

Maria's Parallels

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Hurricane Maria came to Puerto Rico a few days after Hurricane Irma finished making its way through our territory. The University decreed a recess because it was more than obvious the need to secure everyone's life and property. The uncertainty about the potential harm with the power of a Category 5 hurricane for the first time made me think if we were prepared correctly for the event.

During the hurricane, the force of the winds caused the rain to come through the front doors and the windows in the house. One of our biggest concerns was the sliding door in our house which wasn't secured and we had a feeling that it wouldn't resist. Suddenly, there was no electricity, no connectivity through the radial waves, eliminating all communicative interactions. What we encountered once we were able to get out was a huge disaster.

We couldn't get out of the neighborhood because of the fallen trees which completely blocked the vehicles from entering and leaving. When the time came, several neighbors cut off a part of the trunk from the trees allowing vehicle access, even if it was one at a time. Eventually, the need for gasoline and cash made us feel insecure as we didn't have the resources to spend the consecutive days without electric power.

In time, we began to experience some normality through October. The university reopened its doors in their best attempt to finally restore our previous routines. It wasn't easy because, although we quickly recovered the electricity in the place where I live, not all of my family, friends, and classmates had the privilege to experience it in the same way. I realize how some interesting parallels happen when we compare who we are and what we have before and after Maria. We gradually recovered the trees, repaired the buildings, and the university continued to be involved even though it did not recover to a hundred percent. Universities should expect greater involvement and cooperation in developing protocols before, during, and after a hurricane for students' future experiences. It is possible to offer recommendations, suggest approaches, set up recovery centers and encourage early recovery across all human parameters.

We learned to live in community and help each other, and we also discovered that being in a similar period doesn't take much to be comfortable and satisfied. We value those who surrounded us within their needs and we see that together we are stronger.

