

1    Review article: Towards a context-driven research: a state-of-the-art  
2    review of resilience research on climate change

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9      **Abstract**

10     Since the 1970s, Holling's socio-ecological systems (SES) approach has been the most predominant  
11    theoretical force in resilience research with regard to the climate crisis. An overview of the scholarship  
12    in the social sciences during the past five decades reveals two different re-appropriations of Holling's  
13    legacy, which can broadly be classified as naturalist and constructivist, respectively. Characteristic for  
14    naturalist resilience research is its indebtedness to the concepts, methods, and assumptions of the so-  
15    called 'life sciences'. This has resulted in the recasting of Holling's SES into complex systems that are  
16    marked by non-linearity and evolutionary changes. Constructivist resilience research, on the other  
17    hand, relies on the concepts, methods and assumptions that are common in the 'human sciences'.  
18    Accordingly, resilience is studied and critically appraised in its historical, social, and political context.  
19    In this paper, recent developments in resilience research in the social sciences are reviewed to the end  
20    of proposing new research questions. The focus is on the different approaches, models and  
21    commitments that underpin these two approaches to resilience in the context of the ecological crisis.  
22    Particular attention is thereby paid to the naturalist emphasis on adaptation and the constructivist  
23    emphasis on transformation.

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26    Keywords: adaptive resilience, climate change, constructivism, naturalism, SES, transformative  
27    resilience, transformational adaptation

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30      **1. Introduction**

31

32    Crawford Stanley Holling's ecological notion of resilience (Holling, 1973) has become part and parcel  
33    of the social sciences, particularly in the field of social studies of climate change. Some social scientists

34 have recast and integrated it in their theoretical frameworks. Others accept the terminology and  
35 conceptualization of the term while not necessarily endorsing Holling's theoretical framework. The  
36 ecologist's notion of resilience has been presented as interdisciplinary and thus as having the potential  
37 of building a bridge between the social sciences and engineering (Ostrom, 2007; Thorén, 2014). Holling  
38 corrected what he considered to be an unrealistic view of the world and of ecosystems, namely, as  
39 closed or stable. Against the 'equilibrium-centered' view, he emphasized the influence of random  
40 events (natural or human-caused) on ecological systems (Holling, 1973, 15). Holling's socio-ecological  
41 systems (SES) approach appealed to social scientists since it highlighted the interaction between  
42 human societies (political, social, economic, and technological environments) and natural ecosystems.  
43 Consequently, resilience to climate change, for the social scientist, requires the reformation of  
44 established modes of thought (including conceptualizations of 'nature' and 'society'), lifestyles and  
45 consumer habits, production patterns, health issues, law, economy, science, technology, governance  
46 and politics (cf. Douglas & Wildavsky, 1983; Blühdorn, 2013; Fischer, 2017; Dryzek & Pickering, 2019).

47 Holling's ecological approach has been adopted by the Resilience Alliance, whose flagship  
48 journal, *Ecology and Society* (established in 1995), provides a platform for SES-based resilience  
49 research. In the social sciences, resilience to climate change has become a research topic since the  
50 Tsunami in 2004 and Katrina in 2005 (Pizzo, 2015). Katrina and, even more recently, Covid-19, social  
51 scientists point out, reveal a vulnerability that does not only consist in exposure to natural hazards.  
52 Instead, what has been made clear is that social, cultural, political, and economic conditions largely  
53 determine the resilience to these natural calamities (Tierney, 2015; Lockie, 2016). In the past decade,  
54 resilience to climate change has been addressed primarily as a policy discourse. Indeed, since 2010, in  
55 the wake of the global financial crisis (2007-2008), global governance actors and national and local  
56 governments – including the Rockefeller Foundation – have had profuse recourse to the language of  
57 resilience. The economic and political interest behind such discourses has gained the critical attention  
58 of social scientists (Hilhorst 2018). This has given rise to new resilience research, new outlets (such as  
59 the interdisciplinary journal *Resilience* (established in 2013)), and the establishment of resilience

60 research programs in universities around the world. This relatively recent development has meant the  
61 diversification of existing resilience research in the social sciences. As a result, many publications of  
62 the past decade address different definitions and understandings of resilience. Such diversity  
63 corresponds to the diversification of approaches in the social sciences. Resilience research in the social  
64 sciences had been predominantly naturalist. Today, social scientists are increasingly addressing climate  
65 change and resilience to climate change from constructivist angles.

66 The aim of this paper is to provide an overview of the current state of resilience research with  
67 regard to climate change in the social sciences and propose a research agenda. Current research can  
68 broadly be classified into two main schools of thought, namely, naturalist and constructivist. The latter  
69 is a more recent development in resilience research where the natural sciences and mathematics have  
70 tended to be authoritative. The diversification of resilience research in the social sciences is thus  
71 addressed in the first section of this paper. Naturalism and constructivism are presented as two (social)  
72 scientific approaches underpinned by different epistemological and ontological commitments. It is  
73 suggested that social scientific inquiry into resilience in the context of climate change could be raised  
74 to a next level if these two different approaches meet and interact. To this end, we reconstruct  
75 contemporary debates in that particular field of studies and distil recurrent research topics that divide  
76 social scientists. The issues of adaption and transformation in the context of severe disturbances or  
77 shocks that come with climate change (such as hurricanes, floods, drought, and heatwaves) appear to  
78 be such divisive topics. Finally, naturalist and constructivist directions, as well as possible cross-  
79 fertilizations of these two currents, for future resilience research are identified. We point out that  
80 future resilience research in the social sciences – that is, the types of questions raised, theoretical  
81 frameworks and modes of analysis – will also be determined by changing conditions (ecological,  
82 political, and socioeconomic).

83

84 **2. The diversification of resilience research**

85 One of the earliest appearances of the term resilience – in European literature at least – seems to have  
86 been in one of Aesop’s fables, namely, that of *The Oak Tree and the Reeds*. According to one of the  
87 versions of that story, the Oak Tree becomes uprooted during a storm while its fellow reeds survive it.  
88 In a conversation, the Oak Tree expresses its bewilderment that the fragile reeds were able to resist  
89 such a mighty storm while it succumbed. The reeds reply that it is precisely their non-resistance that  
90 saved them. Through their capacity to bend, they moved with the direction of the wind (which thus  
91 did not break them) and rose again when the storm was gone. They were flexible enough. The reeds  
92 ‘bounce’ back and are thus ‘resilient’. Indeed, the English word resilience derives from Latin (*resilire*),  
93 which generally meant rebounding. This Latin word can be found in the writings of Seneca the Elder,  
94 Pliny the Elder, Ovid, Cicero, and Livy; to rebound is also the sense in which *resilire* is used by Cicero  
95 in his *Orations* (Alexander, 2013). The term also appears in Lucretius’ *On the Nature of Things*, where  
96 it denotes ‘being forced back by a resisting surface [...] with reference to the action on Nature’ (Pizzo,  
97 2015). Along this line, nature compels all things to ‘spring off’.

98 Despite the various meanings attributed to the term, the connotation attached to *resilire* was  
99 commonly that of rebounding. Up to the early nineteenth century, this was the predominant  
100 understanding of resilience in common language and imagination. A slight shift appeared when  
101 engineers started to use the term to refer to the properties and capacities of materials to absorb  
102 tensions and release energy, and recover their original forms, without breaking or disfiguration after  
103 undergoing some external shock or disturbance (such as extreme weather conditions) (Estêvão,  
104 Calado & Capucha, 2017; Bergström, 2018; Davoudi, 2018). In the 1950s, psychologists re-adapted the  
105 common sense of the term to mental health and used it to study the coping mechanisms of  
106 concentration camp survivors. Later, the concept is used to study all sorts of trauma, misfortune,  
107 adversity, stress, and mental recovery (Bourbeau, 2015; Estêvão, Calado & Capucha, 2017; Bergström,  
108 2018; Schwartz, 2018). In the 1970s, the ecologist C.S. Holling (1973: 14) redefines resilience as ‘a  
109 measure of the persistence of systems and their ability to absorb change and disturbance.’ Thus  
110 understood, resilience is widely conceived as the opposite of vulnerability, which is defined as the

111 inability to absorb change and disturbance (Gallopin, 2006; Miller et al, 2010) - for instance, a coastal  
112 system that is vulnerable to accelerated sea-level rise is not resilient enough (Smit, Goosen &  
113 Hulsbergen, 1998). In such discourses, greater resilience means becoming less vulnerable to change  
114 and shocks. That said, a system can still be vulnerable to other changes while being resilient in other  
115 respects (Gallopin, 2006). Holling incorporates resilience in a socio-ecological systems (SES) approach  
116 to analyze the stability and strength of ecological systems, which are constituted by the interaction  
117 between natural ecosystems and human societies (Alexander, 2013; Bergström, 2018; Béné et al,  
118 2018; Hoekstra, Bredenhoff-Bijlsma & Krol, 2018). Ecosystems, as noted earlier, are rarely closed  
119 systems, but are instead subjected to natural and human influences.

120 In the social sciences, resilience research that has emerged from Holling's SES approach has  
121 developed along two different lines, which can be called naturalist and constructivist, respectively  
122 (Miller et al, 2010). These two currents of research have different focuses, raise different questions,  
123 and have recourse to different methods. The naturalist line of research is indebted to the accepted  
124 methods and assumptions of the natural sciences. It has a predilection for mathematical and  
125 simulation models. Social scientists dealing with resilience to climate change research questions  
126 consider resilience as a property of a system, which can be (made) weak or strong. Society is modelled  
127 as a social system that consists of parts (including agents and technologies) and physical properties  
128 that can be objectively studied (Aiken, 2006; Floridi, 2017). Resilience as a system property is an  
129 objective measure of the dynamic equilibrium, stability, strength, or survivability of a socio-ecological  
130 system, including coastal systems, urban systems, forest systems, etc. (Hoekstra, Bredenhoff-Bijlsma  
131 & Krol, 2018).

132 The naturalist approach to problems that arise through climate change can be very useful,  
133 especially when both the problem and the solution are quite uncomplicated (and hence are primarily  
134 of a technical nature, such as water purification, for instance). The story becomes more complicated  
135 when, for instance, attempts to make communities more resilient to climate change overlook the  
136 political and cultural reasons why particular groups are more vulnerable to the effects of climate

137 change. Since a model cannot include these reasons, the naturalist social scientist necessarily leaves  
138 out factors that are part of the problem and the solution. In so doing, naturalist social scientists may  
139 well become unwitting allies of political powers and help to perpetuate status quo. Constructivist  
140 social scientists have shown increased interest for resilience research precisely because resilience is a  
141 term profusely used by global and national powers during the last two decades.

142 Historically, constructivism in the social sciences has arisen in reaction to what was experienced as  
143 the narrowness of the naturalist approach. The constructivist does not believe that reality is so  
144 objective that it can be fully grasped and (s)he does not try to objectify it. Instead, natural and social  
145 phenomena can only understood by taking into account diverse human perceptions, experiences,  
146 meanings, interests, values, identities, patterns of domination, etc. Constructivist social scientists thus  
147 think that it is mistake to compress the social sciences into the mold of the natural sciences. In  
148 resilience research, they typically model society as a historically embedded construct that is the result  
149 of particular understandings of nature, society and the person, of values, symbols and historical  
150 practices (which may not be very rational or just), and power relations. Constructivists tend to be more  
151 critical and politically sensitive. They are generally more aware of the potential and actual abuse of  
152 power. When addressing resilience issues in the context of climate change, they typically express  
153 concern for vulnerable communities. Research topics thus include the(un)equal distribution of  
154 environmental burdens, struggles for recognition, claims to participation, and unequal impacts of  
155 anthropogenic climate change (Braun, 2014; Yanarella & Levine, 2014; Skillington, 2015; Sjöstedt,  
156 2015; Weichselgartner & Kelman, 2015; Pizzo, 2015; Lockie, 2016; Derickson, 2016; Lyster, 2017;  
157 Schlosberg, Collins & Niemeyer, 2017; Mummery & Mummery, 2019). Davoudi (2018: 5), for instance,  
158 introduces the notion of 'unjust resilience'. Unjust resilience refers to absorption of changes or  
159 disturbance through a systematic neglect of vulnerable groups and marginalized people. Katrina and  
160 the Covid-19 crisis reveal such systematic injustice. And Glaser et al (2018: 3) refer to 'undesirable  
161 resilience', 'bad resilience' and 'wicked resilience'. These are notions that emphasize how resilience  
162 may go hand in hand with the enforcement of an undesirable or unjust condition. The resilience of

163 oppressive systems (like tyrannical regimes) that systematically marginalize, discriminate or persecute  
164 certain groups are an example of this.

165

166 **2.1. The naturalist view on resilience**

167

168 In the social sciences, naturalist research as such arose in the context of the development of  
169 cybernetics, computational power and automation (and automated decision making) (Simbirski, 2006;  
170 Floridi, 2017; 2018; Davoudi, 2018). Naturalist social studies are based on the cybernetic idea that  
171 machines, organisms, and societies show considerable similarity in structure and function; and can be  
172 described in terms of systems. Since the 1940s, such studies have typically adopted cybernetic  
173 complexity theory as their distinctive overarching theoretical outlook, within which other theories (for  
174 instance, on behavior change, on decision making under risk, or on social institutions) are  
175 incorporated. In complexity theory, machines, organisms, and societies are modelled as complex, non-  
176 linear, evolutionary systems. Complex systems are composed of many components, including  
177 properties, agents, resources, and governance systems. All components interact with each other, in  
178 response to ever-changing environments and disturbance (Walsh-Dilley & Wolford, 2015; Juncos,  
179 2017; 2018). From this naturalist point of view, resilience to climate change is a matter of evolution:  
180 resilience is 'evolutionary resilience' (Pizzo, 2015: 137; Davoudi, 2018: 4). In the 1970s, naturalist social  
181 scientists incorporated Holling's notion of resilience within their own cybernetic complexity theory and  
182 cybernetic methodology (Wiese, 2016; Bergström, 2018). That is, socio-ecological systems are  
183 cybernetically conceptualized as adaptive complex systems. The ability to cope with uncertainty and  
184 complexity is one of the capacities of individual agents and interacting agents. The latter are able to  
185 interact and self-organize, learn and adapt (in an incremental or transformative way), making the  
186 system flexible in absorbing shocks and developing in face of changes (Jesse, Heinrichs &  
187 Kuchshinrichs, 2019).

188                   Naturalist social scientists tend to emphasize a type of laissez-faireism, pointing out that  
189                   adaptive complex systems have their own self-organizational structures that should not be interfered  
190                   with. Bureaucratic interventions to address vulnerability and increase resilience to climate change  
191                   typically generate unintended consequences that may well reduce a system's ability to absorb changes  
192                   and disturbances (Adger et al, 2011). In 2001, Holling introduced the notion of 'panarchy' as an  
193                   alternative to hierarchy, to safeguard the self-organization of complex systems against the threat of  
194                   bureaucratic intervention (Holling, 2001). Derived from the ancient Greek god of the woods, Pan,  
195                   panarchy refers to the structure in which complex (ecological and social) systems are interlinked in an  
196                   evolutionary process of adaptive cycles of growth, accumulation, restructuring, and renewal (Berkes  
197                   & Ross, 2016). Accordingly, when confronted with shocks (like extreme weather events), adaptive  
198                   systems stabilize with supporting self-organizing structures until those structures are overstretched  
199                   and can no longer absorb changes and disturbances; this is when there is a transformation of the  
200                   system(Allen et al, 2014). In other words, in naturalist research, the notion of panarchy (as an  
201                   evolutionary mode of system self-organization) complements Holling's earlier notions of socio-  
202                   ecological systems and resilience (as a system property). In Holling's naturalist theory of panarchy,  
203                   resilience is a primary system property that is measured by the magnitude of shocks that can be  
204                   absorbed before the structures of system change (Boyer, 2020).

205                   Methodologically, naturalist social scientists have typically embraced agent-based modelling  
206                   (ABM) as their favorite mode of analysis in resilience research. They focus on the constant refinement  
207                   of simulation tools (that can cope with complexity, uncertainty and multiplicity of agents) and  
208                   techniques of regulation in favor of adaptation (cf. Cote & Nightingale, 2012; Patriarca et al, 2018).  
209                   Since the 1970s, when it emerged from mathematical sociology, ABM has been a much endorsed tool  
210                   used in complexity-theoretic research for analyzing complex systems. (Conte & Paolucci, 2014). ABM  
211                   is a computational mode of analysis that simulates complex (non-linear) systems that include diverse  
212                   interacting agents that make decisions, interact and learn or adapt in their ever-changing environment,  
213                   according to programmable rules . (Hawes & Reed, 2006; Farmer & Foley, 2009; Van Duinen et al,

214 2015; Martin & Schlüter, 2015; Sun, Stojadinovic & Sansavini, 2019). ABM computes, in probabilistic  
215 terms, the recovery process of complex (non-linear) systems under stress and tracks the emergence of  
216 new stages, phases or entries into new adaptive cycles (Filatova, Polhill & Van Ewijk, 2016). In the social  
217 sciences, naturalist scholars calculate resilience to climate change at the system level as a system  
218 property (Pumpuni-Lenss, Blackburn & Garstenauer, 2017). Since ABM traces feedbacks between  
219 micro-macro scale explicitly, ABM also enables naturalist scholars to estimate the resilience of a  
220 system's individual agents, communities or (sub)groups of agents.

221

## 222 **2.2 The constructivist view on resilience**

223

224 In the social sciences, constructivist resilience research is also inspired by Holling's SES  
225 approach. Yet, for constructivists, resilience to climate change is not a system property. It is instead a  
226 socio-political construct that is created by diverse stakeholders (Walsh-Dilley & Wolford, 2015;  
227 Weichselgartner & Kelman, 2015; Kythreotis & Bristow, 2017). Constructivist research includes a  
228 variety of (typically phenomenological and discursive) scientific perspectives. Constructivist resilience  
229 research primarily focuses on the political context and socio-political implications of resilience  
230 discourses. As a construct, resilience to climate change is not so much technical as political and  
231 administrative in nature (Alexander, 2013; Bourbeau, 2015; Boas & Rothe, 2016; Juncos, 2018; Wessel,  
232 2019). And given its political and administrative nature, resilience is invested with ideology and myth.  
233 Constructivist scholars typically stress that resilience is a neoliberal construct. That neoliberal ideology  
234 manifests itself in the belief in adaptive cycles governed by invisible laws and the non-interventionist  
235 stance. It is thereby overlooked that the so-called self-organizing system is itself the result of political  
236 decisions over a long period of time. Constructivists thus point out that resilience has become a  
237 buzzword for governments that seek to shift the responsibility for vulnerable systems, floods,  
238 pollution, safety, welfare, health, etc. to 'resilient' individuals. Governments, in these cases, have  
239 recourse to resilience to make individuals more self-reliant (or less dependent on the government)

240 when it comes to coping with their own struggles in dealing with the challenges of climate change  
241 (Braun, 2014; Pizzo, 2015; Tierney, 2015; Howell, 2015; Anderson, 2015; Ksenia et al, 2016; Schwartz,  
242 2018; Davoudi, 2018). For instance, governments that fail to provide basic access to water to millions  
243 of rural citizens advocate community-based water management schemes, the leading paradigm for  
244 rural water access in East Africa (Katomera & Georgiadou, 2018). Such schemes 'work' for the state  
245 (and donors) as a means of shifting (or offloading) responsibility for public service provision to the  
246 most vulnerable citizens for whom community management may not be a preferred option (Katomero  
247 & Georgiadou, 2018).

248 Constructivist scholars tend to critically analyze resilience as an ideological construct. Such  
249 critical studies are typically inspired by the works of Michel Foucault, in the sense that resilience is  
250 analyzed as a discursive construct or ideological discourse. For Foucault, a discourse refers to systems  
251 of thoughts and beliefs, expressed through language and practices that systematically construct  
252 subjects and societies of which they speak. In other words, both language and practices are creative  
253 acts. Language is not a neutral tool of communication. Through resilience discourses, a particular type  
254 of subject (like resilient or self-reliant rather than vulnerable or dependent citizens) and a particular  
255 type of society (like a market-based 'society') are discursively constructed and reinforced (Miller et al,  
256 2010). Evans and Reid (2013) argue that as a discursive construct created by power holders, resilience  
257 has the character of a doctrine, according to which the resilient subject must constantly adapt to a  
258 dangerous and changing world, and is willing to accept this. Given this doctrine, vulnerability is rejected  
259 as weakness, a moral flaw (like a lack of character or a lack of will power) or simply illegitimate (the  
260 ability to absorb shocks being the new norm). Many critical constructivist scholars see the political  
261 reactions to events like Katrina (2005), Fukushima (2011), and Covid-19 (2020) as manifestations of  
262 such ideology. A problematic normativity is brought into existence when citizens are told that they  
263 must adapt to ecological and societal catastrophes, and when vulnerable citizens are left abandoned  
264 by their government as they are expected to be self-reliant (Fainstein, 2014; Tierney, 2015; Ribault,  
265 2019). Constructivist scientists also stress that such catastrophes present themselves as

266 'anthropological shocks' (Beck (2015: 80). Such shocks may open up counter-discourses that contest  
267 domination (Fazey et al, 2018). Katrina, for instance, proved to be such an anthropological shock  
268 because it opened up a counter-discourse that brought up the issues of colonial patterns of racism,  
269 slavery, vulnerability, and abandonment (Beck, 2015). As an anthropological shock , it is a potential  
270 initiator of policy transformations beyond the resilience discourse.

271 Constructivist scholars not only emphasize the role of neoliberal ideology that legitimizes  
272 established power relationships and patterns of domination in resilience discourses. They also point at  
273 the role of myth and myth-making in the discursive construction of resilience. Constructed as a myth,  
274 resilience is understood as a widely embraced narrative. Resilience is a story that connects diverging  
275 ideologies, values, interests, worldviews and power relations. The 'myth of resilience' (Kuhlicke, 2013)  
276 refers to the stories that stakeholders enact to make sense of the radically surprising discovery of  
277 something entirely unknown (like Katrina or the Covid-19 crisis). As narrators, stakeholders interpret  
278 their own capacities to deal with stresses and shocks, such as extreme weather events (like floods,  
279 droughts, and heatwaves). In this context of making sense of an unknown phenomenon, stakeholders  
280 develop the capacity to adapt and transform through mythmaking. For instance, the increasing  
281 attention on 'urban climate resilience' (Tyler and Moensch, 2012) resonates with the myth that cities,  
282 or 'local governments', are to lead and shape climate change adaptation as a form of bottom-up self-  
283 organization for absorbing changes and disturbances (O'Hare et al., 2016; Klein et al., 2017).

284

285

### 286 **3. Bridging the naturalist and constructivist view on resilience**

287

288 In the social sciences, naturalist and constructivist resilience research are based on contrasted  
289 premises, each having their own theoretical and methodological outlooks. Given such scientific  
290 contrasts, it has been widely questioned whether resilience can possibly operate as a theoretical model  
291 or unifying paradigm – and whether such a unifying paradigm would be desirable in the first place

292 (Alexander, 2013; Thorén, 2014; Bourbeau, 2015; Fainstein, 2015; Pizzo, 2015). A unifying paradigm is  
293 neither possible nor desirable. Yet, naturalist and constructivist research can be brought together to  
294 enrich and renew understandings of resilience to climate change. Naturalist resilience research has the  
295 great merit that it may help to increase complex systems' robustness to system failure when faced  
296 with shocks and disturbances. ABM – a mode of analysis that complexity theorists tend to prefer – may  
297 be a valuable tool for developing procedural stability, environmental risk management under  
298 conditions of uncertainty, provision of planning security, and prevention of adverse consequences  
299 from disruptive shocks (Schilling, Wyss & Binder, 2018). Constructivist resilience research provides a  
300 critical and most penetrating understanding of resilience as a construct (first of all, a discursive  
301 construct, myth or narrative) that contains political intention and direction. Its interpretation of  
302 resilience to climate change is useful for generating understanding of how resilience is mobilized, taken  
303 up in climate governance, and resisted by social movements' counter-discourses, such as the Fridays  
304 for Future, Black Lives Matter and Extinction Rebellion, that push for less unsustainable trajectories  
305 and for more protection of vulnerable citizens and communities.

306

307

### 308 **3.1 The debate on adaptive and transformative resilience**

309

310 In recent years, the contrast between naturalism and constructivism in resilience research has come  
311 to revolve around the issue of adaptation and transformation (Chandler, 2014; Redman, 2014;  
312 Fainstein, 2014; Dahlberg et al, 2015; Sjöstedt, 2015; Boas & Rothe, 2016; Duit, 2016; Zervogel, Cowen  
313 & Ziniades, 2016; Clément & Rivera, 2017; Lyster, 2017; Schlosberg, Collins & Niemeyer, 2017; Fazey  
314 et al, 2018; Glaser et al, 2018; Hoekstra, Bredenhoff-Bijsma & Krol, 2018; Jesse, Heinrichs &  
315 Kuchshinrichs, 2019; Dryzek & Pickering, 2019). It is an urgent issue that emerges from an ambiguity  
316 in Holling's SES approach (Redman, 2014). In the 1970s, Holling (1973) reinterpreted resilience as  
317 bouncing back or forward in terms of SES adaptation. Adaptation refers, on the one hand, to the

318 capacity of agents to influence the system (and influence or strengthen resilience as a system  
319 property). And on the other hand, it alludes to panarchical adaptation to new (ecological and social)  
320 environments, as an evolutionary process towards a new stage, phase, or adaptation cycle (Boyd et al,  
321 2015). Yet, as Holling emphasizes, the bouncing back and bouncing forward of a system not only refers  
322 to a return to some previous (dynamic) equilibrium or to the persistence and endurance of systems. It  
323 also refers to socio-ecological transformation in an ongoing process of non-equilibrium and instability  
324 and reinvention of systems in changing environments marked by different adaptive cycles (growth,  
325 accumulation, restructuring, and renewal) (Folke, 2006). Transformation refers to the capacity of  
326 agents to create a new system and a new discourse, particularly when conditions make the existing  
327 system untenable or illegitimate. Constructivist resilience research is primarily focused on  
328 transformation. Such research unsettles taken-for-granted assumptions and definitions of the  
329 situation expressed in established discourses; and it ignites new imaginations and counter-discourses  
330 needed for realizing less unsustainable futures (Fazey et al, 2018). Recently, a middle ground between  
331 adaptation and transformation has been developed, in the form of 'transformational adaptation'  
332 (Pelling, O'Brien & Matyas, 2015; Mummary & Mummary, 2019: 920). Transformational adaptations,  
333 such as green growth or the greening of the established economy refer to changes that are aligned to  
334 the scale of projected, possible and desirable changes within systems that are informed by (ultimately  
335 constructivist) considerations of environmental and climate justice.

336 The naturalist emphasis on resilience as system adaptation to climate change means that  
337 resilience research focusses on the degree to which complex systems can build capacity for learning,  
338 as a way to respond to shocks or disturbances, embrace evolutionary change, and live with complexity  
339 and uncertainty (Thorén, 2014; Juncos, 2017; Warmink et al, 2017; Béné et al, 2018). Given  
340 unpredictability and uncontrollability, adaptive resilience comes with short-term planning, uncertainty  
341 reductions, incremental and path-dependent changes (Borsje et al, 2011; Haasnoot et al, 2013).  
342 Adaptive resilience – the system's re-stabilizer – is taken as inherently positive, while disturbances and  
343 shocks (de-stabilizers) are taken as negative (Duit, 2016; Lockie, 2016). It is on the basis of the premise

344 that adaptive resilience is good that naturalist resilience research ties up with climate risk  
345 management, as a way of managing ecosystem services (critical for survival), under conditions of  
346 ecological and societal shocks and disturbances (Boyd et al, 2015; Berbés-Blázquez et al, 2017). For  
347 instance, when confronted with the near flood events of 1993 and 1995 along the river Rhine in the  
348 Netherlands, the Dutch government responded by increasing the flood conveyance capacity of the  
349 large rivers, thereby decreasing flood water levels (Hamers et al, 2015). Since its completion in 2015,  
350 the Room for the River project is considered effective thus far, particularly as its secondary objective  
351 to increase ecosystem values in the river appears successful. Warmink et al (2017) point out that in  
352 Dutch river management, such adaptation responses are typically conservative and within safety  
353 margins. This leads to over-dimensioning and high costs of water engineering works (like flood  
354 defenses).

355 The constructivist emphasis on resilience to climate change as system transformation refers to  
356 the emergent transformation of systems into something new beyond the status quo (Ziervogel, Cowen  
357 & Ziniades, 2016; Rothe, 2017; Béné et al, 2018). Transformative resilience is defined as the system's  
358 internal capacities, capabilities and relations that enables it to create a new condition marked by a new  
359 discourse (and accordingly, new or different power relationships). Flood protection, for instance, is  
360 typically a governmental responsibility, but, with a new myth, stakeholders can transform an  
361 established situation and realize alternative scenario's in which responsibilities may be distributed  
362 among different stakeholders (Warmink et al., 2017). Adaptive resilience comes with evolutionary  
363 change (the definition of change that naturalist research typically endorses). By contrast,  
364 transformative resilience comes with 'metamorphosis'. This type of change refers to a transformation  
365 of systems that is triggered by anthropological shocks that open up new horizons, reassessments  
366 (including of past ideas, beliefs and practices) and rediscoveries (Beck, 2015; Fazey et al, 2018). The  
367 middle ground of transformational adaptation bridges evolutionary change and metamorphosis, in the  
368 sense that such adaptation attends to broader socio-political processes of transformations (Kates,  
369 Travis & Wilbanks, 2012; Ziervogel, Cowen & Ziniades, 2016). The notion of transformational

370 adaptation picks up on and challenges the transformative logic of system transformation with  
371 simultaneous system adaptation, based on uncertainty regarding how fast and how far disruptions will  
372 go – or whether sustainable transformations will thrive as political projects at all.

373 Constructivist social scientists criticize the notion of adaptive resilience for not sufficiently  
374 addressing issues of environmental and climate justice. To address issues of power abuse and  
375 domination, the constructivist argument goes, system reconfiguration is needed: injustice inheres in  
376 the established systems. Naturalist resilience research, however, does not exclude considerations of  
377 justice from scientific analysis. Yet, it identifies justice, like resilience, as a system property. Thus,  
378 enhancing adaptive resilience to climate change may entail liberal principles of equity, fairness and  
379 access to resources and services, so as not to privilege or marginalize certain stakeholders (Redman,  
380 2014; Thorén, 2014; Ksenia et al, 2016; Schlosberg, Collins & Niemeyer, 2017; Bergström, 2018). Yet,  
381 naturalist enquiry into adaptive resilience tends to leave the status quo of systems, including the  
382 problematic Global North-Global South relationship (marked by massive power inequality),  
383 unquestioned (Swyngedouw, 2011; Pizzo, 2015; Clément & Rivera, 2017; Davoudi, 2018; Glaser et al,  
384 2018; Dryzek & Pickering, 2019). In constructivist resilience research, by contrast, the justice question  
385 is placed in a context of broader socio-political processes of system transformation: adaptive systems  
386 can be unjust and oppressive (Fainstein, 2014; Weichselgartner and Kelman, 2015; Huang, Boranbay-  
387 Akan and Huang, 2016; McGreavy, 2016; Zervogel, Cowen & Ziniades, 2016; Ribault, 2019). Adaptive  
388 responses to shocks and disturbances may blur long term sustainability visions, while dominant (or  
389 dominating) stakeholders typically reify existing climate policy efforts in their (standardized) adaptive  
390 responses (Lockie, 2016; Derickson, 2016; Rothe, 2017; Estêvão, Calado and Capucha, 2017; Ribault,  
391 2019). Kythreotis & Bristow (2017) call this phenomenon the ‘resilience trap’ – the reinforcement of  
392 established power relations (legitimized by dominant ideologies such as neoliberalism) and  
393 contemporary resilience discourses (Blühdorn, 2013; Redman, 2014; Yanarella & Levine, 2014; Lockie,  
394 2016; VanderPlaat, 2016; Schilling, Wyss & Binder, 2018; Glaser et al, 2018; Ribault, 2019). Hence,  
395 constructivist scholars tend to reject Holling’s panarchy concept, emphasizing that transformation

396 towards more sustainable worlds is not an evolutionary process of adaptive cycles but a political-  
397 administrative phenomenon. The middle ground of transformational adaptation, accordingly, must  
398 include a process of filtering out resilience traps that come with adaptive resilience. Transformational  
399 adaptation includes an understanding that adaptive resilience may well enforce a governance of  
400 unsustainability (cf. Van de Ven, 2017).

401

402

### 403 **3.2 Transformative resilience and sustainability**

404

405 For constructivist scholars, transformative resilience is a post-neoliberal construct that is intertwined  
406 with the notion of sustainability. For constructivist scholars, sustainability is based on the idea that  
407 existing systems can be transformed – with respect to social, cultural, political, administrative,  
408 economic, technological and environmental factors –, with the right governance interventions and  
409 reconfigurations of the ecological and social underpinnings of SES (Pizzo, 2015; Weichselgartner &  
410 Kelman, 2015; VanderPlaat, 2016; Zervogel, Cowen & Ziniades, 2016; Hughes, 2017; Jesse, Heinrichs  
411 & Kuchshinrichs, 2019). Currently, the sustainable energy transformation is no doubt the best example  
412 of such a reconfiguration (Park et al, 2012; De Haan & Rotmans, 2018). Fossil energy sources like coal,  
413 oil and gas are largely responsible for carbon dioxide emissions, which generate global warming. The  
414 sustainable energy transformation, accordingly, is, amongst other things, a response to climate change  
415 that is potentially transformative in negating and transcending established (climate unfriendly) energy  
416 systems. From the (typically naturalist) perspective of strengthening adaptive ‘energy resilience’ (Béné  
417 et al, 2018: 120; Jesse, Heinrichs & Kuchshinrichs, 2019: 21) – energy systems must adapt to changing  
418 environments in which high levels of greenhouse gas emissions comes from burning fossil fuels for  
419 electricity, heat and transportation. Energy resilience means that established energy systems can limit  
420 the risk of power outage and continue providing reliable energy supplies at stable costs, even in a  
421 turbulent ecological and political environment (Wiese, 2016). The notion of energy resilience, as a form

422 of adaptive resilience to climate change, implies that the energy transition, including the use of  
423 renewables, can only go via incremental changes and greening of the established economy, to avoid  
424 system collapse (Berbés-Blázquez et al, 2017; Schilling, Wyss & Binder, 2018). The middle ground of  
425 transformational adaptation includes this adaptationist notion of energy resilience but aligns it to the  
426 scale of desirable ecological and societal changes that are informed by justice considerations and  
427 political direction towards less unsustainable futures. Given that established energy systems  
428 insufficiently respond to ecological and societal challenges of climate change, transformational  
429 adaptation may imply the metamorphosis of energy systems.

430 From the (typically constructivist) perspective of strengthening transformative resilience,  
431 energy resilience comes with the enactment of the energy system's status quo. This is a status quo  
432 that includes powerful agents that have a vested interest in promoting fossil energy. Such agents use  
433 all sorts of tactics (including sponsoring the climate change denial movement) to secure their  
434 established power position (Stegemann & Ossewaarde, 2018; Szabolowski & Campbell, 2019). It enacts  
435 a condition of 'energy injustice', particularly in the Global South. The notion of energy injustice refers  
436 to current energy systems that distribute the ecological and economic benefits and burdens of  
437 established energy systems in unfair ways; dominate, degrade and devalue certain stakeholders; and  
438 exclude certain agents from processes that govern the benefits, burdens and recognitions (Jenkins et  
439 al, 2016; Heffron & McCauley, 2017). The transformative resilience of energy systems, which is tied  
440 up with the notion of 'energy justice', refers to the resistance to and negation of a fossil-based energy  
441 system and its oligarchical power structure (increasing the vulnerability of such a climate-unfriendly  
442 energy system); and the creation of a renewable-based system, energy commons and collaboratives  
443 beyond the energy establishment (VanderPlaat, 2016; Bourbeau & Ryan, 2018; Juncos, 2018; Schwartz,  
444 2018; Acosta et al, 2018; Jesse, Heinrichs & Kuchshinrichs, 2019). The middle ground of  
445 transformational adaptation includes the long-term vision of energy governance (for instance, towards  
446 2050), but it searches for realizing such transformation through adaptations by the status quo.  
447 Transformational adaptation means that the sustainable energy transformation comes with the

448 change of the energy establishment into agents of sustainability – a change that comes from within  
449 the power complex, for instance, via stakeholder participation (like shareholder activism).

450

451

452 **3.3 AI for resilience and sustainability**

453

454 Adaptive resilience to climate change comes with short-term systematic adjustments to a  
455 changing technological environment that is currently increasingly dominated by smart urbanism and  
456 artificial intelligence (AI) technologies. Governance actors like the UN, EU and national governments  
457 have all drafted their AI strategies for the making of an 'AI Revolution'. Such actors present AI as a  
458 leading technology that contributes to resolving resilience and sustainability challenges (cf. Taddeo &  
459 Floridi, 2018). Particularly in naturalist resilience research, AI is identified as a new systems property  
460 that permeates systems to generate productivity gains, improve efficiency, lower costs, predict climate  
461 change stress, track carbon emissions, monitor flood risks, etc. (Rajan & Saffiotti, 2017; Khakurel et al,  
462 2018; Vahedifard, et al, 2019; Miller, 2019; Saravi et al, 2019). Strengthening adaptive resilience to  
463 climate change through AI primarily means that an integrated data system for circulating information  
464 (near) real time among agents needs to be developed. In an AI technological environment, resilience  
465 implies close collaboration between agents (tool/model developers, data stakeholders, community-  
466 level stakeholders, state-level institutions, etc.) (Vahedifard, et al, 2019). AI comes in both for  
467 combining datasets into usable information, as a monitoring method (like change detection  
468 algorithms) as well as a tool for forecasting (for instance likely occurrence of a natural hazard due to  
469 extreme events). Identifying, harnessing, synthesizing, and communicating pertinent yet structured  
470 and unstructured data (weather data, cell phone GPS data, social media feeds, traffic cameras, smart  
471 city sensors, images, videos, audio data, etc.) enables agents to better forecast, prepare for, respond  
472 to, and recover from disturbances and shocks (Rajan & Saffiotti, 2017; Vahedifard et al, 2019). In urban  
473 systems, so-called 'city dashboards' rely on big data and AI when it comes to ordering and visualizing

474 data through interactive maps and graphs (Kitchen, 2018). By being able to predict (estimate or  
475 forecast) more accurately and learn from past disturbances and shocks, lessons can be learned and  
476 applied in building adaptive resilience against disturbances (Saravi et al, 2019). AI, as for instance used  
477 in city dashboards, quantifies the probabilities of occurrence of extreme events, essential in predicting  
478 and preparing for future natural hazards, such as floods or landslides. For instance, with advances in  
479 machine learning, water availability, ice surfaces and melting rates, saturated soils, pollution,  
480 deforestation, etc. can be more precisely or smartly monitored in space and time so that changes over  
481 time can be tracked. Yet, with monitoring also learning of agents and organizations is needed.

482 In the social sciences, constructivist scientists tend to have a critical view of AI. They do  
483 recognize that AI may help building transformative resilience, given AI's capacity for anticipating future  
484 events. AI may also play a positive role in phasing out of unsustainable yet adaptive systems.  
485 Governance actors, such as the UN in its AI for good program (2017-), the EU in its AI strategy (2018),  
486 and various national governments in their AI programs emphasize the transformative potentials of AI.  
487 Yet, strengthened adaptive resilience can also weaken the transformative resilience that is needed for  
488 materializing sustainable transformations (Khakurel et al, 2018). From a critical constructivist angle, to  
489 make AI serve transformative resilience requires that the domination of giant AI firms (like Google,  
490 Amazon, Microsoft, Facebook, Alibaba, Tencent, etc.) is kept in check. It requires high levels of  
491 transparency and stakeholder involvement in how algorithms are designed, built and applied. In  
492 constructivist researches, it is frequently argued that although big data can be openly accessible (like  
493 satellite imagery for geospatial and data scientists), big data and AI are often in the hands of giant tech  
494 oligarchs (Miller, 2019; Ossewaarde, 2019) that have a vested interest in the further acceleration and  
495 consumption of technological devices (Khakurel et al, 2018). Because of such an oligarchical power  
496 structure, AI tends to obstruct transformative resilience, exerting power beyond rule of law and  
497 democratic will and understanding. Such power abuse is found in the many recent privacy rights  
498 violations and scandals (like the Facebook-Cambridge Analytica data scandal (2018) and the many  
499 Google scandals) (cf. Taddeo & Floridi, 2018).

500

501

502 **4. Six upcoming themes in diversified resilience research**

503

504 In the social sciences, the bridging of naturalist and constructivist scientific approaches in theorizing  
505 change as system adaptation, transformation, or transformational adaptation triggers new research  
506 themes for the study of resilience to climate change. Theorizing change within and of systems has  
507 become the key issue in resilience research, in the wake of changing societal, ecological, and  
508 technological environments. In naturalist research, resilience to climate change is presented as  
509 'evolutionary resilience' and as 'adaptive resilience'. From this angle, the key issue of changing  
510 environments is the survivability of established complex systems under stress. Change is, accordingly,  
511 evolutionary change. In constructivist research, resilience to climate change is presented as discursive,  
512 ideological, mythical (the 'myth of resilience') and as transformative resilience. The key issue of change  
513 is the overcoming of 'resilience to change', 'resilience traps' and 'unjust resilience' or 'bad resilience'  
514 that the status quo that organize established systems produce. Such overcoming of the establishment  
515 is presented as an indispensable condition for enhancing change. Such change refers to  
516 metamorphosis of systems and comes with transformative politics and climate governance. The  
517 reconciliation of naturalism and constructivism in terms of change can be found in the middle ground  
518 of transformational adaptation, which ties incrementalism to long term sustainability visions. It is a  
519 notion that comes with the search for the conditions and tempo of transformations in different  
520 ecological and societal contexts and adaptative cycles. Ultimately, the overarching challenge for future  
521 research is to ensure that resilience to climate change does not compromise sustainability and  
522 considerations of justice (including, environmental, climate and energy justice).

523 A first promising direction for future resilience research concerns the reconciliation of  
524 naturalist and constructivist scientific approaches to resilience. Given the diversification of scientific  
525 approaches, resilience cannot operate as a theoretical model or unifying paradigm (Mummery &

526 Mummery, 2019). Yet, as a metaphor resilience provides a sound basis for reconciling contrasting  
527 scientific approaches, mainly because of its heterogeneity and high level of abstraction (Thorén, 2014).  
528 Intellectually, the reconciling of naturalism and constructivism implies an appreciation of diverse  
529 scientific vocabularies, many visions of what counts as scientific knowledge, other approaches'  
530 scientific worlds, a certain embracing (which includes making manifest) of the tensions between the  
531 contrasting types of science, and creating spaces for constructive contestation (Pfeffer & Georgiadou,  
532 2019). Thereby, new resilience perspectives may develop. New questions may be posed (or new  
533 answers to long-standing questions may be provided). The resilience trap – typically marked by the  
534 promotion of adaptive strategies that reify responses and corresponding power structures in the short-  
535 term – may be avoided (via challenging current assumptions underpinning resilience research). Current  
536 adaptation and transformation and transformational adaptation approaches may be further refined.  
537 And much-needed new ways of scientific thinking and possibilities may be opened in resilience  
538 research, beyond old conceptualizations and modes of analyses (cf. Fazey et al, 2018). These  
539 developments ask for new collaboration frameworks and platforms that empower stakeholders to  
540 bring both their resilience research questions and their assets to the table to collectively explore and  
541 define potential futures from the perspective of all present worldviews.

542 A second theme for future resilience research comes with a change in political environment,  
543 in which the legitimacy of adaptive, transformative, and transformational adaptive responses to  
544 climate change is constantly contested. Anthropogenic climate change comes with a political-  
545 administrative crisis, which manifests itself in the form of a legitimacy crisis, authority crisis (including  
546 the crisis of scientific authority), crisis of democracy, a crisis of human rights, a crisis of modernity  
547 (Swyngedouw, 2011; Blühdorn, 2013; Fischer, 2017; Ossewaarde, 2018; Stegemann & Ossewaarde,  
548 2018; Dryzek & Pickering, 2019). Crisis and the ability to absorb changes and shocks has been widely  
549 constructed as the new normal (Hilhorst, 2018). In an increasingly toxic political environment (marked  
550 by climate change denial, anti-immigration policies, and nationalist protectionism) adaptive and  
551 transformative resilience and transformational adaptation may be expressed and contested in

552 manifold ways. For instance, on the one hand, environmental protest movements are stakeholders  
553 that develop a leverage required to transform established systems (such as energy systems) and their  
554 governance arrangements. On the other hand, agents who hold power thanks to such arrangements  
555 typically use tactics of repression and criminalization, particularly in the extractive sectors of the Global  
556 South (Szablowski & Campbell, 2019). New research questions emerge on the one hand from  
557 polarization and the exercise of (il)legitimate power in the governing of and for resilience to climate  
558 change. This is the question of how the adaptation and metamorphosis of systems under pressures of  
559 climate change comes with power inequalities, polarization, injustice, battle for resources, democratic  
560 deficits and post-democratic tendencies, climate change denial tactics, attacks on legal rights, and the  
561 resilient governance of unsustainability. To put it in more positive terms, urgent questions concern the  
562 meanings of transformation, the theorization of transformation in terms of just resilience, the linkage  
563 of resilience to sustainable futures, the development of a transformation agenda in participative,  
564 proactive and deliberative ways, and the comparison of different administrative capacities and new  
565 governance arrangements that explain differences in system adaptation and reconfiguration (cf.  
566 Blühdorn, 2013; Fischer, 2017; Davoudi, 2018; Köhler et al, 2019; Mummery & Mummery, 2019).

567 A third promising topic for future resilience research concerns the relationship between  
568 adaptive resilience and transformative resilience and transformational adaptation in the reactive and  
569 proactive governance responses to anthropogenic climate change (Clément & Rivera, 2017). In the  
570 coming decade, questions like how adaptive and transformative resilience to climate change is  
571 strengthened or weakened; how the current performance of systems when it comes to responding to  
572 possible disturbance (for instance, through the use of monitoring systems) can be better understood;  
573 how unjust resilience can be disabled (and therewith ‘positive vulnerability’ can be increased to  
574 generate beneficial transformation (cf. Gallopin, 2006); and how transformational adaptation  
575 manifests itself (how multiple adaptations may lead to transformational adaptation and what are the  
576 tipping points for igniting transformation), become urgent ones for resilience research (Grove &  
577 Chandler, 2017; Glaser et al, 2018). The notion of ‘tentative governance’ appears particularly relevant

578 in the context of transformational politics, when it comes to phasing out systems and weakening  
579 adaptive resilience. Tentative governance is marked by interventions that are designed as preliminary  
580 rather than as persistent, for purposes of probing and learning rather than for stipulating definite  
581 targets or fixating existing systems and their underlying assumptions (Kuhlmann, Stegmaier & Konrad,  
582 2019). It is likely that stakeholder engagement (including resistance) in transformational politics and  
583 tentative governance varies, and manifests itself differently, across different policy fields. For instance,  
584 the sustainable energy transformation may include multi-layer governance challenges, many pro-  
585 active stakeholders, new investment opportunities and job opportunities. Given that multiple public  
586 and private actors are responsible for the performance of different parts of a system, tentative  
587 governance comes with transformational adaptations that must be arranged. Hence arises the  
588 question which adaptations allow for transformation? In contrast with the sustainable energy  
589 transformation, sea level rise and the disruption and relocation of coastal cities may trigger a more  
590 limited transformative politics, despite inevitable transformation of systems due to shocks and  
591 disturbances (metamorphosis). Yet, in the coming decade, transformational politics and tentative  
592 governance – including anthropogenic topics like population displacement, privatization of climate  
593 adaptation, conflict organized around scarce resources (like water resources), intergenerational  
594 environmental conflict, and the closing of old infrastructures that are too costly to maintain – becomes  
595 a more urgent research topic.

596 A fourth topic for future resilience research concerns the relationship between phasing out of  
597 unsustainable systems and societal transformations. The sustainable energy transformation is a most  
598 obvious phasing out of old systems (like coal energy systems) and change of worldviews, middle class  
599 consumerism, lifestyles, etc. towards new energy systems, given that burning fossil fuels has such a  
600 major impact on climate change. Adaptative and transformational responses to climate change are  
601 intermingled with responses to many societal and ecological developments. A response like  
602 investment in transportation systems that aims to address increasing transportation demand must  
603 accordingly include possible climate change impacts. In the Anthropocene epoch, systems typically

604 face pressures to change, to establish new (less unsustainable) interactions between society and  
605 ecology. Pressures on existing systems not only emerge from ecological adversity, over-exploitation,  
606 resource depletion, etc., but particularly from counter-discourses and new ways of thinking, new  
607 lifestyles, and new contestations (like the Fridays for Future, the Anti-Mining, the Transition Towns,  
608 Black Lives Matter, and Degrowth movements) that increase the positive vulnerability of undesirable  
609 systems (Bergmann & Ossewaarde, 2020). At the same time, anthropogenic climate change comes  
610 with the development of a multi-trillion market of the emerging green economy, which proves new  
611 climate investment opportunities. Given such societal pressures and opportunities, new research  
612 topics include the governing and accelerating of the decline of existing systems and their adaptive  
613 cycles (Stegmaier, Visser & Kuhlmann, 2014; Hoffmann, Weyer & Longen, 2017; Stegmaier, Visser &  
614 Kuhlmann, 2020); the particular circumstances in which accelerations can manifest themselves; the  
615 identification of, and coping with, uncertainties in processes of adaptation and transformation and  
616 transformational adaptation; and the construction of new incentive structures, for accelerating  
617 sustainable transformation (cf. Clément & Rivera, 2017; Warmink et al, 2017; Köhler et al, 2019). This  
618 branch of discontinuation research assumes that technologies influence socio-ecological systems.  
619 Some technologies threaten resilience to climate change, while others enhance it (Smith & Stirling  
620 2010). Such research informs that political objectives like drastic reduction of CO2 emissions (as can  
621 be found in the European Green Deal (2019) will hardly be achieved by using single cleaner (green)  
622 technologies alone, but structural system metamorphosis is needed to qualitatively alter established  
623 systems (Vögele, Kunz, Rübelke & Stahlke 2018; Rogge & Johnston, 2017; Stegmaier 2019). One of  
624 the challenges for the coming decade is to reverse the negative, alarmist, catastrophic, apocalyptic or  
625 paralyzing image of climate change: transformational adaptation comes with stakeholders taking a  
626 pro-active and positive view on climate change and on positive vulnerability, with new opportunities  
627 emerging from responses to climate change. How can climate change and vulnerability of established  
628 (and typically unsustainable) systems be regarded as an opportunity rather than as a risk in the  
629 governance of transformational adaptation to climate change?

630 A fifth theme for future resilience research concerns the role of environmental, energy and  
631 climate justice in theorizing, modeling, interpreting, and explaining resilience to climate change (cf.  
632 Skillington, 2015; Fazey et al, 2018; Mummery & Mummery, 2019). For future research, theories of  
633 environmental justice, energy justice and climate justice can be conducive to helping furthering  
634 comprehension of adaptive and transformative resilience and transformational adaptation. How can  
635 justice claims be made more responsive to newly unfolding ecological and societal circumstances and  
636 uncertainties? How can principles of equity, fairness and access to resources and services be secured  
637 in a toxic political environment? And how can – in the problematic context of climate-induced  
638 migration and a political environment marked by anti-immigration policies – the wellbeing of migrants  
639 be ensured? Theories of environmental, energy and climate justice are also highly relevant for  
640 developing understanding of how adaptive and transformative resilience and transformational  
641 adaptation are perceived and experienced in everyday life by different stakeholders that face  
642 anthropogenic challenges. Constructivist enquiry into perceptions, experiences and prioritizations of  
643 resilience constructs is a promising topic for future resilience research. In this regard, insurance  
644 decisions of citizens against the risks associated with climate extremes can gain further research  
645 attention. As addressed by O'Hare et al. (2016), citizens are faced with an increasing responsibility to  
646 make decisions to 'insure' themselves and their assets against the possible damages of climate change.  
647 Such decisions can have diverse justice implications in different political and economic contexts that  
648 influence how citizens perceive, experience, and prioritize climate risks. Similarly, the cross-sectional  
649 dimensions of justice, particularly gender and racial relations, is becoming increasingly relevant and  
650 yet challenging to understand and integrate into climate justice (Terry, 2009), and energy justice  
651 (Feenstra and Özerol, 2018) frameworks. And in the Global South, addressing issues of corruption,  
652 violence, poverty and lack of access to resources (and violent battles for resources) and services (like  
653 education and sanitation) may have a higher priority than global environmental considerations (Köhler  
654 et al, 2019).

655 A sixth theme for future resilience research comes with a changing (geo)technological  
656 environment, that is, the so-called 'AI revolution' in the making. Given worldwide investments and top-  
657 down AI strategies that global governance actors and national governments have recently published,  
658 AI will most plausibly become a major force that shapes resilience to climate change by means of  
659 monitoring, forecasting and learning. A relevant example of big data is the G-Earth Engine and the vast  
660 amount of satellite imagery made available by space agencies, which opens up an unprecedented  
661 dataset of satellite images for scientific research. Such extensive datasets, marked by high spatial and  
662 temporal resolution, are essential for monitoring a changing earth system. In the past decade,  
663 resilience discourses have increasingly incorporated phenomena like big data, AI, cybersecurity and  
664 smart city. In the coming decade, resilience discourses may increasingly become algorithmic  
665 technology discourses. New interplays between automation, (un)sustainability, and adapting and  
666 transforming systems trigger new questions for future resilience research (cf. Köhler et al, 2019). For  
667 instance, in the near future, not only the number of climate disasters is expected to rise. Also the data  
668 – satellite data, drone data, sensor data, social media data, volunteer geographic information (VGI)  
669 data, Internet of Things data, etc. – available on such disasters is expected to increase in size and  
670 resolution, amounting to vast volumes of climate disaster data. However, AI, due to the unstructured  
671 nature or coverage of input data, may omit those phenomena, places and social groups that are not  
672 present in the data (Hoefsloot et al. 2019). Alternative ways of knowing can refine or contribute  
673 complementary insights to the precise measurements and data gaps (Pfeffer and Georgiadou 2019).  
674 New research questions for naturalist and constructivist research emerge from challenges of  
675 organizing big data and how to make it available and usable, given the variety of public and private  
676 stakeholders, workflows and incentive structures involved in the (social) construction of big data  
677 (Wright, 2016). How can AI be augmented with alternative ways of knowing to strengthen  
678 adaptive/transformative resilience? How to incorporate the socio-spatial dimension in resilience  
679 research, to pronounce the different capabilities of different groups and places? And what role can AI  
680 play in creating a dialogue between the naturalist and constructivist resilience research? In the coming

681 years, AI tools – mainly tracking (for instance, tracking of deforestation tracking or energy/water  
682 consumption) and machine learning techniques – are expected to be widely used. Among other things,  
683 for detecting and predicting how climate disasters probably develop, for locating areas or communities  
684 at risk, for analyzing the consequences of climate disasters, and for assisting in climate disaster  
685 responses. Working with AI for purposes of learning from data – for instance, via the use of data mining  
686 or deep learning techniques for dissecting patterns in satellite images – comes with the design of  
687 procedures for data analytics, forecasting and intervention (Rodríguez-González, Zanin & Menasalvas-  
688 Ruiz, 2019) and requires domain and local knowledge as well as a dialogue between naturalist and  
689 constructivist researchers. In contrast to the official national statistics of the past, which diffused  
690 societal controversies, big data analytics create myriad parallel realities, stand in the way of achieving  
691 a minimal consensus about basic facts and amplify controversies. A recent example where AI and  
692 alternative ways of knowledge came together is the resilient settlement program led by UN HABITAT  
693 which brought together a multitude of actors (policy, private, academic, community organizations) and  
694 data and algorithms and local knowledges to identify settlements at risks. In sum, next to  
695 technologization of resilience discourses, social processes of big data construction, the inclusion and  
696 exclusion of diverse stakeholders, the embeddedness of AI in everyday practices, the various uses of  
697 AI in the exploitation of data, fair, transparent and accountable (FAT) AI, as well as the integration and  
698 inclusion of alternative knowledges are promising fields of resilience research.

699 In the coming decade, several AI challenges are most likely to increasingly come to the fore in  
700 resilience research. First, monitoring systems (for instance, monitoring the status and behavior of  
701 infrastructure or human settlement dynamics) that incorporate machine learning make that systems  
702 are automatically checked rather than regularly inspected by experts. When AI is integrated with  
703 knowledge of how systems work, expertise is outsourced to AI, which implies that expert knowledge  
704 may get lost or become obsolete. Moreover, AI classifications may have unintended consequences for  
705 certain places or communities. For example, by labelling areas at risks, property prices may go down  
706 or insurance agencies are not willing to provide an insurance certificate. Second, the digitalization of

707 SES makes systems vulnerable to, for instance, breakdowns, power outages and cyberattacks – hence  
708 resilience strategies and digital strategies are intertwined (Wessel, 2019). ‘Digital resilience’ has  
709 recently become a key concept in resilience research that refers to strengthening resilience of digital  
710 systems to potential cyberattacks, including the adaptive capacity to respond to such attacks (Wright,  
711 2016). The making of digital resilience typically implies bringing in tech firms for the protection of SES,  
712 whose algorithms are typically opaque. Third, because of the reliance on AI and associated data, other  
713 realities are neglected, excluding certain places or communities from digital resilience strategies.  
714 Fourth, AI systems facilitate governing at a distance, with governing becoming more invisible and  
715 possibly unaccountable. For instance, when disaster management (for instance, in the context of an  
716 extreme weather event) becomes ‘digital humanitarianism’, the distance between the saviors and  
717 survivors becomes big, with survivors becoming reified abstract entities that inspire limited empathy.  
718 In fact, survivors are confronted with the risks of AI systems, in terms of privacy breaches and identity  
719 frauds. In other words, while AI is expected to become a key theme in resilience research, a promising  
720 topic for future resilience research concerns the challenge of uncovering resilience traps and  
721 neutralizing the ecological and societal damage and injustice done through the reinforcement of AI  
722 technologies in governance processes like digitally-based service provision or humanitarian  
723 interventions in the Global South.

724

725

## 726 **5. Conclusion**

727

728 In the social sciences, resilience to climate change is a concept that is incorporated in different  
729 theoretical approaches that are linked to contrasting scientific approaches. Holling originally  
730 reinterpreted and incorporated the good old notion of resilience in his SES approach, which was then  
731 picked up by naturalist scientists who incorporated Holling’s reinterpretation of resilience in their own  
732 cybernetic complexity theory. The naturalist complexity theoretic approach to resilience as system

733 adaption to climate change was dominant in the social sciences, until the ecological and political (and  
734 increasingly also the technological) context of resilience research changed. When a decade ago actors  
735 at global, national and local governance levels drafted their resilience policies in the wake of socio-  
736 ecological catastrophes, financial crises, climate crises, pandemics, governance failures, and the  
737 breakdown of infrastructures, constructivist approaches developed to take resilience research far  
738 beyond complexity theory and associated methods. And it introduced a variety of new concepts for  
739 resilience research, such as the resilience discourse, myth of resilience, just resilience, resilience trap,  
740 transformative resilience, and transformational adaptation. Resilience cannot operate as a unifying  
741 paradigm, but it can facilitate the reconciliation of naturalism and constructivism. Thereby, the two  
742 contrasting scientific approaches can provide a liberating perspective on each other (without the one  
743 repressing the other) and brought into a theory-energizing tension with each other. Such reconciling –  
744 igniting theory-energizing tension – is needed for reimagining resilience to climate change and for  
745 specifying how new political-administrative institutions (including panarchical self-organization) and  
746 practices can respond in legitimate ways (taken justice and vulnerability considerations into account)  
747 to the challenges of climate change, in different ecological, political and technological contexts (cf.  
748 Johnsson et al., 2018).

749 Given recent developments in the social sciences, the key resilience issue concerns the political  
750 response in the form of adaptation, transformation, and transformational adaptation in newly  
751 unfolding political, ecological, and technological environments. The six resilience themes for the  
752 coming decade that this paper has identified are all connected to the issue of the political-  
753 administrative response to the challenges that come with anthropogenic climate change. A first theme  
754 concerns the reconciliation of naturalism and constructivism, to be able to move beyond established  
755 assumptions, theories, concepts, and modes of analysis; and to trigger new imaginations to be able to  
756 create new, theory-rich, resilience perspectives. A second theme is the legitimacy of the political  
757 response in a toxic political environment, in which top-down and bottom up responses, including new  
758 governance arrangements and system reconfigurations, may suffer from legitimacy deficits. A third

759 theme is how, in a toxic political environment, adaptation, transformation and transformational  
760 adaptation can be materialized; and under which conditions such governance responses are sufficient  
761 for addressing climate change challenges. A fourth theme is how systems are under pressure due to  
762 climate change, ultimately igniting a phasing out of systems and a departure from environment-  
763 unfriendly consumerist lifestyles, values, and assumptions. A fifth theme is how governance responses  
764 can be made legitimate, by incorporating considerations of environmental and climate and energy  
765 justice, thereby strictly connecting resilience to justice considerations. A sixth theme is how new  
766 technologies (mainly AI) come to intermingle with resilience: what is the role of such technologies and  
767 giant tech oligarchies like Google and Amazon in political-administrative responses to challenges that  
768 come with climate change? And, correspondingly, what are the undesired consequences that come  
769 with AI and giant tech firms, when it comes to responding to climate change. How does AI enact  
770 existing power structures, thereby reinforcing resilience traps?

771

772

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