

ERSA 2019 Special Session Proposal

Regional Resilience: How can regions survive?

The convenors:

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Brief description of the topic:

Resilience has become one of the most popular concepts in regional science research in the recent years. It is a concept finding its origin in the life sciences, in particular in ecology and bio-physics, but more and more integrated in social and humanities sciences. Different factors acting in different ways at regional or national levels, in urban and rural areas, on social or individual level, have led to a complex set of structural transformations of the social systems under conditions of economic, social, ecological or political shocks. Some systems are more adaptable, recover their functions following a shock, and return to the pre-shock situation under socially and economically acceptable costs; other systems have the capacity to maintain their core functions and, even more, to improve their performance while others are failing (due to resistance to change, while preserving inefficient functions, or due to the entering a deep and a long-term crisis). Synthetically, some systems are resilient, and others are not.

The regional resilience is about the how regions resist and recover following a shock, but also about how they “adapt” and “adopt”: adapt their structure to the new context and if and how they adopt new development patterns. The main question is why some regions are more resilient and others are not, why some regions have the capacity to develop in a sustainable way, and others do not. The literature in the field provides a large spectrum of explanations: resilient regions have good institutions, good governance, are more connected to the global economy, are smarter, have an attractive social capital, or innovation capacity, are more human capital- or technology- intensive, etc.

However, given the width and the depth required by the various resilience approaches in regional studies, regional resilience still needs new theoretical, methodological and empirical insights, so as to increase the added value of growth theories and to connect more profoundly theoretical views to a more policy-oriented mission.

This special session on Regional Resilience aims to bring together papers on theoretical and empirical research results, focusing on the relevance of the resilience concept for regional growth and development patterns, the drivers of resilience and how the resilience can capture the regional dynamics, how to connect economic resilience with social and ecological resilience, on core-periphery structural differentiations of the resilience capacity as well as on studies applying the resilience perspective to regional and territorial planning or regional development policies. In addition to the spotlight on regional resilience, other connected topics could be added: climate change adaptation, urban resilience, smart regions, territorial capital, etc.

It is expected that the session will have a significant contribution to the scientific debate on the relevance of resilience for a better understanding of the regions’ restructuring processes in a changing world and will provide new inputs for advanced research in regional studies.