



Sustainable and Resilient Societies (SURE)

Summer 2024

Course type:	Summer School
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Dates and place:	24-29 June, 2024 Royal Netherlands Institute Rome Via Omero 12 00197 Rome, Italy

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1. Purpose of the Summer School

The fragility of social systems and their underlying institutional foundations being widely recognized, makes resilience an urgent item in the research agenda of contemporary social and behavioral sciences and the humanities.

The related attempts at enhancing resilience are multilevel, ranging from individuals, communities, to organizations, to more concerted large-scale attempts addressing the resilience of entire policy domains or sectors.

Polycrisis and disruptive transformations happen at different levels, and SuRe will focus on demographic crisis; disasters; socio-economic crises; technological innovations; organizational crises.

Divergent as they might be, a common denominator uniting scholarly attempts, policy initiatives and other interventions is the insight that getting grip on resilience problems analytically and societally requires transcending disciplinary silos, monocausal explanations and single-issue policies and interventions.

SuRe intends to shed new light on urgent questions about the relationship between sustainability and resilience by providing advanced social sciences knowledge on the multi-levelness of these concepts and their complex relationship. SuRe aims to bring together scholars and students from different disciplines in the social and behavioral sciences and humanities whose work is related to resilience issues at the micro-level of individuals, the meso-level of collectivities (organizations, communities, families), the macro-level of societies and their institutions, as well as its conceptual or ethical dimensions. Equipped with this knowledge, participants will be trained in an inter- and transdisciplinary learning environment combining theory, methods and practice into group projects. The summer school will be held at the KNIR Institute in Rome, and it will be connected to disciplines as diverse as demography, history, sociology, psychology and economics. Top scholars from Europe will introduce key topics and they will work in close contact with the students to develop research projects.

2. Format and Outcomes of the Summer School

The school is designed as a research workshop. It is organized in three parts.

The first part of the school consists of three types of introductory lectures. The first two lectures cover the *theoretical foundations* of sustainability, resilience, and the governance of (poly)crises. These introductions provide the contours of the analytical framework that will then be applied to the study of *specific crises*, which are addressed in the four subsequent lectures. These provide an overview over the state-of-the art of research on social sustainability related to four societal challenges: (1) Aging, life course and Resilience, (2) Disasters in Historical Perspective, (3) Socio-Economic Crises, and (4) Disaster Resilience as a social construct. The *keynote address* by Dr. Stefanos Fotiou (Head of the SDG Unit of the FAO), on Agrifood Systems Transformation as SDG Accelerators, will conclude the first part of the school.

The second part of the school consists of “labs” dedicated to the four societal challenges. Each participant will join one of the four groups. Each group will be guided by a lecturer who is an expert in the respective domain. Each group will first jointly narrow down the focus and specify the research problem they want to engage with, as well as the specific deliverables they want to produce during the school (e.g. a policy brief, a white paper, a research note). Subsequently, each group will engage in collecting relevant theoretical works and empirical evidence in order to analyze their respective research problems. Experts will be available for consultation. Groups will provide plenary updates at the end of each day.

The third part of the school consists of a *presentation session* in which each group shares their insights. For that purpose, each group prepares a presentation. Each presentation will be followed by a Q&A. We will conclude the school with a general reflection on lessons learned.

3. Programme overview

	Monday, 24/06	Tuesday, 25/06	Wednesday, 26/06	Thursday, 27/06	Friday, 28/06	Saturday, 29/06
Morning I 9:00-10:30	Arrival	Crisis 1: Population Aging Crisis <i>Letizia Mencarini</i>	10:00-11:30 Online Keynote Agrifood Systems Transformation as SDG Accelerator <i>Stefanos Fotiou</i> (Head SDG FAO)	Check in and Lab (crises work groups)	Check in and Lab (crises work groups)	Presentations Groups 1-2
Morning II 11:00-12:30	Arrival	Crisis 3: Coping with Disasters in Historical Perspective <i>Domenico Cecere</i>	Explaining the Assignment (project goals and operation)	Lab (crises work groups)	Lab (crises work groups)	Presentations Groups 3-4
Afternoon I 14:00-15:30	Introduction to summer school, icebreaker, personal 3-minute presentations (all)	Crisis 2: Economic Crises <i>Enrica Chiappero</i>	Lab (crises work groups)	Lab (crises work groups)	Lab (crises work groups)	Plenary discussion (debriefing, lessons learnt) and closing
Afternoon II 16:00-17:00	Theory I: Sustainability and Resilience <i>Rafael Wittek</i>	Crisis 4: Climate Adaptation <i>Francesca Gardini</i>	Lab (crises work groups)	Lab (crises work groups)	Lab (crises work groups)	Departure
Afternoon III 17:00-18:00	Polycrises and Governance <i>Kees Boersma</i>		Q&A	Plenary	Plenary	Departure
Evening	Drinks		Reception, Social Dinner			

4. Programme breakdown

Monday, 24th of June, 16:00 - 17:00

Prof. Rafael Wittek

University of Groningen

Social Resilience and Sustainable Cooperation

Description of the lecture

I argue that most conventional institutional arrangements are ill-suited to safeguard the resilience of communities and organizations. The reason is that they are insufficiently geared to sustain cooperation. My contribution first explicates the concept of sustainable cooperation, disentangling it from the concepts of (social) resilience and sustainability. Cooperation is sustainable to the degree that the social infrastructure for the joint production of mutual benefits remains effective and efficient in producing outcomes that are valuable for both the participants in the joint production and society, also under adverse conditions. I then discuss which kind of governance structures are needed to foster sustainable cooperation. I argue that such governance structures need to be able to keep the normative goal frame – which feeds joint production motivation – in the cognitive foreground. Using available case study evidence I then discuss three processes that enable sustainable cooperation during three phases of a community's exposure to disturbances: (a) its capacity to resist hazards by adapting institutional arrangements that enable and instigate joint contributions to disaster preparedness; (b) its ability to respond if a hazard becomes a disaster by activating a collaborative social infrastructure that is able to trigger collective action, social support and coordination; (c) its ability to recover from crisis by restructuring cognitive frames towards mental schema's supporting sustainable cooperation.

Mandatory Readings

1. Wittek, R. (2024). Social Resilience. *Elgar Encyclopedia of Global Social Theory*, edited by Gert Verschraegen and Raf Vanderstraeten (forthcoming).
2. Wittek, R. & Bekkers, R. (2015). The Sociology of Altruism and Prosocial Behavior. In J. D. Wright (Ed.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* (2nd Revised edition ed.). Elsevier.

Optional Readings

1. Elmqvist, T., Andersson, E., Frantzeskaki, N., McPhearson, T., Olsson, P., Gaffney, O., Takeuchi, K. and Folke, C., (2019). Sustainability and resilience for transformation in the urban century. *Nature Sustainability*, 2(4), pp. 267-273.
2. Van Bavel, B., Curtis, D. R., & Soens, T. (2018). Economic inequality and institutional adaptation in response to flood hazards: A historical analysis. *Ecology and Society*, 23(4).

Monday, 24th of June, 17:00 - 18:00

Prof. Kees Boersma

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

All-of-society crisis and disaster governance – a resilience perspective

Description of the lecture

In my discussion with the graduate students I will highlight recent research findings on societal and institutional resilience in the context of polycrisis and disasters. I will first demonstrate emerging changes in term of inclusive resilience practices among formal and informal actors, from an all-of-society governance perspective. Then I will speak about the process of learning lessons from crisis that will help disaster management organizations to transform into resilient institutions. Next, using concrete examples, I will talk about participatory approaches to show how local initiatives and local knowledge can be appreciated by disaster management organizations in all phases of the disaster management cycle (from response to mitigation and from recovery to prevention and preparation. Resilience in this context is seen as the capacity of a social system to proactively adapt to and recover from disturbances that are perceived within the system to fall outside the range of normal and expected disturbances. It is about the ability of social entities to absorb the impacts of external and internal system shocks without losing the ability to function, and eventually transform into organizations that can prevent disturbances turning into disasters. In this line of thought I will pay attention to vulnerability as the characteristics of a person or group in terms of their capacity to anticipate, cope with, resist and recover from the impact of a (natural) hazard. From the Horizon 2020 project LINKS, I will bring examples of technological innovations in building crisis preparedness and on how to more strategically use social media and crowdsourcing for engaging with diverse communities in order to create resilient communities.

Mandatory Readings

1. Tierney, K. (2012). Disaster governance: Social, political, and economic dimensions. *Annual review of Environment and Resources*, 37, 341-363.
2. Boersma, K., Berg, R., Rijbroek, J., Ardai, P., Azarhoosh, F., Forozesh, F., ... & Bos, J. (2022). Exploring the potential of local stakeholders' involvement in crisis management. The living lab approach in a case study from Amsterdam. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*, 79, 103179.

Optional Readings

1. Quarantelli, E. L., & Dynes, R. R. (1977). Response to social crisis and disaster. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 3(1), 23-49.
2. Henig, D., & Knight, D. M. (2023). Polycrisis: Prompts for an emerging worldview. *Anthropology Today*, 39(2), 3-6.

Tuesday, 25th of June, 9:00 - 10:30

Prof. Letizia Mencarini

Università Bocconi

Aging, Life Course and Resilience

Description of the lecture

With low fertility and increased longevity, the age distribution of European populations is changing rapidly. These demographic changes impact a range of dimensions: the sustainability of social support systems and health care arrangements, but productivity, employment and occupational patterns are also shifting. Changes in the age composition of the population will affect, too, consumption, investment and economic growth. Social inequalities in old age are very much a function of circumstances and choices made at a younger age and across the life-span, as well as of stereotypical assumptions, expectations and beliefs about older people. Hence ageing must be viewed in terms of a life course approach. This is both because political decisions simultaneously impact the lives of both younger and older citizens, which will necessarily affect wellbeing and survival (period effects), and because the health, family and occupational status of older age groups change with improved conditions and prolonged life expectancy (cohort effects). Secondly, given inevitable crises and inherent uncertainties, new policies – and revisions of old ones – ought to be resilience enhancing. They should enable both citizens and service providers to cope and adapt to whatever the next shock will be. A focus on resilience means that policies are thought of in terms of proactive planning, adaptability, flexibility and where possible, prevention, rather than post-hoc solutions to challenges related to the ageing of the population. But they must also factor in linked lives through families, social networks, environment, communities, nation states and also supra-national entities, such as the EU. Resilience means that our policy-generating system – from education and health care to employment and family policies – must also be resilient for all.

This lecture starts by providing a conceptual framework for how to think about resilience and the life course. Empirical results from the EUROFOUND Working, Living and Covid-19 longitudinal survey, where we highlight key drivers behind individual resilience, are presented, as well as explorative findings in terms of resilience and fertility trends in a time of crisis.

Mandatory Readings

Plach, S., Aassve, A., Cavalli, N., Mencarini, L., Sanders, S. (2023) COVID-19 policy interventions and fertility dynamics in the context of pre-pandemic welfare support, *Population and Development Review*, 1-31, March 2023.

Gatta, A., F. Mattioli, L. Mencarini, and D. Vignoli (2022). Employment uncertainty and fertility intentions: Stability or resilience? *Population Studies* 76 (3), 387–406.

Optional Readings

Chlon-Dominczak A. et al. (2024) Report on Resilience as theoretical foundation of fertility dynamics, FutuRes n.3, <https://futu-res.eu/publications/research-reports>

Aassve A., Bastianelli E. (2024) Report on Resilience in policy design: What makes policies resilience-enhancing?, FutuRes project report n.2, <https://futu-res.eu/publications/research-reports>

Tuesday, 25th of June, 11:00 - 12:30

Prof. Domenico Cecere

Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II

Disasters in Historical Perspective

Description of the course

What have we learnt from the experience of the last seven centuries of recurring lethal epidemics? This is one of the recurring questions that many scientists, doctors, politicians, journalists, and ordinary people asked themselves in the early months of 2020, when the epidemic caused by Covid-19 paralysed the economic and social life of many countries around the world and undermined health systems. Faced with an unknown and frightening scenario, societies tried to explore past events to detect similarities and differences with what they saw threateningly unfolding before their eyes.

My presentation aims to highlight that comparisons with past centuries enable us to investigate the transformations, over the centuries, in the ways in which societies have perceived risks and in which they have responded to disasters caused by environmental or biological factors. A glance at the past can reveal the differences between our era and those that preceded us, as well as the remote origins of certain attitudes, policies and practices still in place today, particularly in terms of collective behaviours, cognitive biases, control devices, beliefs, etc.

The lecture addresses the cultural, social and political impact of extreme events on early modern societies (1500 – 1800 ca.). Focusing on the European and American territories of the Spanish Monarchy, I will outline the evolution of policies and practices aimed at managing uncertainty and recovering from disruption. I will challenge the notion that responses in early modern societies were solely based on religion or superstition, employing an interdisciplinary approach to study how information dissemination and narrative creation influenced decision-making in the aftermath of disasters. I will explore how socio-cultural interactions unfolded during crises, leading to the emergence of institutions and practices designed to mitigate risks and protect society. I will also show that a historical perspective can shed light on how government bodies and societies interact in the management of risk and disruption, and that it can provide valuable comparative elements for scholars researching how times of

emergency affect the politics of obedience and resistance, the emergence of concepts comparable to states of exception and the redrawing of the boundaries of political power.

Mandatory readings:

Pfister, C. (2011), “‘The Monster Swallows You’: Disaster Memory and Risk Culture in Western Europe, 1500–2000”, *Rachel Carson Centre Perspectives*, no 1. DOI: doi.org/10.5282/rcc/5583;

Van Bavel, B., Scheffer, M. (2021), ‘Historical effects of shocks on inequality: the great leveler revisited’, *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*. DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-021-00763-4>

Optional Readings:

Hardwick, J., Stephens, R.J. (2020) ‘Acts of God: Continuities and change in Christian responses to extreme weather events from early modernity to the present’, *WIREs Climate Change*, 11-2. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.631>

Cecere, D., Tuccillo, A. (2023), ‘Times of emergency: Managing communication and politics in the aftermath of a disaster’, in *Communication and Politics in the Hispanic Monarchy: Managing Times of Emergency*, eds. D. Cecere, A. Tuccillo, Peter Lang, p. 11-35. DOI:

<https://dx.doi.org/10.3726/b21360>

Tuesday, 25th of June, 14:00 - 15:30

Prof. Enrica Chiappero-Martinetti

University of Pavia

Socio-economic crisis

Description of the lecture

It is widely recognized that we are currently experiencing an age of poly-crisis, characterized by multiple, interrelated shocks affecting a wide range of policy areas. These crises are increasingly taking on the nature of perma-crisis due to their long-lasting effects on the economy, society, and the environment. These crises range from the global financial and sovereign debt crisis in 2008 to the COVID-19 pandemic, from the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East and their resulting energy and food price crises to the migration and humanitarian crisis, from natural disasters driven by climate change to the challenges posed by AI and digital transformation.

A common trait of all these poly-crises and perma-crises is their contribution to a deep and prolonged sense of insecurity and uncertainty across the population. However, the severity of these outbreaks and their socio-economic impacts vary in timing and intensity across countries, firms, communities, and individuals. Therefore, it is crucial to identify the factors of vulnerability that can amplify the effects of a crisis and those that, conversely, can make economies, communities, and individuals more resilient to severe shocks.

The aim of this lecture is to reflect on the consequences of global socio-economic crises on people's standards of living, with a special focus on the most vulnerable groups. We will conceptualize individual well-being—and the related notions of deprivation and inequality—as multidimensional and multifaceted, referring to the capability approach pioneered by Amartya Sen in the mid-1980s and further developed by scholars across various disciplines. The goal is to investigate the linkages among resources, opportunities, and achievements and identify the personal and contextual factors that can make people and communities more resilient or, conversely, more vulnerable. By connecting the micro (individual), meso (family and community), and macro (country) levels, we aim to better understand the complex relationship between socio-economic sustainability and resilience.

Students will be invited to select data and indicators to describe this multi-layered and multidimensional account of well-being, poverty, and inequality, as well as the relevant personal and contextual factors that may act as 'protective' or 'constraint' factors in the well-being and development process. They will also be encouraged to suggest policies, programs, or projects that might increase resilience, mitigate exposure to risk, or compensate for disadvantages.

Mandatory readings:

Amartya Sen (1999), Development as capabilities expansion ([here](#))

ZOE – Institute for future fit economies (2022), A framework for economic resilience, Transformation Policy Brief #9 ([here](#))

Optional readings:

JRC – Joint Research Centre (2018), The resilience of EU Member States to the financial and economic crisis. What are the characteristics of resilient behaviour? ([here](#))

UNDP (2022), Building resilience through livelihoods and economic recovery, UNDP Guidance Note ([here](#))

UNDP (2024) Human Development Report 2023/2024, Breaking the gridlock. Reimagining cooperation in a polarized world ([here](#))

UNDP Human development indicators platform ([here](#))

European Commission, Resilience dashboards ([here](#))

European Commission, The recovery and resilience scoreboard ([here](#))

OECD (2014) Guidelines for resilience systems analysis, OECD Publishing ([here](#))

Enrica Chiappero-Martinetti, University of Pavia, is an economist with research interests in poverty, inequality and human development.

Tuesday, 25th of June, 16:00 - 17:30

Prof. Francesca Giardini

University of Groningen

Disaster resilience as a social construct

Description of the lecture

There has been a significant change in the risk landscape in recent years (GAR 2022). Growing global interconnectedness, geopolitical risks, expansion of urban development in areas prone to different hazards, existing vulnerabilities to weather hazards (heatwaves, wildfires, heavy rains, rising sea levels, drought and floods) made more severe by climate change, all make the occurrence of disasters more likely. A disaster is "a serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society at any scale due to hazardous events interacting with conditions of exposure, vulnerability and capacity, leading to one or more of the following: human, material, economic and environmental losses and impacts" (UNDRR). Unfortunately, such an increase in the number and impact of disasters has not been paired with a corresponding increase in preparedness, at the individual, organizational and institutional level. To accelerate essential risk reduction and resilience building it is necessary to understand how individual decision making and social networks can be leveraged to improve disaster preparedness across contexts, countries and crises.

In this lecture and in the related project, we will reflect on risks as social constructs, and we will review main psychological and sociological theories to understand barriers to and opportunities for improving disaster risk perception and preparedness. Our starting point will be the analysis of high-level policy documents (UNDRR Global Assessment Report, 2019 and 2022), in order to reconstruct the policy theories behind them, identify the psychological and social mechanisms supposed to explain risk preparedness and critically analyze the expected impacts of the proposed policies. In reconstructing the policy theory, we will apply the "Realist Evaluation" framework for policy design (Pawson and Tilley, 1997), and we will link it to existing evidence on risk perception, decision making and social amplification of risk.

Mandatory Readings

1. Eiser, J. R., Bostrom, A., Burton, I., Johnston, D. M., McClure, J., Paton, D., ... & White, M. P. (2012). Risk interpretation and action: A conceptual framework for responses to natural hazards. *International journal of disaster risk reduction*, 1, 5-16.
2. Paton, D. (2019) Disaster risk reduction: Psychological perspectives on preparedness, *Australian Journal of Psychology*, 71:4, 327-341, DOI: 10.1111/ajpy.12237

Optional Readings

1. Pawson, R., Tilley, N. (2004). Realist evaluation. https://cnxus.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/RE_chapter.pdf
2. UNDRR Global Assessment Report GAR2022, <https://www.un-ili-brary.org/content/periodicals/24118648>
3. YouTube videos on the GAR2022 (interviews and summary)

Wednesday, 26th of June, 10:00 - 11:30

Keynote lecture

Dr. Stefanos Fotiou

Head SDG FAO

Agrifood Systems Transformation as SDG Accelerators

Description of the lecture

Transforming agrifood systems means reorienting and redesigning them to be more inclusive, resilient, sustainable, efficient and equitable while delivering multiple benefits for people and the planet. This transformation not only has the potential to achieve SDG 2 - ending hunger, achieving food security and improved nutrition and promoting sustainable agriculture, but it can also accelerate progress across all other SDGs by triggering actions, such as reducing inequalities, promoting good health and well-being, and tackling climate change.

Therefore, transforming agrifood systems is a strategic opportunity to advance the entire 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which is severely falling behind across all indicators. By embracing this acceleration principle, we can make holistic progress and create societies that ensure to leave no one behind.