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Title: Resilience assessment for food systems – steps for implementation



What determines the ability of food systems to react to and plan for inevitable change? How can this ability be assessed?

A social-ecological resilience approach focuses on how to build capacity to deal with change (Biggs et al. 2015), and in the face of climate change such an approach becomes more and more valuable.

The resilience concept has received much attention in terms of theoretical development, however, less so, how to assess it. The tools that do exist are divided between academic and practitioner audiences, meaning there is a lack of integration of both the academic and applied elements of social-ecological resilience.

We present a methodology for how to conduct a resilience assessment, specifically within the context of food systems but that is generally applicable in any social-ecological system. Though food systems have been a common area of focus, analysing them within a social-ecological resilience framework is still relatively new. In contrast to other social-ecological systems, food systems are normative in nature, i.e. the desirability of food security is embedded (Hodbod & Eakin, 2015).

Our methodology allows to collect information and draw conclusions concerning all 7 principles of resilience in general, and adaptive and transformative capacity in particular. It suggests but does not prescribe specific methods for data collection as these will always need to be adapted to system's context. We provide some examples from different case studies to explain why our mixed-methods framing of resilience assessments requires a participatory approach. Ideally, the data collection and assessment should be community-driven in order to use resilience as a management tool. However, it can also be a purely academic endeavour. This methodology is specifically aimed at researchers new to the field of resilience studies who want to move from theoretical concept to practical assessment. For them, it can serve as a bridge to implement resilience within a research design. Ultimately, conducting resilience assessments can help communities, practitioners and researchers understand and implement resilience principles in order to build capacity to cope with change.

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