



Call for papers *International Conference Resilience and Antifragility in History and Archaeology. Reconstructing the Complexity of human-environmental Interactions in the Past*

Dates : 30-31 May 2025

Location : *Université Catholique de Louvain, Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium*

Submission Deadline: 20 March 2025

In recent decades, Resilience Theory (RT), derived from ecology, has been increasingly adopted in historical and archaeological research to reconstruct the dynamic interplay between human societies and their environments. Resilience is commonly understood as the capacity of a system to maintain key functions and processes under stress by adapting to change. While this framework has offered valuable insights, its application is not without challenges. These include a lack of consensus on definitions, methods, and benefits, as well as concerns regarding its overuse in historical narratives. Recent advancements in related fields have introduced the concept of Antifragility, formulated by Nassim Nicholas Taleb in 2012, which offers a fundamentally different perspective. Unlike resilience, which emphasizes the ability to return to original conditions, antifragility describes systems that thrive and improve when exposed to shocks and disruptions. This alternative lens provides an opportunity to revisit and reinterpret human-environmental interactions and socio-political dynamics in antiquity.

This conference aims to bring together researchers interested in advancing the discussion on resilience and antifragility in historical and archaeological reconstructions. We invite contributions that explore these themes, emphasizing innovative methodologies, theoretical frameworks, and interdisciplinary approaches, without chronological or geographical restrictions. Furthermore, the conference seeks to contribute to the ongoing debate by reflecting on the impact of alternative theoretical approaches in prompting new narratives of the past. By challenging established frameworks and exploring diverse perspectives, we aim to foster innovative historical reconstructions that capture the complexity and dynamism of socio-environmental systems in the past.

Conference Axes & Key Topics

The general aim of the conference is to discuss about current research projects involving historical and archaeological reconstructions to reflect on the impact of applying methodological/theoretical approaches involving resilience and/or antifragility.

The conference will be organized following three main axes:

1. Dynamics of Change and Resilience Theory in Human-Environmental Interactions: This axis delves into the application of Resilience Theory to reconstruct how past societies

responded to environmental and social changes over time. Papers are encouraged to explore the use of proxies—such as material culture, environmental data, and settlement patterns—to translate archaeological findings into key variables for resilience analysis. Additionally, this theme invites reflections on the limitations and challenges of applying Resilience Theory, including debates on its relevance across different temporal and cultural contexts, as well as opportunities to refine the framework through archaeological case studies.

2. Dealing with Antifragility or alternative theoretical approaches to Resilience in Historical and Archaeological Reconstructions: This axis focuses on case studies and theoretical explorations that challenge or extend the resilience framework by incorporating the concept of antifragility or other alternative concepts. How have human societies not only survived but thrived and improved when faced with challenges such as environmental, social, or political disruptions? Contributions should highlight examples of thriving under adversity and reflect on how antifragility or other alternative concepts can reshape our understanding of past systems.

3. Cross-Disciplinary Applications and Methods to reconstruct Complex Systems in the Past: The third axis invites papers that may focus on cross-disciplinary methodologies, computational modeling, or conceptual insights that bridge gaps between micro-level behaviors and macro-level trends in complex systems. This axis encourages innovative collaborations and methodological reflections to expand the scope, impact on results, and applicability of theoretical frameworks, such as resilience and antifragility, for historical and archaeological reconstructions.

Submission Guidelines:

We welcome submissions from scholars in history, archaeology, anthropology, digital humanities, and other related disciplines. English or French languages are accepted, papers should not last more than 20 min. Abstracts should be no more than 300 words and include:

- Title of the paper
- Author(s) name(s) and affiliation(s)
- Contact information

Publication Opportunity:

Selected papers may be invited for submission to an edited volume published by Presses Universitaires de Louvain (PUL)

Please submit your abstract to valentina.limina@uclouvain.be by **20 March 2025**. Notifications of acceptance will be sent by **30 March 2025**.

Contact Information: For inquiries, please contact the conference organizers at valentina.limina@uclouvain.be