

RESILIENCE 2011 - Resilience, Innovation and Sustainability: Navigating the Complexities of Global Change

Arizona State University, Arizona, USA

March 11-16, 2011

Proposed panel

1. Title

Making resilience useful for Disaster Risk Management: Multiple uses of the concept and its integration in policy

2. Chair: Paulina Aldunce, Universidad de Chile and The University of Melbourne, paldunce@uchile.cl

3. Panel members:

- a) Susanne C. Moser, Susanne Moser Research & Consulting, University of California-Santa Cruz, USA
- b) Donald Nelson, Department of Anthropology, University of Georgia, USA
- c) John Handmer, Director - Centre for Risk and Community Safety, RMIT University, Australia
- d) Paulina Aldunce, Department of Resource Management and Geography, The University of Melbourne, Australia and Department of Environmental Sciences and Natural Resource Management, University of Chile, Chile
- e) Neil Adger, Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, School of Environmental Sciences, University of East Anglia, UK

4. Conference theme: Analyzing and framing resilient development, resilience resources and security

5. Abstract

The study of resilience started in the 1940s in the field of psychology and psychiatry. However, the ecological root of the resilience perspective emerged in the 1960s and 1970s. Since then, this perspective has influenced other fields in sciences and social sciences, and lately has reportedly been incorporated in an increasing number of policies and programs. Even if resilience is not a new concept for Disaster Risk Management (DRM) practitioners and researchers, only in the last decade has it been strongly introduced into the policy arena. However, there is no single definition of disaster resilience with the idea being highly contested. As in other fields, in DRM more efforts are needed to investigate on how resilience could be a useful framework for policies and practices, and also how decision makers are attempting to incorporate resilience ideas into their work. The aims of the panel are: first, to present and discuss multiple interpretations and uses of resilience ideas in DRM, in both practice and theory; and second, to explore how to make resilience useful for decision makers with a focus on operationalising resilience ideas.

Multiple interpretations of the concept could be perceived as complicating and confusing DRM discussion; instead we argue that this diversity could contribute to its practical applications and theoretical development. The panel will start with a review of the meanings of resilience, vulnerability, and their many related and underlying concepts in the social science literature on global change carried out by Susanne C. Moser. This analysis reveals a diversity and some nagging contradictions, but also some surprising commonalities in meaning among these concepts. The emerging insights help bridge and bring together the long-separate discourses of disaster risk management and climate change adaptation. Second, Prof. Donald Nelson will present an analysis of drought events, vulnerability and resilience from an historical perspective in the region of Northeast Brazil. The analysis explores the relationship and value of public and private investments in generic and specific forms of adaptive capacity in order to promote flexibility and adaptation in the face of unknown and multiple risks. Third, the importance of financial resilience will be discussed by Prof. John Handmer. Financial resilience for individuals, households and communities is fundamentally about flows of money or their equivalents. Flows can come from many local and distant formal and informal sources – highlighted by recent Australian wildfires. Assets are valuable if they can be converted into flows. Significant debt can undermine resilience. Fourth, Prof. Paulina Aldunce will present results of an ongoing research that looks at institutional arrangements that explicitly incorporate the term of resilience in their title and aims. This

case study provides an opportunity where empirical work informs about stakeholders understanding and implementation of resilience ideas. Finally, Prof. Neil Adger will discuss the evolution of implicit social contracts between citizen and state inherent in how disaster risk reduction and protection is carried out in practice, arguing that such social contracts require change to incorporate notions of resilience and social learning.

6. Preferred panel format and innovation of the panel

We expect that the panel will encourage debate, thus the panel format will be short presentations of 10 minutes for each panellist, followed by 40 minutes in-depth discussion that will be guided by the questions made by the audience. The innovation that we propose is to share the discussion with the audience, thus after a question or comment has been made by the audience, first it will be offered to people from the audience to answer the question, seeking to oppose points of view and then the panellists could have the opportunity to complement with some comments. Also we propose to write a paper in which we will include the questions and the discussion that will emerge from the audience of our session.

- Motivation: open opportunities of new ways of thinking