



Resilient Communities Workshop

# Book of Abstracts


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University College Dublin  
Hybrid

## WHAT KEEPS US GOING?

Human communities beyond crisis and collapse  
through multidisciplinary, diachronic  
perspectives on societal resilience





# Spice up your life: Adding emotions to the prehistoric resilience menu

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Archaeological studies on societal resilience are mainly oriented toward broad economically-oriented changes within a culture and often involve the Adaptive Cycle Model. Somehow, we forget that people are the ones who adapt to stressful situations or crises, not only in physical and material but also mental domains. While emotional resilience is currently recognised as a critical ability for individual and collective positive adjustment in the face of adversity, it is surprising that research on past societies little (or ever) refers to it.

Having that in mind, I introduce two approaches to reveal prehistoric adaptive emotions in turbulent times for the present discussion.

1) The Final Pleistocene /Early Holocene food stress. Food shortages are probably the most mentioned crises in prehistory, provoked by environmental instability and/or demographic change. Hunter-gatherers responded to them differently: changing subsistence procurement practice to the intensification of few resources and exploiting a broad spectrum of resources, storing food and other items, an allocation - migration to neighbouring allies not affected by famine, and even cannibalism. We compare basic emotions recognised worldwide, possibly revealed by or related to ancient behavioural adaptations, and discuss their role in preferred choices.

2) The encounter with the Other in Neolithization. The idea is to consider the behaviour of the Mesolithic indigenous population as a consequence of the emotional reaction to Neolithic newcomers and novelties. We treat the encounter with the Unknown and the Other as affecting the reference framework of local communities. Mesolithic hunter-gatherers should readapt emotional and other cultural subsystems according to the apperception of external stimuli, whether 'threatening' or 'affirmative' and further on changeable or unchangeable, avoidable or inevitable. The relevant resulting feelings are a) anger, b) fear, c) sadness and d) pleasure accompanied by reactions such as a) an attack on strangers, b) withdrawal,



c) passivity or d) approaching them. Those behaviours could be read in archaeological material as a) conflicts between communities with traces of violence, b) abandonment of the Mesolithic sites, c) continuation of Mesolithic regional culture without adopting (much of) the Neolithic elements and d) fast regional fusion of Mesolithic and Neolithic features.

The research on suggested methods is still ongoing yet hopefully contributing to the resilience debate.

