

Overcoming Iota: A Reflection on Old Providence and Santa Catalina in the Face of Climate Change

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Abstract

In November 2020, category 4 Hurricane Iota devastated Old Providence and Santa Catalina (OPSC), small islands located in the Colombian Western Caribbean and home of the Raizal people, an African-descendent ethnic group bearing their own culture and language. Despite the chaotic governmental response, the local community has responded to the situation by adapting and reorganizing their ways of life. In this chapter, I present a reflection on how OPSC people have used culture in different ways to prepare, adapt and resist during the disaster and post-disaster periods, in the context of increasing climate change, creating new ways to relate to their islands and community that play an important role in their future. To do this, I use some concepts drawn from cultural perspectives on disasters, climate change and resilience. As I will try to show, the OPSC community has demonstrated a strong cultural resilience through its capacity to recover and ability to learn from experience and adapt to new situations. This is not an easy process, as the current context exacerbates vulnerabilities. However, cultural resilience and community processes are a source of hope for islanders to continue to inhabit their land and seascapes with wellbeing and autonomy.

Keywords: Culture. Resilience. Hurricane. Caribbean. Raizal people.

CULTURAL RESILIENCE

in Old Providence and Santa Catalina islands

Local knowledge and practices:

Strong relations with sea and land ecosystems

Islandness:

Particular ways to live on a limited and remote space (Diegues, 1998)

Experience:

Extreme climate events
Sea Culture
Local and Abroad



Post-hurricane



Reconstruction



Adaptation

Raizal culture is fundamental to guarantee successful reconstruction and to think about future processes of climate change adaptation. This signifies **the valuation and recognition** of local knowledge and practices and the need to promote knowledge exchanges. As the complex experience of the PSC disaster, post-disaster and reconstruction processes show, technical and scientific knowledge falls short when it ignores **the cultural and territorial realities it intends to impact**.