

Structure Report for

Professor Urban Resilience and Global Development (1.0 fte)

International Institute of Social Studies ISS of Erasmus University Rotterdam (EUR)

Background, motivation and positioning

In its Strategic Plan 2018-2022, ISS aims at enhancing its role as a research-intensive university institute in The Hague, focussing on academic excellence and high societal relevance of its research and teaching. In addition, ISS considers engagement, i.e., linking research and teaching to society, to be an important task of a university. In the research accreditation exercise conducted in 2017, the ISS research programme Global Development and Social Justice was highly rated and the ISS wants to maintain or exceed this level of performance. As part of its strategy, the Institute currently pursues four multidisciplinary, cross-cutting research themes. These are:

1. Environment and climate change
2. Conflict and peace
3. Social protection and inequality
4. Migration and diversity.

Consistent with the institute's strategy and with an eye to current and future developments in the area of development studies, and in particular the link between urbanisation, local and global development (described below), the Institute Board (IB) wants to establish a Chair in the area of Urban Resilience and Global Development.

Urban Global Development, ISS & relevant networks

Research in the field of urban global development at ISS is in a process of change *and* development. Due to recent retirements, the institute has limited capacity in the fields of urban poverty, formal and informal governance and local development. The ISS feels that there is a need for courses/teaching initiatives that offer a systematic, critical look at urban development and cities' and communities' responses to various types of crises (economic, social and environment).

Within Erasmus University Rotterdam, ISS participates in the *Erasmus Initiative Vital Cities and Citizens* (VCC), a collaboration with EUR faculties of social sciences (ESSB) and humanities (ESHCC). See: <https://www.eur.nl/onderzoek/erasmus-iniatives/vital-cities-and-citizens>.

VCC started working with three sub-themes within 'the urban': migration and diversity; conflict and security; culture and media. ISS contributes a global and critical social science perspective to the VCC with three PhD researchers, two postdocs and one assistant professor. They conduct research on the themes of migration and diversity, and conflict and security, both in the so-called global South (e.g. India, Kenya, Ethiopia) and the global North (metropolitan region The Hague-Rotterdam). Last year, four main urban themes have been identified by the VCC: (1) inclusive cities and diversity, (2) smart cities and communities, (3) sustainable and just cities, and (4) resilient cities and people.

ISS leads the theme on resilient cities and communities.

Other relevant players in the network are

- the ISS-based *Centre for Frugal Innovation in Africa* (CFIA), part of the strategic alliance between Leiden University, Delft University of Technology and Erasmus University Rotterdam (LDE), which also conducts also research on safe cities in Africa, specifically in Kenya and South Africa
 - the *LDE Centre for Migration and Diversity* and
 - the *LDE Centre for BOLD cities*.
 - the recent convergence between Erasmus University Rotterdam and the Technical University Delft focuses its efforts on urban sustainable deltas, both in the Rotterdam region and the global level.
 - UNIC, the European University of Post-Industrial Cities.
- The ISS chair will play an active role in ISS and the VCC, and spearhead networking and collaboration within the existing networks and beyond.

Urban Resilience and Global Development

Recognizing the promising developments in the VCC and cognizant of the growing urgency to understand urbanization as a global development that spans mega-cities and rural areas and all that is located in between, and urban resilience as a site where all the cross-cutting research themes of ISS play out, ISS wishes to invest in a Chair in Urban Resilience and Global Development.

A key focus of the Chair concerns the relationship between urban resilience and forms of urban governance, with attention to power, accountability and the space of citizens to interact and influence governance. The new Chair is expected to pay attention to global, international, national and local perspectives, policies and dynamics regarding urban resilience and development. An important challenge for the development of education and research is to link these large-scale processes with local perspectives, or to provide a citizens' focus on roles of communities in urban governance and development. It is further anticipated that the Chair will be able to link the study of urban resilience and governance to the ISS -and VCC- research themes of migration and diversity, and conflict and peace.

While the core of the work of the Chair is expected to concern the global South, attention will also be paid to cities in the Netherlands or other parts of the global North, since resilience is equally relevant to cities in the global South and in the global North. The city of The Hague joined the initiative of the 100 Resilient Cities (100RC) created by the Rockefeller Foundation in 2013. 100RC supports the adoption and incorporation of the resilience perspective that includes not just the shocks— such as earthquakes, fires, or flood but also the stresses that weaken the fabric of a city on a day-to-day or cyclical basis. In addition, it emphasizes the need to bounce back and recover from stresses and impacts. The city of Rotterdam is also affiliated to 100RC and is a leading municipality in the Netherlands on the theme.

In 2020, ISS established a Local Engagement Facility (LEF) which included four research projects on coping strategies with COVID19 among marginalized groups in the city of The Hague. This first LEF programme was followed by a second round with two projects focussing on resilience and coping

strategies in both the cities of The Hague and Rotterdam and conducted in collaboration with researchers from other EUR faculties.

UNIC, the European University of Post-Industrial Cities is a network of eight European universities based in post-industrial cities.

- The Chair is expected to develop the theme of urban resilience and global development in research, education and engagement and will have an important role in aligning and integrating various academic and educational activities within ISS.

Description of the academic area

Cities in both the so-called Global South and North face multiple and ever-growing crises and stresses such as poverty, inequality, competition over living space and services, exclusion, violence, environmental degradation, and disasters. Expanding on this, Sparke noted that “the Global South is everywhere, but it is also always somewhere”, and that “somewhere” is increasingly located at the intersection of urbanising geographies of dispossession and repossession worldwide (Sparke, 2007, p. 117; Brenner, Schmid, & Christian, 2014).

Paying attention to local responses to urban precarity and marginality reveals diverse ways of people making-do in terms of economy, security, health and/or climate change. This makes visible dynamic urban practices of individuals, groups and institutions with particular orientations to labour and livelihood, security, and/or disaster management that do not offer a mere alternative to top-down approaches, but instead become part of a wider commitment to exploring diverse urban responses ‘in their own right’. This becomes especially important when seeking to rethink the urban worldwide from a Southern vantage point and explore:

- a) existing and unfolding urban practices to ‘make-do’ in uncertain terrains from the perspectives of people who live through marginality, risk and violence; and
- b) whether and how such strategies ‘from below’ interact with top-down arrangements geared towards coping with, adapting to and/or transforming urban crises. Governance is thus perceived as a process which emerges through - and is constituted by - interactions between ideas, actors and practices at different scales and sites.

Urban governance constitutes multiple actors (groups) at various administrative levels – not only the government with its politicians and bureaucrats, but also civil society and the private market – that interact and act to solve societal problems. It is about “the capacity to get things done in the face of complexity, conflict and social change. (...). The capacity to get things done no longer lies (if it ever did) with government power and authority in one place” (Kearns and Paddison, 2000: 847). Governance implies the sharing and interdependency of resources which make coordination and collaboration between actors with different organizational backgrounds and variety in perceptions and interests necessary - but exceedingly complex. One risk is the “depoliticization” of the governance discourse where it may refer more to technical fixes or (formal) administrative dynamics, whereas the notion of power is – or should be- central in theories on urban resilience and development and ultimately addresses issues of exclusion, urban livelihoods, and urban land grabbing. This is compounded by the fact that in many countries, systems of ‘informality’ (bribing, collusion, political

corruption) are more dominant and effective than ‘formal’ systems (Ansell and Gash, 2008). How the concept of urban resilience can be meaningfully applied across classes, genders, generations and levels of administration is a major challenge.

The concept of resilience is not new. Holling defined resilience as a “measure of the persistence of systems and their ability to absorb change and disturbance and still maintain the same relationships between populations or state variables” (Holling, 1973: 14). Resilience is understood as the capacity of a system to absorb disturbance and maintain its equilibrium (Berry, 2013; Sharifa and Yamagata, 2016). However, some scholars stress the evolutionary character of resilience, implying that systems (cities, humans) can also develop beyond their state of equilibrium (Folke, 2006). Resilience then also refers to the capacity of an organization, individual or group of people to adapt and transform (Elmqvist, 2014).

In the literature, at least three conceptions of resilience exist (Folke, 2006; Sharifi and Yamagata, 2016): engineering, ecological and social-ecological resilience.¹ Next to these three, one can distinguish the community resilience viewpoint (Davidson, 2010; Berkes and Folke, 1998). This strand originates from social sciences (sociology and (social) psychology) and deals with inter-personal development and mental health. This provides the conceptual background of the disaster literature (Brown and Westaway 2011) and has connected with a range of social science disciplines interested in factors that allow communities to deal with adversity, such as community development (Paton and Johnston 2001) and community self-organization (Norris et al. 2008). Conceptual development of community-level resilience in this literature is relatively new (Berkes and Ross, 2013), and crucially important. The attention to community-level resilience can be seen to uphold a ‘myth of community’ that maintains a notion of communities as self-organized and harmoniously collaborating for the better good of all, which may grossly misread the local dynamics in communities.

To provide directions for research in this field, Kelly and Kelly suggest the use of the term resilience and state that “the idea of resilience seems to play a role in recovering and supporting a sense of agency” (Kelly & Kelly, 2017, p. 21). Critiques of resilience thinking have pointed to the risk of political degradation, where a neo-liberal tenor off-loads governance responsibilities to local communities and people (Aradau, 2014; Bourbeau, 2015; Evans & Reid, 2014; Hall & Lamont, 2013). In the approach of Kelly and Kelly, urban resilience aims to incorporate these critiques and pertains to resourcefulness, self-reliance, solidarity and interdependence and includes citizens, government institutions and private actors and is therefore located at the interface between top-down and bottom-up approaches.

¹ First, engineering resilience is about the efficiency and rapid recovery of the system after a disturbance. Engineering resilience is interpreted as having a single equilibrium. Second, ecosystem resilience, which refers to the buffer capacity or the ability of the system to withstand a disturbance and still maintain its function. It focuses on the ability of the system to persist and perceives the system as having multiple equilibria. Third, social-ecological resilience is the interplay of the disturbance and reorganization. It refers to the system having an adaptive capacity to transform, learn and innovate. The system in this concept has an integrated feedback mechanism and cross-scale dynamic interactions that allow the system to sustain and develop. Notwithstanding their merits, critical questions can be raised with regards to all these conceptions, in particular about power issues, differentiated impacts for different socio-economic groups, and questions about the equilibrium that may in fact constitute an ongoing situation of inequality, exclusion, stress, precariousness and undignified conditions.

This type of research would engender nuanced understandings of urban resilience as encompassing both depoliticising and empowering sensibilities, practices and materialities. In this vein, urban resilience seems to carry at least the potential for counter-conducts, of radical political solidarity and of critique of the fundamental destruction of social and natural life associated with the neoliberal push to global urbanization (see Hornborg, 2013; Hopkins, 2008).

Thus, it is expected that:

- the successful applicant will develop a research agenda which is based on awareness of urbanization as a global phenomenon that encapsulates the entire planet while being sensitive to urban resilience mechanisms, innovations, organizations and possibilities, and being aware of the power relations underlying the neoliberal push for urbanization and top-down governance approaches.

Without being prescriptive, the ISS expects the successful applicant to develop and generate research projects, including attention to knowledge uptake and policy recommendations, around thematic areas such as:

- Research on urban resilience that looks at the interactions between the formal/top-down and informal/bottom-up governance activities at various jurisdictional, organizational and geographical scales and whether and how these engender configurations of resilience to violence, destitution and disaster.
- Theoretical development on the concept of urban resilience, integrating various research disciplines (social sciences, policy studies, political science, ecology, disaster studies, international studies).
- Urban development, governance and politics to explore multiple crises affecting cities such as poverty, violence, dismal services, or disasters, from the perspectives of people and communities affected by these crises.
- Connecting local, multi-actor and multi-scalar practices and relationships of urban resilience to government and corporate actors to encourage multi-stakeholder collaborations in local arenas. This would in turn yield insights for global urban development that build from - rather than operate against - local connections, knowledges and practices.
- Focus on solidarity (and resistance) initiatives that respond to the haphazard and unplanned ways many cities develop, thus bringing into view innovative opportunities and policy options for urban inclusivity, disaster response and social justice.

The Chair is expected to take up teaching activities in the MA Programme in Development Studies and/or other teaching programmes that ISS offers (in person or online); and to engage in PhD supervision.

Profile and selection

The post will suit an academic with a strong track record in research and teaching in the broad field of development studies with a particular focus on the role and potential of urban resilience as a discourse and set of practices in tackling development challenges brought forth by global urbanization. Potential applicants should be able to address both the worldwide implications of urbanization and have in-depth knowledge of urban resilience in the broadest sense in relation to global development challenges. As mentioned above, motivated by global ambitions as well as the Institute's strategy and its existing networks, the ISS expects the Chair to focus on urbanization as a worldwide process and the role of urban resilience in addressing global development challenges, especially in relation to the ISS cross-cutting research themes.

Given the inter-disciplinary nature of the topic, the successful candidate may have a PhD in development studies, sociology, anthropology, public policy and management, political science, urban geography, urban planning, or another demonstrated relevant field. Regardless of her/his disciplinary background, the successful candidate will be expected to demonstrate the ability to conduct inter-disciplinary work and have keen interest in doing so. The candidate should be open to working with both qualitative and quantitative methods.

In terms of research, the ISS expects the successful candidate to have excellent and proven academic research skills, including a strong publications record, demonstrated ability in developing and leading research programs, and acquiring and managing research funding. The successful candidate will also need to demonstrate her/his ability to successfully supervise PhD students.

With regard to teaching, the candidate should have the capacity and skills to develop, lead and deliver courses in the area of urban resilience and global development and should be willing to deliver foundation courses and/or methodology courses at the post-graduate level (PhD/MA students), and/or to contribute to a core course of a Major, the MA general course, or other (in person or online) teaching activities of the ISS. The successful candidate should have experience and commitment to teaching, research and service in a multicultural environment and is expected to contribute actively to teaching innovation.

The successful candidate will also be expected to engage with relevant non-academic actors to demonstrate the societal relevance of academic research including, for example, by contributing to public debate, interacting with the media or taking up advisory work.

Finally, the Chair will be expected to display academic leadership within ISS and to take up management tasks.

Required competences

1. Persuasiveness, ability to inspire and lead research/teaching teams
2. Clear vision regarding urban resilience and global development
3. Managing for results
4. Capacity to collaborate in teams

Diversity

The International Institute of Social Studies is committed to building and sustaining a community based on inclusiveness, equity and diversity and the ISS community believes this will contribute to the ISS mission and vision of being the best institute in its field. ISS is an equal opportunities employer and we encourage applications from candidates of all genders, ethnicities and nationalities. Given the current composition of the ISS and priorities relating to staff diversity, the Institute has a preference for applicants originating from the Global South.

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