The social sciences and social-ecological resilience: Past trends, new developments, and contested frontiers

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Abstract

Over the past couple of years, there has been a surge in social science engagement with social-ecological resilience ideas and practice. This includes scholars from the traditional social sciences (e.g. sociology, anthropology, economics, geography, and psychology) as well as from closely aligned interdisciplinary fields (e.g. environmental education, architecture and planning, and law). While this body of social science scholarship is rapidly growing, it largely remains scattered and isolated in specific social science disciplinary silos. Building on recent overviews of this body of work, we provide a review of how social science theories, methods, and empirical data have been incorporated in resilience scholarship, the major themes of inquiry that have recently emerged, and areas where there is significant disagreement. This presentation builds on a panel given at the Resilience 2011 conference and an ongoing Special Feature in Ecology & Society entitled "Exploring Social-Ecological Resilience through the Lens of the Social Sciences". It aims to consolidate and synthesize: (1) social analyses that have been incorporated in resilience scholarship and social science perspectives on resilience to-date (past trends), (2) emerging themes and growing areas of social research (new developments), and (3) areas that have generated criticism and debate (contested frontiers). The purpose of this presentation is to foster greater understanding and dialogue within the social sciences and between the social sciences and the ‘resilience community’.

Keywords: social sciences, resilience, review, trends, frontiers

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