

Review of: "How Social Infrastructure Saves Lives: A Quantitative Analysis of Japan's 3/11 Disasters"

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This paper discusses how social infrastructure in Japan reduced the mortality rate of senior citizens more effectively and cost-efficiently than the two other types of infrastructure (gray and green) during the 3/11 Triple Disasters that shocked the world in 2011. The author did a great job in explaining research steps and demonstrating the results, ensuring the rigor and replicability of this study.

As the author pointed out, it is important to note that traditional forms of critical infrastructure—while they are still important—are generally expensive and often require decisions at higher administrative levels. Such decisions are often made in top-down manners, leading to policies that are inadequate or irrelevant to those in need, or excluding voices from affected communities (e.g., Amore et al., 2017). Rather than strong command-and-control agenda set by the national government, therefore, building social infrastructure that can strengthen the connections that bind residents to one another should be an essential part of disaster strategy. This study emphasizes this point very well.

It is important to remember that our social networks, built by social infrastructure, are resilient during disasters. Natural hazards often destroy our towns and neighborhoods, but it is only physical structures that are destroyed temporarily. In the face of disaster, most people take it upon themselves to rescue their loved ones, provide shelter for strangers, and lend their helping hands to build back their communities (Aldrich 2019). Our altruism, trust, and social networks tend to be enriched, rather than impoverished, during the disruption, which makes our communities more resilient than before (see Lee & Fraser, 2019; Lee 2020).

Reference

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