

Resilient Societies

Early Career Research Symposium for the Humanities and Social Sciences 2022

Call for papers

Resilience – a term once again highlighted in the course of the COVID-19 pandemic and current debates surrounding the impact of climate change and violent conflict – constitutes a highly ambiguous concept, one that nevertheless forms one of the most important needs for societies, impacting international conflict and cooperation, national and local politics, individual and household behaviour as well as social interaction. The ambiguity of the term rests on its paradoxical qualities: It depicts robustness, stability, solidity, sustainability; at the same time, its pursuit frequently requires fluidity, flexibility, coping, adaptation, and adjustment. Its connotations with durability tend to rest on change. Similarly, its relationship with efficiency is complex. In turn, when employed at the societal level, we need to account for the demands various types of resilience place on different aspects of social organization. Improving resilience in global supply chains, for instance, may help in creating robustness in the face of economic shocks, and may even facilitate ecological sustainability. But it may come with the price of high levels of inflation – and job losses in less prosperous parts of the world – that destabilize household-level resilience, and in doing so may eventually affect global stability both in economic and in political terms which, in turn, may hamper global efforts for cooperation. Given the complexities involved, the permutations of possible effects within and across societies tend to be overwhelming.

Keeping in mind the complexities and ambiguities in studying resilience, we invite paper presentations from across the humanities and social sciences as well as related disciplines, and inter-disciplinary approaches. We focus on six main areas of inquiry, though approaches that explore links to different topics are welcome:

1. (Public) health, bodies, and emotions
2. Poverty, inequality, and development
3. Sustainability and ecological crises
4. Governance, institutions, state-building, and state failure
5. Crisis, conflict, violence, and trauma
6. Urbanity and urbanization

(Public) health, bodies, and emotions:

The present pandemic has once again highlighted the problems in creating resilience in (public) health, just as much as it has brought into focus the impacts of health-related concerns on bodily and emotional well-being. Health crises, and efforts to strengthen social responses to them or their aftermaths, however, go well beyond the immediate context and need to be studied empirically as much as in their historical trajectories and in comparative frameworks. Beyond policy, we need to understand their impacts on bodies and emotions to explore coping mechanisms that link the

individual to societal and state responses and extend the inquiry from public to private responses and patterns of organization.

Poverty, inequality, and development:

While inequality frequently is resilient in its own right, poverty heightens the need for developing coping mechanisms among the poor, placing additional burdens on livelihood strategies and, ultimately, poses dangers to social and political stability. Development, in turn, may have vastly different outcomes in terms of resilience, depending on a group's specific location along socioeconomic and socio-ecological parameters: It may favour unequal growth trajectories as much as provide for the means to produce robust coping strategies, enlarge the available assets that can be employed for mitigating the impact of crises, or undermine livelihoods to the extent where new forms of coping become a necessity. Beyond the superficial equation of development and prosperity with resilience, we seek to study the linkages between various forms of resilience in societies that are affected by poverty, inequality, and growth.

Sustainability and ecological crises:

Sustainability in resource use and as a goal of development strategies is frequently linked to the creation of resilience in the face of both local and global climate and resource use crises. The goal of ecological resilience at global scales, in turn, may at times threaten short-term strategies for resilience in other socially important fields, compromising the ability of people to adopt long-term strategies in line with the larger goals of ecological sustainability. In turn, the deterioration of ecological resilience, both globally and locally, tends to undermine livelihoods as much as development strategies, while also contributing to conflict across the world. We seek contributions that identify and observe linkages between the various scales of resilience and sustainability, and the complex feedback loops between resilience and sustainability across social contexts.

Governance, institutions, state-building, and state failure:

Institutional resilience, reflecting the successes and the harmful potentials of interaction between politics and society, is constantly negotiated and contested. Institutional resilience may facilitate trust in the capacity of states to address people's concerns, but it may equally contribute to the establishment of governance systems perceived as unjust or oppressive, in turn affecting the capacity of policies concerning the resilience of societies in other fields. Crises in institutional resilience may facilitate state failure, but state failure often also stems from the resilience of institutional forms of organization, favouring some types of resilience over others. We invite contributions that dissect the various fields of forces underlying institutional resilience, and that create links between the former and their outcomes for resilient societies.

Crisis, conflict, violence, and trauma:

Violence – at various scales – constitutes one of the most durable problems for societies, on the one hand reinforcing the resilience of social structures of oppression and exploitation, on the other hand occurring in the wake of resistance. Violent conflict transgresses scales of social interaction, ranging

from localized and sporadic acts to sustained and organized, even institutionalized violence at national and international levels. At times, violence may appear to be devoid of direction, yet it also affects the stability of social interaction and has long-term implications for social cohesion. One of its outcomes – trauma – significantly undermines the possibility for peaceful cohabitation, thus feeding into the resilience of patterns of violence in society and compromising resilience across a wide array of social practices. We seek contributions that study the operation of violence in society, and address its impacts on social resilience, extending from its immediate outcomes to long-term implications.

Urbanity and urbanization:

Urban agglomerations constitute one of the most complex forms of social organizations, especially concerning the interplay of development, inequality, (public) health, contestations of social space, security and violence, resource use and sustainability. They form spaces where the ordering and regulating intent of institutions directly and substantially interferes with the livelihood concerns of residents and migrants. On their perimeters and through the link with mobility, they encounter and tend to disrupt other established forms of resilience. This complexity necessitates governance regimes that balance a multiplicity of conflicting claims; it often results in intrusive tendencies that, in turn, at times magnify resistance and evasion. At the same time, the heightened complexities of urban living facilitate the frequency and extent of crises, thus reinforcing endeavours to enforce order and stabilize specific forms of resilience. We invite paper proposals seeking to emphasize the kaleidoscope of permutations in which urban living has affected (and is affecting) resilient societies across geographical and cultural contexts.

Date and format

The workshop will be organised as a virtual event from 5th to 9th September 2022.

Who can submit proposals?

Junior researchers including doctoral students and postdocs without a tenured position from South Asia, Germany, and Europe who work on topics related to India, South Asia, Germany, Europe.

Selected candidates will be contacted by 1 July 22

A longer abstract (max. 1,000 words) needs to be submitted by all selected applicants by 1 August 2022 and will be circulated among workshop participants.

Application

To participate with your entry submission, please take the following survey by clicking on the link below:

<https://www.daad.de/surveys/355899?lang=en>

The application deadline is 31 May 2022.

The entries will be shortlisted by an expert committee. Submission of your entry is only via the survey link above.

For related queries, please write to narke@daad.de.