Evaluating programmes and projects aiming to enhance community engagement and resilience

Ioan Fazey

1University of Dundee (UoD) – School of Environment/CECHR, University of Dundee, Perth Road, Dundee DD1 4HN, United Kingdom

Abstract

THIS IS PART OF THE SESSION ON COMMUNITY RESILIENCE (PART 3) by Ross and Berkes Enhancing community resilience requires navigating and facilitating social processes and interactions, including processes of the exchange and co-production of knowledge. While emphasis on the design and management of knowledge exchange (KE) for resilience is increasing, learning about how to do this better is hampered by lack of conceptual development and appropriate methods to evaluate complex and multifaceted knowledge sharing processes. This paper therefore outlines principles for the evaluation of KE operating in community resilience and research initiatives. The work is based on an analysis of 135 peer-reviewed evaluations of KE in cases analysed from diverse disciplines. The results indicate strong relationships between the field of study (e.g. health care, environmental management), the way knowledge and KE were conceptualised and implemented, the approach used for the evaluation, and the outcomes being evaluated. A typology of seven KE evaluations are presented, which provide the basis for five principles for evaluating KE occurring in communities to enhance resilience. These principles are: (i) design for multiple end users; (ii) be explicit about why KE is expected to deliver its outcomes; (iii) evaluate diverse outcomes; (v) use evaluations as part of the process of delivering KE; and (v) use mixed methods of data collection. A catch-all approach to evaluation is neither appropriate nor desirable. Instead, approaches that focus on understanding the underlying processes of KE, assess the relative contribution of other factors in shaping outcomes in addition to KE, and which involve multiple stakeholders in implementing evaluations will be the most appropriate for improving knowledge about how to enhance the sharing of knowledge, adaptive capacity and learning in ways that build community resilience.

Keywords: Adaptive capacity, Learning, Stakeholder Engagement, Community, Empowerment, Evaluation

*Speaker