From an SIA to a resilience lens: implications for learning between fields

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My studies in SIA and resilience

**SIA** 1980s – 2000s
Coronation Hill SIA (1990, with Lane, Dale) - Indigenous
Theoretical frameworks (e.g. Ross and McGee 2006) – health and mining case

**Resilience** (2000s to present)
Stanthorpe study – what makes communities resilient, relationship between individual and community resilience (Buikstra et al. 2010)
Theoretical development across psychology and social-ecological system paradigms (Berkes & Ross 2013, Ross & Berkes 2014, Berkes & Ross 2016)
SIA and Community resilience both involve ‘agency’

Communities are proactive in responding to potentially impactful developments and events.
SIA

Focuses on the events (projects, cumulative) and also on SEA – impact assessment in planning

*Shaping the event*

The impact is seen as arising from the event (linear thinking?)
Usually single level, e.g. a community, a region.
Usually one-off assessments
   
   Even in cumulative (where we need to consider over time as well as multiple projects)
Resilience

Focuses on the nature of responses and outcomes

- Not much differentiation among the events (since the focus is on unplanned, usually ‘natural’ events)

Thinks cumulatively

- Responses to single and successive events
- Not linear. A system can build, then lose, resilience over successive shocks

Multi-level view

- Levels in the system affect each other in complex ways (beyond ‘cumulative’)

Navigating (not shaping) the system responses

- Adaptive co-management
- Understanding and building adaptive capacity
SIA theory

Very few models were ever developed.
SIA theory cont.

Community organization model
Community response model

Social vitality
patterns of social behaviour (interactive or private)

Economic viability
degree to which communities are economically dependent on, or independent of, the regional, provincial or national economy

Political efficacy
the extent to which social vitality and economic viability are associated with the mobilization of political power and processes. Internal debates and use of external linkages.
A study of the cumulative effects of lead contamination and mining industry downsizing in Broken Hill (1990s)
Ross & McGee found these frameworks would not have fully predicted the outcomes.

Social response model
• Community had strong social vitality, apparent political efficacy, yet did not provide strong social support. Economic dependence on mining led to unwillingness to confront the source of the health threat. i.e. interactions among the factors in the social response model matter.

Social organization, community organization, models
• How to tell which values are pivotal?
  • In such a socially cohesive community, why did individual values and behaviour prevail over social support? The social processes are subtle: disempowerment of private individuals

Conclusions:
Frameworks are still useful but remain a ‘best guess’. Dynamics in an impact situation are complex. They draw attention to different aspects, e.g. formal and informal social organization, values, culture
** Importance of community agency**
Turning to resilience

Many of the same factors are identified as characteristics in community resilience (Berkes & Ross 2013)

They are not a checklist – agency and self-organizing are crucial to turn the latent characteristics into a resilience process

Greater linkage to environmental characteristics
Social-ecological systems – and resilience – are multi-level

Berkes & Ross 2013
What can we learn?

Potential power in combining impact assessment and resilience thinking

Focus on the events and the responses – people have agency in both

Resilience is one response to an impacting event

Adaptive capacity (related to the resilience characteristics and SIA models is surely important

Suggests we should not only minimize negative social impacts (and improve opportunities), but build adaptive capacity and resilience where we can

But where? Regions prone to shocks, regions subject to massive developments?

That takes longer than project time-frames

But it would be wrong to expect communities to cope with social impacts, on the argument that they ought to be resilient (and are somehow deficient if not).
Mutual learnings

**SIA can learn from community resilience**

Look more closely at community-environment connections (how does this social-ecological system work)

Complexity theory, complex adaptive systems

Multi-level analysis: individual, group, community, within region etc. all influencing one another

**Community resilience can learn from SIA**

The complexity of community dynamics, how groups interact in creating the eventual ‘impact’

- The nature of self-organizing behaviour

More attention to values, culture, political dimensions
Over to you – further suggestions please
References


Thank you

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