

Planning for Resilience: An Ecosystem Approach to Depictive Analysis In Post-Katrina New Orleans

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Panel: Resilience Through Multi-scalar Collaboration

Complex systems require a particular technique to their depiction in planning. A nested, scale-hierarchic ecosystem ecological approach offers the most viable methodology for an instrumental depiction. Most intractable planning problems are best seen as “wicked problems,” as delineated by Rittel & Webber (1973)—that is to say, as problems that shift and change, both with perspective and with scale and time, and that defy singularization. In such cases, planning for resilience, taken ecologically in the sense of Holling’s (1996) use of the term, will result in robust and enduring resolutions in cases where a single ideal solution is beyond reach.

The essence of an effective ecosystem approach to planning requires that we take a multi-perspective, multi-objective, multi-criteria, multi-scale approach to crafting our depictions. This leads us to a savvy-stakeholder based participatory planning model for the construction of our descriptions of the problem-space. From within such depictions, we can then begin to interrogate the meaning and the mode of the idea of “planning for resilience.” The case of a post-Katrina New Orleans is considered, with the argument that the city’s continued resilience in the face of future perturbations rests most on the restoration of the wetlands within which it is embedded.