

# **Social Resilience**

## Critical Responses to Challenges and Change

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**Series in Sociology**



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# Foreword

**Julian Reid**

*University of Lapland*

Resilience saturates contemporary discourse. From NATO to self-help literature, from climate adaptation strategies to mental health interventions, the imperative to be resilient shapes how we are governed and how we govern ourselves. For scholars of social science, this saturation presents a problem: how to engage with it without becoming part of the problem? How to write and speak about it without reproducing its myths? How to achieve a critical distance from the concept while at the same time being attuned to the conditions which have engendered its rise?

This volume approaches these kinds of questions not by claiming to resolve resilience's conceptual and discursive difficulties. Such a feat would, in any case, probably be impossible at this point in time. What this volume does do is to offer its reader something more modest and yet useful: a mapping of resilience discourse's current terrain across multiple disciplinary sites and empirical contexts.

The editors have assembled perspectives from law, anthropology, sociology, and social work, examining resilience as it appears in diverse settings: among migrants navigating hostile legal regimes, farmers adapting to ecological change, LGBTQ+ workers confronting workplace discrimination, entrepreneurs weathering economic crisis. This breadth is instructive. It demonstrates resilience's conceptual diversity and its capacity to travel across contexts. Reading it, we learn that resilience means different things to different subjects, and serves varied and often contradictory purposes.

What strikes me about this collection is less its theoretical coherence than its ethnographic attentiveness. The strongest contributions show us resilience as it is actually lived and practiced rather than as it is abstractly theorized. We see people doing resilience: buying dollars and hiding them "under the mattress" in Argentina, cultivating support networks in Swedish church cafés, navigating the gap between official immigration law and its arbitrary implementation in Russia. This is useful scholarship. It refuses the abstraction that allows resilience discourse to float free of the material conditions and power relations that make it necessary in the first place.

That the volume does not achieve tight theoretical integration between its various chapters may itself be telling. Resilience resists coherence because it operates across incommensurable scales and serves contradictory political projects. It names both individual psychological endurance and collective social transformation, both adaptation to existing conditions and transformation of those conditions. A volume that perfectly synthesized these tensions might be more conceptually satisfying but less honest about resilience's actual functioning.

The editors acknowledge in their introduction the neoliberal undertones of resilience discourse. Scholars of resilience are very familiar with the ways it can be said to individualize responsibility for systemic failures, celebrate adaptation to conditions that should not be tolerated, and transform vulnerability from a political problem into a personal deficit. This critical awareness runs through several chapters, though unevenly. Some contributors remain more firmly within resilience discourse than others, treating it primarily as a capacity to be built or a resource to be mobilized rather than as a discourse of governance to be interrogated.

This unevenness, too, is instructive. Even scholars committed to critical analysis struggle to think beyond resilience's terms. The concept has become so deeply embedded in how we understand and respond to crisis that alternatives remain difficult to articulate, for scholars, as much as for everybody else subject to its influence. What would it mean to reject resilience entirely? What other frameworks might we deploy for thinking about human endurance, adaptation, and transformation without reproducing resilience's problematic assumptions? These are questions which will not go away easily, precisely because they are difficult to answer well.

For students and researchers entering this contested terrain, the volume provides a useful introduction to resilience's multiple deployments and the debates surrounding them. It will be particularly useful for those seeking empirical grounding for resilience's operations across different social contexts and for anyone wishing to understand how the concept travels between academic discourse, policy implementation, and everyday life.

The question that haunts this volume, as it haunts all resilience scholarship, remains unresolved: Why should people be resilient rather than replace the regimes that demand resilience from them in the first place? Until we can sustain that question without immediately translating it back into the language of resilience-building, we remain trapped within the very discourse we seek to critique.

This volume contributes to an ongoing conversation without claiming to settle it. That modest ambition may be all we can reasonably expect at this stage

of resilience scholarship's evolution, or devolution, depending on our perspective.

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## Contributors

**Sara Kauko** is a senior lecturer in the Division of Social Anthropology, Department of Sociology in Lund University, Sweden. Her research concerns socioeconomic mobility, processes of social resilience and cultures of neoliberalism in the context of recurring economic crises in Argentina. She has investigated how micro-entrepreneur women navigate their everyday lives in a conservative sociocultural context as autonomous entrepreneurs. Her research also concerns upper middle-classes and elites, and how people representing the upper echelons of the society manage, and even benefit from economic downturns. Dr. Kauko received her Ph.D. in cultural anthropology from Emory University, U.S., and her MA from University College London.

**Patric C. Nordbeck** is a senior lecturer in the Department of Psychology at Lund University, Sweden. His current research focuses on creating experimental paradigms based in relational and processual psychological theories. He also teaches philosophy of the social sciences, process-relational theories of psychology, and linear & non-linear statistics. Dr. Nordbeck's future research program is based on exploring the universality of these paradigms by applying them within interdisciplinary contexts. The core methodology has been inspired by interdisciplinary critiques of resilience and social resilience, and this Edited Volume forms part of formalizing the philosophical grounding of process-relational theory and methodology.

**Azher Hameed Qamar** is a Postdoctoral Researcher at the University of Münster, Germany, within the COFUND-MDC Fellowship Programme. His research focuses on migration, diasporic citizenship, and social resilience, with a particular interest in grassroots community networks and migrants' lived experiences. Before joining the University of Münster, he worked as a Postdoctoral Researcher at Lund University, Sweden, where he focused on social resilience and migrants' lived experiences, contributing to the development of a theoretical framework for social resilience in the context of migration and social integration. He has organized interdisciplinary workshops and published on themes related to social resilience and migration, community engagement, and participatory research in migration studies.

**Tove Lundberg** is an associate professor of psychology and a senior lecturer in qualitative methodologies at Lund University. Their research mainly focuses on LGBTQI issues, sexuality, and well-being. As principal investigator (PI), they have recently completed a research project exploring how minority stress at work is experienced and how it can be counteracted. Tove is part of the research group Queer Psychology Sweden (QueerPsy).

**Anna Malmquist** is a senior associate professor of social psychology at Linköping University. LGBTQ psychology is at the heart of her research. Her research interests include LGBTQ minority stress and joy, parenting, fear of childbirth, and birth trauma. Anna is part of the research group Queer Psychology Sweden (QueerPsy).

**Theodor Mejias Nihlén** is a licensed clinical psychologist, sexologist, and PhD candidate at Linköping University. His research focuses on promoting well-being and good working conditions among trans and gender-diverse people. Theodor is part of the research group Queer Psychology Sweden (QueerPsy).

**Matilda Wurm** is an associate professor of psychology and a senior lecturer in social work at Örebro University. In their recent work focusing on LGBTQ issues, they have studied factors influencing the development and maintenance of health and ill health, as well as interventions promoting health. Matilda is part of the research group Queer Psychology Sweden (QueerPsy).

**Mrudula Josyula**, MA, CCC, is a Certified Career Counselor and PhD student in Counseling Education and Supervision at the University of Cincinnati. Her research focuses on the impact of career-related stressors, such as immigration policies and cultural adaptation, on mental health challenges like anxiety and depression. Mrudula holds a master's degree in clinical Mental Health Counseling from Xavier University, and she currently serves as a Senior Career Counselor at The Ohio State University's Fisher College of Business. Mrudula's work focuses on supporting international students through advocacy, culturally responsive programming, and mental health-informed career development.

**Christine "Yani" Shi** is an adjunct professor at the University of Cincinnati, where she also completed her PhD in Community and Organizational

Psychology in 2025. She is primarily interested in research that prioritizes the well-being of minoritized people and communities through community collaborations. At the heart of it, her research focuses on systems and ideological forces as well as human rights, capabilities, and dignity.

**Carlo Nicoli Aldini** is a PhD candidate in the Department of Sociology of Law at Lund University, Sweden. He is interested in socio-legal theory and practice, with a particular focus on the double-edged role of law as an instrument of both power and resistance across cultural and political contexts.

**Rustamjon Urinboyev** is an Associate Professor at the Department of Sociology of Law at Lund University. He is a socio-legal scholar whose research focuses on corruption, informal economies, migration, legal pluralism, and governance in Eurasian contexts, especially Central Asia, Russia, and Turkey, combining extensive ethnographic fieldwork with strong theoretical analysis. He is the author of several influential books and leads major EU-funded international research projects on corruption, governance and non-Western migration regimes.

**Prof. Dr. Anne Dienelt**, maîtrise en droit (Aix-en-Provence), holds the Chair of Public International Law, with a focus on Sustainability and Resilience Research at the Faculty of Law at Saar University in Saarbrücken, Germany. Her current research explores different notions of resilience and their translation into legal frameworks, with a particular focus on international and German climate change law. In her most recent book, *Armed Conflicts and the Environment* (Springer, 2022), she analyzes the intersection of international humanitarian law, international environmental law, and human rights law as they relate to environmental protection in armed conflicts.

**Sarah H. Whitaker** is a Research Associate in Anthropology at Boise State University, USA. Her work focuses on how social and ecological systems interact to shape human and animal well-being under conditions of climate and environmental change. Her current research projects address flooding and infrastructure, how people make decisions under conditions of uncertainty, and how climate and environmental changes are affecting agricultural practices and human well-being in rural mountain areas.

**Anna Giorgi** is a Full Professor of Environmental and Applied Botany at the University of Milan. She directs the Mountain University (UNIMONT), a satellite campus of the University of Milan located in Edolo, in the Central Italian Alps, and the associated Research Center for the Sustainable Development of Mountain Areas (GESDIMONT). She has been delegated by the Rector of the University of Milan to coordinate "teaching, research and third mission activities for the enhancement of mountain territories." She is president of both the Bachelor's and Master's degrees at UNIMONT and is a member of the main national and international working groups and networks for the development of mountain areas, including NEMOR, EUSALP, ISCAR, and EUROMONTANA. She is responsible for the scientific coordination of numerous national and European research projects on sustainable development in complex socioecological systems, such as those found in mountain areas, and has produced over 100 scientific publications.

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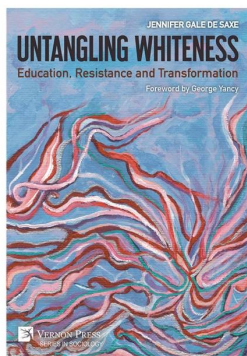
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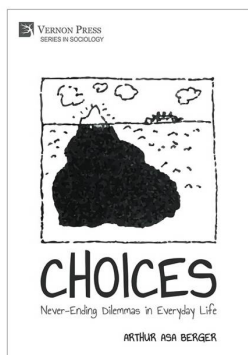
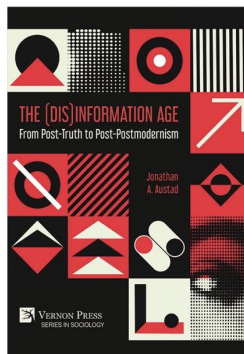
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