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Protection Prevention Preparedness Response Resilience Recovery



UNDER THE WEATHER
FAILURES IN RESPONSE

Heatwaves in Europe & the UK |
Hybrid threats | Ukraine resilience |
Quantum computing | Martyn's Law

Publishing Editor

Luavut Zahid
luavut@crisis-response.com

Editorial Assistant

Zainab Farooqui
zainab@crisis-response.com

Executive Advisor

Andy Blackwell

Executive Advisor

Jeannie Barr

Editor Emeritus

Emily Hough
emily@crisis-response.com

Design & Production

Rizwan Ahmad
creativesdesign360@gmail.com

Subscriptions

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hello@crisis-response.com

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Rosie Hunter | Ikon Images

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Nick Lowndes | Ikon Images

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comment

Can you feel the heat? At this point, is there anyone who doesn't? Year after year, temperatures keep reminding me that the human race is no better than a frog leisurely boiling in a pot.



In the many years I've worked on climate-change-related stories, be it as a reporter, researcher or editor, they have changed shape, from an abstract problem, to another note in risk registers, and finally, to the emergency it always was. The fire under the pot is a big one, and this edition spells its domains out pretty clearly: extreme weather, infrastructure, energy, public health, finance and organisational resilience are no longer separate conversations. They are becoming part of the same one.

On p12, Matt Minshall highlights that Europe and the UK are failing to deal with their own heat, hamstrung by existing laws and practices that make it harder for people to survive rising temperatures. Beverley Griffiths examines how repeated climate-driven emergencies are creating a state of continuous disruption, and asking what that means for organisations already under sustained pressure (p28).

Zainab Farooqui (p34) explores how the politics surrounding renewable energy are getting messier, showing that the future of the energy transition may depend as much on economics and public confidence as it does on policy.

Meanwhile, Emily Hough's review of *Performing New Orleans* on p14 reminds us that preparedness isn't built through plans and procedures alone. Culture, creativity and lived experience also have a role to play in strengthening resilience.

Across this edition runs a common thread: Resilience is no longer about preparing for isolated events. It's about adapting to continuous change. That requires more than stronger plans or better technology. It requires institutions that can learn, communities that can adapt, and decision-makers willing to respond to evidence as circumstances evolve.

The risks may be changing, but the principles of resilience remain remarkably consistent. The only question is: If we jump out of this not-so-slow-boiling pot, can we jump far enough to avoid the fire?

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Pandagolik | Magnific

The rhythm of resilience

Preparedness is often viewed through the lens of plans, policy and infrastructure. **Emily Hough's** review of *Performing New Orleans* makes a compelling case for placing creativity, culture and lived experience alongside traditional approaches to resilience



Many professions – including architecture, planning, policing and especially prevention and public safety – pressures of timing, along with human and financial resources constraints, can often lead to solutions that are the simplest and most convenient fixes, however unimaginative they might be. Whether in mitigation, planning, response, during post-incident recovery or even when introducing new legislation, there appears to be no appetite, or capacity, to envisage solutions that will simultaneously improve people's wellbeing, their sense of and pride in place, or their enjoyment of an area or a system that is designed to protect them. Rather, a brutal and shortest course-to-water solution is often imposed, and behaviour is expected to change, often enforced by faceless, institutional rigidity.

None of this truly improves lives, communities or spaces and, without public buy-in, may fall far short of intended outcomes.

Equally, talk of 'communities' can be misleading, especially when reading reports of how communities have been consulted, I often wonder which communities and what 'community leaders' have been included – worryingly, these often appear to be the people who shout the loudest.

And, I'm well aware that, in my increasingly jaded and cynical outlook, beauty and 'fun' cannot be imposed from the top down, because this risks becoming institutionalised and prescriptive greyness, with all joy and exuberance shredded away. Even worse, misguided 'nudging' can lead to pendulums swinging the other way and to pathological distrust.

So, enter *Performing New Orleans, Rethinking Resilience in Art and Everyday Life*, by Stuart Andrews and Patrick Duggan, two authors who have written previously for the *Crisis Response Journal* (CRJ 16:3 and 19:2). Written by these performance studies scholars, hardened readers

Paul Groom Photography Bristol | Pexels



of the *CRJ* might be inclined to dismiss the book and the important role that arts and culture can offer both in “good times and in crisis”. However, for those who feel this way, I urge you to put any prejudices aside just for a moment and truly consider what this means, and this book, while not wholly concerned with our traditional view of resilience and preparedness, might get you thinking in new directions.

As made very clear by its title, the book focuses on New Orleans, drawing on Hurricane Katrina (August 2005) and the more recent experiences of Covid-19. It explores the paradox of overtourism in certain well-known areas of the city languish, not benefitting from these tourist dollars.

The authors explore the importance of the city’s streets, which are: “Incredibly important places politically, socially, and culturally in New Orleans.” Here, they draw upon geography and urban planning, how to rethink cities in terms of: “Valuing individuals and local communities and their lived experience of a place.” Duggan and Andrews look at ‘playful cities’ initiatives which, in the UK, and in Bristol in particular, have resulted in artists and local officials rethinking place. The key here is *artists*.

“Also starting in Bristol, Playing Out has become a model of street play that has, similarly, been taken up internationally,” explain the authors, adding that the concept has spread, with Cape Town in South Africa closing streets to enable playful pedestrian activity.

“Such practices inquire into streets and the ways in which we might reimagine them as sites for performance practices or use performance to engage in critical contemporary questions, such as the impact of technological innovations, like Artificial Intelligence.” They explain that the Playable Cities projects have led to playful approaches to managing streets that have emerged through: “Interdisciplinary practice in which the arts are embedded.”

Further on in this chapter, the authors discuss the Claiborne Expressway which, they describe as a major highway that passes: “Through the city and yet that does little to address the impact of the road on the areas through which it ‘passes’.”

In particular, black communities were disproportionately affected by the construction of this road. The issue struck a particular resonance with me because a place is made up of its people; their history – good and bad, fair and unfair; cycles of affluence and poverty and so on, but also so much more. Governance, planning and decision-making shape an area, and sometimes residents are left to carve out how they belong in what has become (maybe inadvertently) an area that is hostile to everyday life and the community that calls it home. This is *their* community, not an abstract plan on a paper somewhere.

Now that the Claiborne Expressway needs major repair, the authors explain differing perspectives on the future

of the overpass. Local residents have adapted, parades often end up ‘under the bridge’ and marching bands use its shelter when practising. Concrete pillars that support the road have been painted with murals and, further on, the book describes a project by an artist (Barandon ‘bMike’ Odum) in Florida and one in DeGaulle Manor, a low-income housing project in the Algiers neighbourhood of New Orleans. They say: “In both projects, Odums transformed existing infrastructure into a site for people, creative practices and stories.

In a city where infrastructure has been particularly challenged, the use of murals focuses attention on the people of the city, resisting catastrophising narratives and repurposing space to represent African Americans as key to the city.

Turning to the chapter entitled, ‘The Art and Performance of Situation Rooms,’ I initially spluttered my tea like a whiskery Victorian colonel at the direct comparison of the City Hall’s situation room with the Music Box Village and the André Cailloux Centre for Performing Arts and Cultural Justice.

The authors explore the history of situation rooms (that is, crisis centres, or control rooms), stating: “Performance practitioners and theorists have addressed ideas and practices that directly speak to all the kinds of practices that play out in situation rooms.” This, they contend, relates to simulated, immersive performance environments

– in other words, simulations of crises.

But, they move further to consider how: “Performance spaces are doing the work of situation rooms in a city in relation to its resilience challenges.” The arguments presented are interesting, but are too long to dive into in this short review. However, I would encourage people to

“In a city where infrastructure has been particularly challenged, the use of murals focuses attention on the people of the city, resisting catastrophising narratives and repurposing space to represent African Americans as key to the city”

read this and make up their own minds, and leave you with one further quote from this chapter: “These sites use performance as a key mode of intelligence gathering, reflection and communication, facilitating opportunities to develop and refine means of response to multiple and, at time, overlapping, intersecting city challenges.”

‘Living With Water’ is a particularly appropriate chapter in the book, given that the topic is New Orleans. The Industrial Canal, which was: “Intended to separate people from water, ultimately failed to do so on critical occasions,” say the authors, who highlight a range of artworks and performances that raise questions about climate change and the challenge that water poses to ways of life in New Orleans and its surrounding areas. However, they say: “Through performance, artists in the city [...] find ways of making meaning of water and land here.

“Too often, internationally, artists’ creative ideas, strategies and practices that address life with water and land are not part of strategic conversations on the ways in which a city or geographical area develops management plans,” they continue.

Duggan and Andrews move on to 'Pandemic Performances,' a subject they have also covered in the *CRJ* articles referenced to earlier and, in this book, they suggest that the "neatness" of "mitigation – preparedness – response – recovery fails to account for the complexity of lived experience in a given place, at least conceptually."

They argue that performance offers new insights into new ways of thinking and new forms of practice in events such as pandemics. They discuss the concept of refamiliarisation as a: "Critical step in the journey from response to recovery." However, they are also aware that it is not always a sensible idea to go back to exactly the way things were before a crisis. I think all those who read the *CRJ* are aware that 'bouncing back' is not always the way forward; crisis also means an opportunity to improve what was there before.

In discussing creative responses, Duggan and Andrews highlight much of the historical discussions revolving around spontaneous volunteers at disasters: "Left unchecked, emergency plans and innovative local creative responses will operate as they do at present, in varying forms of parallel practice [...] As a crisis unfolds, there is a risk that local creative practices of response may be seen to 'get in the way' rather than offer obvious solutions."

But, they argue, their case studies in this book show that arts and culture offer dynamic, novel approaches to problem-solving that can be valuable to individuals, communities, neighbourhoods and the city.

So, back to my original, slightly ranting introduction to this review. The fundamental premise of this book is that: "The more that arts and culture are embedded in emergency management, the more that perspectives from these fields will be sought in revising practices."

I'm still unsure as to whether all the points made in this book will resonate directly with our readers, but that makes

"These sites use performance as a key mode of intelligence gathering, reflection and communication, facilitating opportunities to develop and refine means of response to multiple and, at time, overlapping, intersecting city challenges"

them no less valid; it is for people far more knowledgeable than I to decide. My instinct is that responses, while impeccably well-meaning, can come across as top-down, unfeeling, rigid and prescriptive and, as Covid-19 lockdowns showed us, are often enforced harshly and without the most basic understanding of, or care about, specific circumstances of individuals or communities.

I would argue that there HAS to be room for joy, the unexpected, the spontaneous, laughter, and, yes, beauty in our regular interactions with the places we live in and visit. All of these things that make our lives tolerable – even in a disaster or crisis – are an essential part of resilience. Yet, the conundrum is that if the



state or authorities step in and try to over-organise such spontaneity, these actions can be perceived as repressive and forced, stripping the pleasure from the serendipitous delight of human interactions and creativity.

Here is a quote from the book that encapsulates this argument neatly: "Perhaps it seems a stretch to argue that arts and culture are suited to emergency response. Perhaps it makes more sense to look on them as the things of recovery once the infrastructure of 'the new normal', even the temporary new normal, is in place.

"Yet, this is to remove the importance of the practice by which people make sense of a place. Further, the more that emergency managers shift their practice to address local understandings of place and take up creative approaches to crisis response, the more it becomes critical to review the ways that people and organisations in a place contribute to multi-vocal responses to challenges faced by that place." *CRJ*

■ *Performing New Orleans, Rethinking Resilience in Art and Everyday Life*, by Stuart Andrews and Patrick Duggan, is published by LSU Press, ISBN 978-0-8071-8454-7

Author



EMILY HOUGH is Editor Emeritus and Founder of the Crisis Response Journal

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