Assessing to what extent planning impacts institutional resilience

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Abstract

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Institutional resilience is generally considered a desirable attribute (Hills, 2000), if not an objective to reach. This is translated by the fact that since the 1990’s, most donors and development agencies aimed at the sustainability of participatory processes through favouring adequate institutional environments (Leroy, 2009) and the emergence of ad-hoc organisations. We consider here that institutions are “normative (rules, norms, procedures) and cognitive (identity, culture, representations, common beliefs) frames, formal or informal, that govern society” as opposed to organisations which are groups of individuals. This definition places endeavors of the past two decades under the frame of organizational resilience rather than institutional resilience. We will argue that the concept of institutional resilience in that sense is difficult to define, even less to assess, since institutions as a set of rules, norms and values are hardly identifiable and nameable and can undergo a wide range of dynamic changes from persistence to transformation. The various concepts of resilience will be discussed, along with the link between institutional resilience, resilience of social-ecological systems (SES) and adaptiveness of institutions.

We will advocate here that institutional and organisational (I&O) resilience are not always desirable, and should be considered as support functions rather than as an objective per se. This implies that I&O change and emergence should not necessarily be pushed for but rather provided favourable conditions, with the potential of being precluded.

We analyse here a specific form of participatory process called “cooplan” (collaborative planning) implemented in 5 real case study areas (South Africa, Mali, Tunisia, Uganda and Ethiopia) presenting various NRM issues in the frame of a European project. A common monitoring and evaluation protocol was developed in order to observe potential organizational and institutional changes induced by the process. The hypothesis is that planning is more likely to call for I&O changes than other forms of participatory processes. The main monitoring tool is a "logbook" based on the model developed in Etienne (2009) supposed to monitor all interactions, decisions and external factors (such as tribal conflicts, floods, etc.) happening in the case study area. Additional tools record stakeholders’ engagement, time of inclusion, satisfaction, learning, relational aspects, innovation, commitment, etc. All these factors were identified as proxys for assessing I&O emergence, change and/or resilience within and outside the social groups involved. This process is largely conditioned by field requirements, with an assumed action-research and loosely-controlled experiment posture.

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This presentation will detail this process, discuss the different implementation in the countries, the observed discrepancies, and discuss some of the procedural results and remaining challenges.

**Keywords:** Adaptive Governance, Institution, Planning, Self, organisation, Social, ecological systems