

## **Resilience Thinking and the Policy Sciences: Thoughts Towards Productive Engagement**

Chanda Meek, Ronald Brunner, Douglas Clark, Lance Gunderson

Resilience Theory and the Policy Sciences are complementary bodies of scholarship that share a fundamental goal of integrating knowledge in service of society. Resilience thinking is an emerging lens through which to view dynamics of coupled social-ecological systems (SES). One of the key foci of resilience thinking is evaluating transformation of SESs. However, the resilience literature could deepen its insights into policy processes that form an important part of the social subsystem. At the same time, central theory of the Policy Sciences can offer much in that regard, but by itself provides insufficient ways to incorporate ecological or SES dynamics. Such incomplete contextualization can lead to a fragmented assessment of the role of the environment and non-linear dynamics in shaping or affecting the workings of political and policy subsystems. Fortunately, interconnections between the two fields are becoming increasingly common. For example, working independently, scholars from both traditions have each converged on concepts of “adaptive governance” for integrating societal and ecological goals.

Here we consider three initial questions to explore how these complementary approaches can, together, inform inquiry and promote common-interest goals such as environmental sustainability, social-ecological resilience, and human livelihoods. First, how might the policy sciences approach, with a focus on contextuality, problem-orientation, and diversity of methods, assist resilience researchers with problems they face analyzing policy processes? For example, how can we better understand the potential – and opportunities – for change of institutions within constitutional democracies (or other regimes), which tend to maintain existing bureaucratic structures and approaches despite their lack of adaptive capacity? Second, how might resilience thinking, with a systems perspective, help to better understand the outcomes of policy processes in which interactions between social process and ecological phenomena play important roles in social and decision processes? Third, what advances in theoretical and empirical insights might become possible if policy processes (a fundamental unit of analysis in the policy sciences) are conceptualized as dynamic, holonarchical or panarchical systems?

Our panel is designed to be a facilitated dialogue between scholars from each tradition. Drawing on the three questions above, panel members will draw on empirical as well as theoretical insights from both traditions to explore adaptive governance and policy-making. Chanda Meek and Douglas Clark will facilitate the dialogue by drawing out overlaps and gaps between each perspective, drawing on recent work in the Arctic. Ron Brunner will outline a policy science approach to adaptive governance of climate change and Lance Gunderson will draw on his work examining possibilities for adaptive governance in the Everglades, Grand Canyon and other large scale systems.

Panel participants and papers:

Chanda Meek, Douglas Clark

Ron Brunner

Lance Gunderson