

Communicative Resilience

Bruce Evan Goldstein

Panel session: Collaborative Resilience: Social-Ecological Knowledges in Formation

Collaboration can do more to foster resilience than just foster trusting relationships and capacity to deal with complexity. Communicative resilience can enable communities to gain better understanding of their place within social-ecological systems while developing capacity to make more equitable decisions about what should become more resilient, through which approach, and for whose benefit. Drawing on both collaborative planning and social-ecological resilience studies, I suggest that communicative resilience is an emergent property of the interaction between systems science and communicative dialogue. Reflecting this synthesis, communicative resilience is both a procedure and an outcome:

- As a process, communicative resilience recognizes the validity of other knowledge systems, and a plurality of ways of understanding and valuing the social and natural world. It is attentive to power, including the domination of certain framings over others, enabling participants to re-examine their ways of thinking and revise the assumptions from which institutional norms, rules, and practices are derived.
- As an outcome, communicative resilience emerges as participants identify the ecological as well as social components of a system, and explore their properties and appropriate scales of analysis and activity. It is more than a fact-finding process, or social learning – it's a process of mutual discovery that reshapes those who take part in it, initiating new forms of collective knowledge and identity amidst the productive interplay of different knowledge practices, and builds capacity to catalyze institutional change.

Efforts to pursue communicative resilience may result in a more unified understanding of a social-ecological system through joint fact-finding and collective sensemaking, but it is unknowable before collaboration takes place – indeed, since resilience is in part social, system conditions may be re-shaped by collaborative interaction. Scientific assessment of resilience can be a part of a communicative resilience, both through participation in the collaborative process and assessment of its impact. As advisors, resilience experts need to cultivate a reflexive awareness of their own influence on the process, and to remain open to critical review from their intended beneficiaries. Complementing this necessary precaution, they should be prepared to be drivers of change and even be part of that change, engaging with their clients to help create new knowledge, social identities, and opportunities for institutional change. This underscores that conflict and struggle can be constructive and unavoidable parts of a collaborative process, rather than a threat to its stability. In this way, communicative resilience transcends the managerialism that have characterized most approaches to operationalizing resilience.