



# Resilience, Realities and Research in African Environments

Transdisciplinary Workshop Series  
Oxford University Centre for the Environment

**Background:** The Oxford University Centre for the Environment will host a small one-day workshop on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> June 2007 at Jesus College. The day will include a short plenary and two focused sessions reflecting on critical questions, linkages and methodologies in current research on resource management in Africa. By building on the existing wealth of interdisciplinary experience within Oxford, as well as bring together different stakeholders and researchers from Africa and beyond, we hope to make a contribution to the emergent debate on theory, process and application of resilience in development. The event is funded by an African Environments Programme grant (UK Natural Environment Research Council/UK Economic and Social Research Council), the James Martin 21<sup>st</sup> Century School/Environmental Change Institute and the Global Environmental Change and Food Systems (GECAFS) Project.

09.00-09.30 Registration (with coffee outside Habakkuk Room, Jesus College)

09.30-11.20 **Welcome:** Henny Osbahr

**Session 1: Is resilience theory useful to interdisciplinary researchers?**

Chair and rapporteur: Diana Liverman

There is a growing mainstream focus on ideas of 'resilience' but different disciplines and stakeholders have adopted the concepts in diverse ways. What are the key underlying concepts that do help interdisciplinary researchers to understand complex adaptive systems, and what do we mean by 'resilience' in socio-ecological systems in Africa?

Five short plenary presentations:

- Emily Boyd (ECI) with Maria Carmen Lemos (ECI/University Michigan), Henny Osbahr and Emma Tompkins, Cross-scale governance, adaptive capacity and development
- Eric Lambin (University of Louvain) The socio-environmental interface
- Graeme Cumming (University of Cape Town) Resilience in ecological systems
- Marco Janssen (Arizona State University) Social resilience and institutions
- Carl Folke (Stockholm) (co-contributor Per Olsson) Adaptive governance

*Discussion around structured theme*

11.10-11.40 *Coffee break (Harold Wilson Room)*

11.40-13.15 **Session 2: Resilience depends on scale: what has meaning in measurement?**

Chair and rapporteur: Graeme Cumming

This session draws on case study evidence to highlight questions on the cross-scale dimension of resilience, especially the implications and usefulness of scale measurement on targets. Key discussion will focus on how to move from indicators to surrogates, especially when complex systems are constantly transforming, and the value of different methodologies. For example, structured scenario models and adaptive management frameworks based on case studies/historical profiling both reach different conclusions. We aim to move beyond the global change debate in resilience systems to consider cross-scale aspects, particularly the national-local level.

Four short presentations to set specific discussion questions:

- Tom Downing (SEI Oxford) (with Jochen Hinkel PIK-Postdam) Measuring vulnerability in resilient systems, linking actors, time and scales
- Lindsey Gillson (UCT South Africa) long-term change in South African savanna ecosystems
- Henny Osbahr (Oxford) Measuring resilience in Southern African drylands environments (human-environmental systems)
- Jon Lovett (University of York) Measuring conservation: biodiversity and ecosystem resilience in Africa

*Discussion around structured theme*

13.15-14.15 *Buffet Lunch (Harper Room)*

14.15-16.00 **Session 3: Using ‘resilience’ to promote sustainability in development practice**

Chair and rapporteur: Prof Frances Stewart (QEH)

Is resilience key to successful environmental management or an important concept that is difficult to apply in practice? Is the concept analytically useful or is it inherently difficult to assess complex socio-cultural, historically embedded settings (e.g. finding convening indicators for resilience in human systems, which allows comparison of communities across different time horizons, can be difficult as institutions may promote and limit adaptive capacity to different groups or at different scales). What is its best application for managing uncertainty in socio-ecological systems; as a theoretical framework, a tool for measurement, how to influence policy? This is a challenge; what could be more effectively communicated to policy makers? (to use the session as a chance for policy makers to interface with scientists – how to manage uncertainty in complex systems, the gap between scientific resources and delivery, multi-level governance). The session will raise questions about the trade-offs for long-term goals and whether justice, resilience and sustainability are linked.

Four short presentations to set discussion questions:

- Ian Scoones (IDS) Development Policy in Africa – creating entry points
- Steve Jennings (Oxfam GB) Promoting resilience in practice – what does the NGO community need to know?
- Polly Ericksen (GECAFS) Examples from food security practice in Southern Africa
- Tendayi Kureya (representative FANRPAN) Food security, HIV and resilient livelihoods in Africa.

*Discussion around structured theme*

16.00-16.20 *Coffee break*

16.20-17.30 **Wrap up session** –Rapporteurs: tbc and Emma Tompkins (ECI)

Discussion around key issues generated from the sessions and output planning (a paper will be developed by the organisers with others who are interested in contributing) plus a summary report for stakeholders and workshop report made available on AEP website.



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