Operationalising resilience thinking in multi-stakeholder contexts: Assessing the catalytic role of scientists

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Abstract

As scientists, a major challenge of our time is to act as catalysts for change. We need to enable individuals to integrate knowledge cultures, learn and act collectively to promote resilience or transformation. Collective responses are necessary to address the roots of complex ‘wicked’ problems and find potential solutions, but are constrained by structured thinking and institutionalised barriers. This requires participatory research and planning processes which can simultaneously bridge stakeholders’ world views, encourage cross-scale partnerships and innovation, and generate social learning and collective action. However, this presents fundamental challenges for scientists. Often we have to facilitate multi-stakeholder processes and act as objective knowledge brokers, but also have to manage and integrate our own disciplinary paradigms and value systems. In developing contexts, the power dynamics of ‘North’ and ‘South’ knowledge systems can influence process and outcomes. In cross-cultural situations, simple concepts can be lost in translation. Furthermore, we need to learn ourselves by evaluating the impact of such processes on knowledge integration, learning and collective action, but this is difficult to address methodologically. In two complementary, back-to-back sessions scientists’ experiences as practitioners facilitating resilience thinking ‘in the field’ are assessed, with the aim to distil our learning about how to more effectively design, implement and evaluate knowledge integration processes. In the first session the focus is on stakeholder processes, while the second presents different methodological approaches for operationalising resilience and catalysing change.

\textbf{Keywords:} Collective action, Local knowledge, Multiple perspectives, Shared learning, Stakeholder engagement, Ways of knowing