

Consideration of ecosystem services in urban resilience in South African cities

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Abstract

In 2011 South Africa published the 3rd State of Cities Report (SoCR) for its nine largest municipalities. This report, titled: "Towards Resilient Cities, a Reflection on the first decade of a democratic and transformed local government, 2001 – 2011", sets out to view the various economic, environmental, social and governance issues of the cities from a resilience perspective. In view of the transformation the country has to achieve, within the constraints of global challenges and changes, the study raised questions such as whether these nine cities are on an unsustainable growth path and therefore at the risk of future disaster or not? And do the cities, with their huge social and economic challenges, embrace ecology as part of the sustainable development approach?

The objective of this paper is to critically examine how the resilience of urban ecosystem services was considered in the South African SoCR. This was done by looking at the SoCR through the framework provided in the Resilience Alliance Workbook for assessing resilience in social-ecological systems. It was found that while the 2011 SoCR opened the door to using a resilience approach in discussing the sustainability of cities, it does not really allow the user to gain an understanding of the resilience of the ecosystem services in South Africa's main cities and the reporting methodologies needs to be adapted in future reports.

Keywords: Urban resilience, urban ecosystem services, State of Cities, South Africa