



**UCL
Engineering
Doctorate**
Urban Sustainability
& Resilience

Top-down resilience

Governing cities for resilience in the face of uncertain change and transformation

Rachna Lévêque

Centre for Urban Sustainability & Resilience, University College London

AESOP Young Academics Conference, Vienna 26 Feb – 1 Mar 2013



A framework for city-level planning and governance for urban resilience

Aims and methodology

- Social-ecological resilience and planning
 - Resonances between social-ecological resilience and planning identified (Goldstein 2009, Wilkinson 2010, 2012), but how do these translate into practice?
- Aim
 - To identify what the attributes of a resilient planning and governance process are
 - To verify whether social-ecological resilience can be translated into urban planning and governance as claimed, and if so, identify what the fit is and what the challenges are.
- Methodology
 - Review SES literature to identify key attributes of social-ecological resilience
 - Explore parallels in planning and governance theory and practice
 - Develop a framework for translating resilience into urban planning and governance
 - Test this framework against a recent city-scale planning and governance process aiming to transform
 - Desktop study of material around Detroit strategic planning process
 - Derive lessons for translating social-ecological resilience into practice

A framework for city-level planning and governance for urban resilience
Rachna Lévêque AESOP YA 2013, Vienna 27th February 2013



Theoretical basis

- Interpretation of resilience as from social-ecological theory
 - i.e., Holling (1996) et al
- Resilience as the ability of a system to transform and adapt in the face of change, rather than resilience as return to some idealised 'normal' state
 - Governance for resilience provides means of dealing with uncertainty

(And a point implicit in the paper)

- Resilience to 'stress', and 'shock'

Climate change	Flood
Ageing infrastructure	Failed bridge
Economic decline	Economic recession

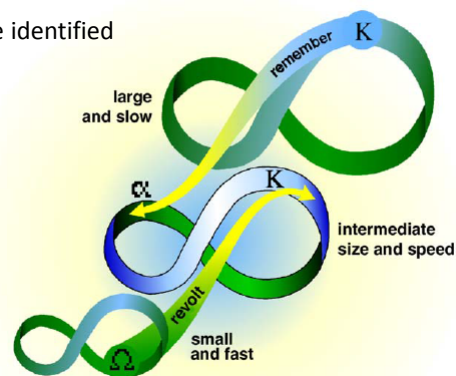
 - Stresses arise due to inconsistencies in system structures (how things are done) and provide the opportunity for radical and uncertain transformation in addition to incremental adaptation
- Not the common approach in either planning or the built environment

A framework for city-level planning and governance for urban resilience
 Rachna Lévêque AESOP YA 2013, Vienna 27th February 2013

UCL

Theoretical basis

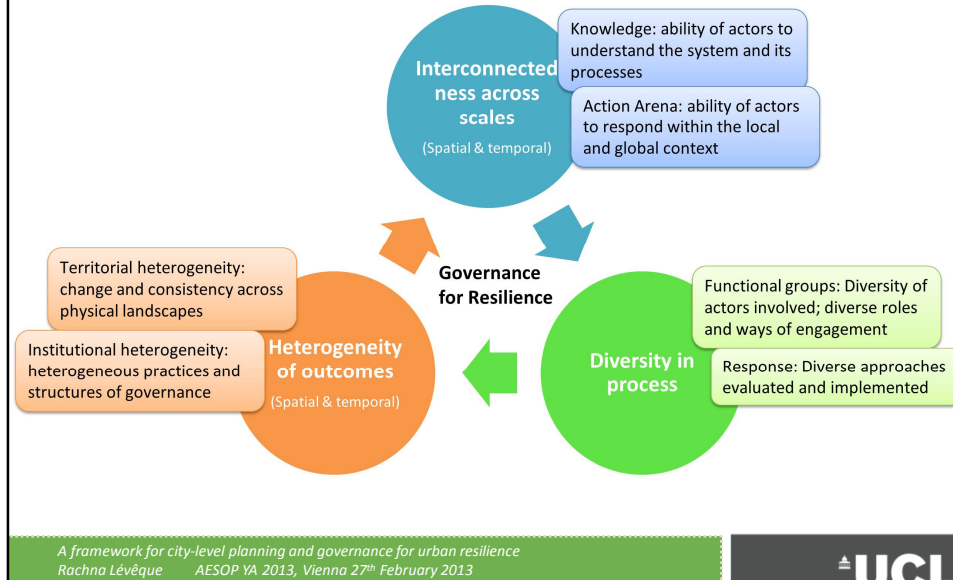
- Key tenets of social-ecological resilience
 - Interconnectedness across scales, nested systems, feedback loops - awareness
 - Diversity of resources (functional groups) and responses
 - Heterogeneous landscapes
- How these characteristics were identified



A framework for city-level planning and governance for urban resilience
 Rachna Lévêque AESOP YA 2013, Vienna 27th February 2013

UCL

Framework to translate social-ecological resilience into urban planning and governance



Detroit context

- Capital of auto-industry to “the nation’s symbol of urban decay” (Boyle 2001)
 - Stresses: Racial segregation, red-lining, “white flight”, lack of political vision
 - Shocks: Global collapse of auto-industry
 - Detroit city continues to face population decline, property abandonment, dysfunctional infrastructure, while surrounding counties flourish

“There’s a “Nothing left to lose” quality in Detroit - much like there was in New Orleans after Katrina. Detroit has suffered a Katrina equivalent, but over the course of ... several decades, rather than a few days”

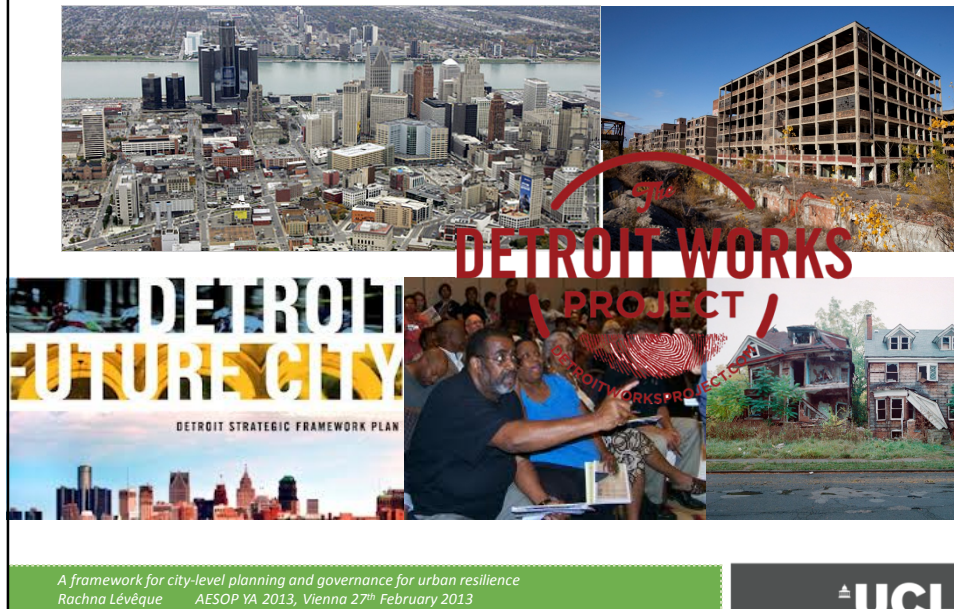
(Bruce Katz, in Arellano 2010)

- Detroit strategic planning process
 - Kresge and Ford foundations, city, businesses, outside experts/ consultants, and citizens

A framework for city-level planning and governance for urban resilience
Rachna Lévêque AESOP YA 2013, Vienna 27th February 2013



Detroit context

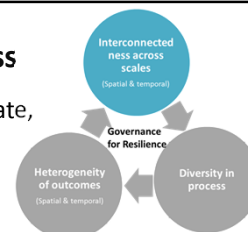


A framework for city-level planning and governance for urban resilience
 Rachna Lévêque AESOP YA 2013, Vienna 27th February 2013

UCL

Observations from Detroit - Interconnectedness

- Wide variety of stakeholders - government, public, private, within city, county region and beyond
- Knowledge
 - Planning priorities influence what knowledge is gained, what value is associated to it and how visible it becomes
 - Not all stakeholders may be willing to share knowledge.
 - Interconnectedness of knowledge is selective
- Action arena
 - Abilities and resources a function of actors' role in the planning process; dynamic
 - Notwithstanding ability, actions may not achieve scale required for transformation
 - Actors may choose to exercise their ability to not act
 - Influenced less by planning priorities than by actors own efforts, role, purpose of involvement; those with less resources may remain at the margins



A framework for city-level planning and governance for urban resilience
 Rachna Lévêque AESOP YA 2013, Vienna 27th February 2013

UCL

Observations from Detroit – Diversity in process

- Stakeholders who initiated the process had diverse interests
 - Kresge, Ford, DEGC, City of Detroit, etc
- Diverse actor groups
 - Diverse ways of engagement to engage diverse actors
 - Structure defines who is engaged and what output is gained, peer pressure
 - Not diverse functional groups, but diverse contributions to the process, i.e., diverse actor--role combinations
- Diverse responses
 - Responses at micro scales not always visible when viewing city-scale process
 - Engagement process uncovered diverse conceptualisations of transformation required for Detroit
 - Efforts at city-level focussed by themes arising from engagement, accompanied by reframing, questioning, communication and revision
 - Communication (interconnectedness of knowledge) primer to diverse responses?
 - What feedback is retained?

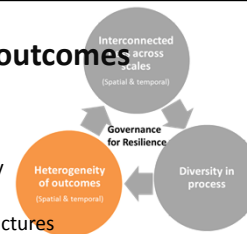


A framework for city-level planning and governance for urban resilience
 Rachna Lévêque AESOP YA 2013, Vienna 27th February 2013

UCL

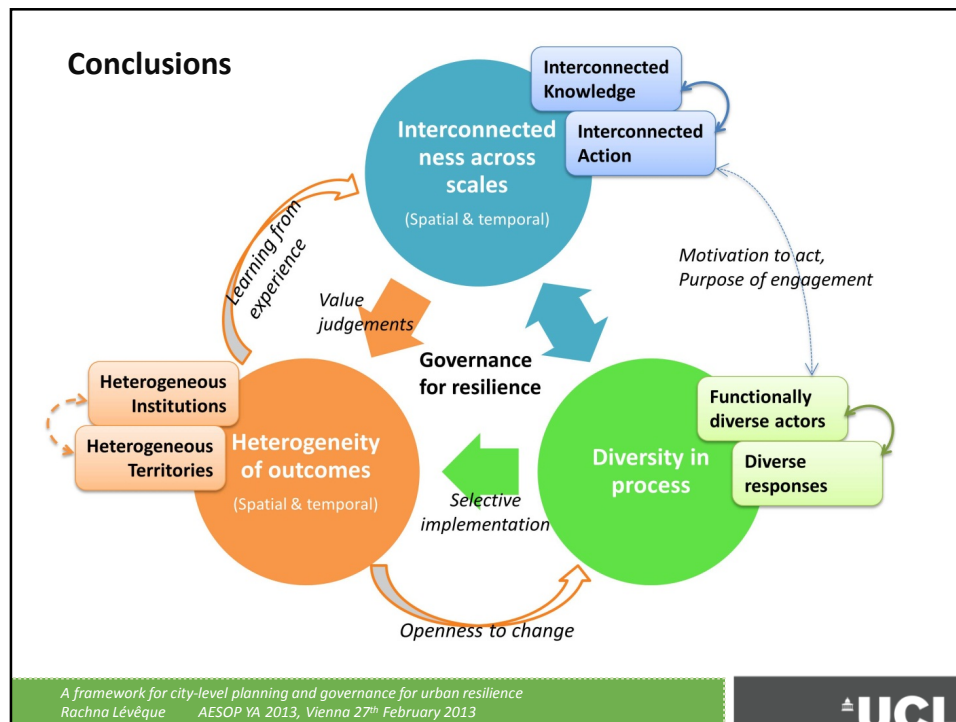
Observations from Detroit – Heterogeneity of outcomes

- Territorial heterogeneity
 - Territorial heterogeneity may also form basis for diversity of response! E.g., varying neighbourhood conditions throughout city
 - Limitations to heterogeneity, legacy of infrastructure but also apprehensions to physical changes, e.g., new neighbourhood structures
 - Do changes introduced or a large-scale contribute meaningfully to heterogeneity? Must heterogeneity necessarily be local?
- Institutional heterogeneity
 - New institutional set-ups as actors at several levels brought on board – businesses, community and religious groups, neighbourhood level groups with their own plans, etc
 - Iterative refinement of working structures and remits demonstrates willingness to learn and openness to change
 - Who should be open to change? Openness or political pressure to change?



A framework for city-level planning and governance for urban resilience
 Rachna Lévêque AESOP YA 2013, Vienna 27th February 2013

UCL



Conclusions

- Not a direct translation.
- Interdependent and messy relationships, rather than a linearised model for resilience or checklist
- Multiple overlapping influences – inclusion, power, values, political priorities – not yet covered by social-ecological resilience
- Resonances between social-ecological resilience and planning but need to keep an open mind if social-ecological systems thinking is to bring something new to planning
 - Not just about participation, engagement, transparency and power!
- Resilience at what scale, of whom and in what boundaries?