Attempts at Neoliberal Urban Planning in Postearthquake Chile

Master Plans for Reconstruction

by

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Urban and regional reconstruction after the February 27, 2010, earthquake and tsunami in Chile was organized by master plans at the local level. These plans, based on public-private partnerships, can be considered an innovation as an instrument of postdisaster reconstruction. They emerged as a commitment to privatization of urban planning in Chile. An analysis of two master plans based on field research carried out between 2011 and 2014 reveals that they had limited impact because of weak public-private ties, lack of comprehensiveness, and lack of legitimacy. They can be read as failed attempts at neoliberal deepening at the level of urban and regional administration.

Después del terremoto y del tsunami del 27 de febrero de 2010 en Chile la reconstrucción urbana y regional fue organizada usando planes maestros a nivel local. Estos planes, con base en alianzas público-privadas, pueden considerarse una innovación como instrumento de reconstrucción posterior a un desastre. Surgieron como una transigencia con la privatización de la planificación urbana en Chile. El análisis de dos planes maestros con base en el trabajo de campo que se llevó a cabo entre 2011 y 2014 revela que esos planes tuvieron un impacto limitado debido a la debilidad de los lazos entre el sector público y el sector privado, la falta de un enfoque amplio y la falta de legitimidad. Se pueden entender como esfuerzos fallidos de la profundización neoliberal al nivel de la administración urbana y regional.

Keywords: Reconstruction, Master plans, Maule Region, Neoliberal planning

Chile has an ancient seismic history. In just the past 100 years, there have been 20 seismic events registering over 6.5 on the Richter scale (Centro Sismológico Nacional, 2013). There is consensus that socio-natural catastrophes can be treated as opportunities for the development of the affected areas (Archer and Boonyabancha, 2011). In fact, the seismic experience in Chile has played an important role in the country’s history of urban housing; postdisaster reconstruction has been a source of new urban policies for increasing communities’ resilience. The 1928 earthquake (Talca, 8 on the Richter scale) led to the formulation of the country’s first model for urban regulation, and the reconstruction

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