Bringing People into Resilience Efforts:
Integrating Community, Justice and Infrastructure for Change

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Background/Objectives. Calls for increasing resilience to extreme events have grown in the past decades, as we realize that more of value is in harm's way, and climate change is changing the character of disasters from what we have experienced in the past. However, even as society becomes more aware of the need to improve resilience, there is still a large gap between our growing knowledge and effective action to increase resilience on the ground. While improvements to infrastructure such as roads, bridges, culverts, and dams are necessary for building resilience, they are not sufficient. "Real" resilience encompasses a much broader perspective that takes into account governance, community relationships, social capital, inequality, vulnerability, and partnerships.

Approach/Activities. Building resilience in practice requires different approaches as compared with traditional research and engineering. For example, building resilience to drought in urban water systems not only means updating infrastructure, it also requires a commitment to dialogue with many publics, changing attitudes toward water, and remaking revenue and billing structures. To give another example, preventing heat wave deaths is not only a matter of weather predictions and warning systems or even building cooling centers, but working in partnership with vulnerable populations to develop innovative new ideas, such as New York City's "Be A Buddy" system to help at-risk people.

Results/Lessons Learned. As we look to accelerate societal resilience in a changing climate, we must discover innovative ways to enhance the social components of building resilient communities, prioritizing work that benefits the most vulnerable, and in the process build a more integrated understanding of resilience globally.