristics of urban resilience, there is a wide consensus that the capability of capital building for local areas is an indispensable attribute. Based upon this understanding, this research will take the example of Kesennuma City, a small coastal town in Miyagi Prefecture of Japan that was severely damaged by the aftermath of the 2011 East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami (herein after EJET) and has been vigorously pushing forward its revival, to illustrate how the pursuit of building local capital can be incorporated into the agenda of reconstruction planning. Analysis is given to this specific case and more generic discussions are made as to how similar small cities facing challenges of disasters and/or economic decline can build capital in order to ensure its future healthy development.

## 2. Research methodology

To start with, the literature review on urban resilience, and one of its most important aspects, capital building, is conducted. In the Japan's urban planning context, the concept and phenomenon of *machi-zukuri* needs special attention, because it provides the basis for multi-sector led and participation focused urban planning philosophy, and is conducive to capital building in this sense. This research relies on the interpretation and analysis of various reconstruction planning documents and reports of the targeted area, and the on-site field work with meetings of local stakeholders. The primary planning document studied is Kesennuma City's recent master reconstruction plan which has guided its development courses during the post-EJET years. The local field trip has been paid in middle March of 2016, five years after the disastrous EJET.

The government official in local planning department and the head of local chamber of commercial were visited and interviewed to understand their roles and duties in the reconstruction process, and the recent reconstruction updates. Besides, random interviews and talks were also made to different citizens and industrial practitioners to learn about their change of life conditions, inputs and visions for the future. Main questions include but are not limited to the following:

1. What are the goals of reconstruction plans and how are these goals related to capital building in the local area?
2. What kind of roles have the government and the private sector played to promote the capital building efforts?
3. What are the feedbacks from the citizens and what are the problems left behind that hinder smooth promotion of capital building in the local area?

## 3. Resilience, capital building and *machi-zukuri*: a literature review

The concept of resilience was first adopted by Holling (1973) in the field of system ecology. It concerns the adaptability of a system reflected after the occurrence of disturbance. The theories of resilience develop through three stages: the engineering perspective, which views resilience as the mere ability of recovery to the previous state after shock; the ecological perspectives, which considers resilience as the amount of disturbance the system can absorb before the change of state; and mostly recently the evolutionary perspective, which deems resilience as the

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/4401336>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/4401336>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)