Measuring, assessing, profiling (MAP) community resilience: psychosocial dimensions

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Abstract

Resilience 2014 (Montpellier, France): Session Abstract
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Defining and measuring, assessing and/or profiling human resilience at the individual and collective levels has been the focus of attention for interdisciplinary researchers in the social and behavioural sciences for the past dozen years. International development and humanitarian agencies are also interested in the question of measurement/assessment of community resilience, having increasingly re-framed their interventions as ‘resilience building’ activities. There are ongoing debates and dilemmas over the notion of external agency in building resilience when human resilience is more about individual and collective agency and pathways to maintain dynamic steady-states in complex adaptive (or maladaptive as the case may be) systems and sub-systems. With respect to international development, the traditional linear equation that still permeates policy and practice guidelines:

\[ \text{Inputs from within and without + goals, targets and indicators (such as the MDG) = development} \]

has been challenged (Almedom 2012), and alternative non-linear and uncertain realities described as more plausible pathways to sustainable livelihoods that require composite indices and multiple narratives of community resilience to be better understood.

This session aims to provide a workshop-style venue to discuss major theoretical and methodological advances made in understanding the psychosocial dimensions of human resilience: the capacity to anticipate and/or judiciously engage with adverse events and experiences, actively learning and positively adapting to changing realities while maintaining ‘normal’ (routine) function without loss of identity, core purpose and meaning. Community resilience

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is supported by the pillars civic engagement or deliberative democracy and collective efficacy that arise from community organizing. The workshop will be co-facilitated with one or more contributors who will be invited to discuss and agree the details of a participatory discussion focused on theory, definitions and methods. A possible outcome of this session/workshop may be a co-authored paper on measuring, assessing and profiling (MAP) community resilience – the psychosocial dimensions.

It is maintained that the cognitive and structural aspects of community social capital of the bonding, bridging, and linking types underpin the psychosocial dimensions of community resilience. Hence the need for multi-level measurement and/or assessment tools for creating multi-dimensional profiles of community resilience. This session will invite participants with established theoretical and/or empirical contributions to the rapidly growing bodies of knowledge on human resilience, the psychosocial dimensions. These may include those who have studied community resilience in the context of natural-resource dependent livelihoods such as forest-dependent communities around the world. They may also include disaster resilience research and policy/practice analyses. Questions of food security; conflict resolution; legal empowerment; and sustainable livelihoods may be debated and discussed as part and parcel of the psychosocial dimensions of community resilience.

**Keywords:** community resilience, social capital, adaptive learning, adaptive governance, measurement/assessment methods and tools