

**“What makes a resilient
community?”**

**Examining community
responses following
unplanned events”**

Contents

| | |
|---|---------|
| Executive Summary | Page 1 |
| Purpose and Background | Page 2 |
| Literature Review | Page 5 |
| Methodology | Page 8 |
| Methods | Page 9 |
| Ethics | Page 10 |
| Discussion | Page 12 |
| Conclusion | Page 15 |
| Bibliography | Page 18 |
| Appendices | Page 20 |
| Appendix 1 – Acknowledgements | |
| Appendix 2 – Ethical Approval request | |
| Appendix 3 – Questions Used | |
| Appendix 4 – Participant Information | |
| Appendix 5 – Thanks and Contact Details | |

Executive Summary

This paper sets out to explore what makes a resilient community.

I will further examine the concepts of resilience within the paper, but in brief, I have defined it, for the purpose of this paper, as the ability to recover and grow after unplanned events, in this instance, flooding.

There are a wide range of factors that impact resilience the Garioch area of Aberdeenshire following the flooding in January 2016.

I intentionally kept the focus of this paper very local so that it has a purpose and active life after writing, influencing my own practice and the development of community action plans for the Garioch Partnership.

Purpose and Background

In early 2016, Storm Frank battered Scotland. The North East of Scotland was massively impacted, with many communities facing extreme flooding. I work in the Garioch area of Aberdeenshire, and there were many communities affected here.

Witnessing the way the communities coped made me think about “resilience” and what makes communities strong and cohesive, and how they cope in the aftermath of an unplanned event. It raised issues of how best we can support our communities after something unexpected happens, and what we, as a community development organisation, can do to help them not only bounce back, but bounce-beyond as identified by the Glasgow Centre for Population Health (12:2014)

“For example, at community, city or regional level, resilience has assumed importance in the face of growing uncertainty around future trends. The complex nature of these trends, and their multiple impacts, ensures that a return to pre-crisis conditions will not be possible. Climate change is one such example, with the need to maintain resilient places in light of environmental challenge leading to increasing uncertainty about the viability of communities to support the ways of life to which they are accustomed”

To focus my own enquiry and to keep it manageable, I opted to examine 3 communities that were affected – Port Elphinstone (PE), Kintore (K) and Kemnay (KR). I also felt it important to speak to a small number of agency respondents – one from the Local Authority (LA), one from Health (H) and one from the Police (PS). I anonymised the respondents by allocating letters and numbers for responses as in brackets above. I chose to do face to face interviews, and with 3 respondents in each area, although sadly due to personal issues for one respondent, I could only achieve 2 in Kemnay – although in the report, the respondents were already numbered so it is KR2 that is absent. The questions I used are listed in the appendices at the end. My interviews were initially scheduled to take one hour, but after the first two, I found that 90 minutes was a more realistic time to give fair time to allow people to tell their stories without feeling pressured or rushed. There was no payment or other incentive for people to be involved. Respondents were identified through current contacts.

My interviews were transcribed, and all went back to the respondents to ensure it met what they had said, with the freedom for them to edit or remove any comment they felt had not reflected what they shared. I recorded the interviews typing directly into a word document – with the response code as described above. I had planned to use vocal recording, but after discussion with interviewees, and the majority feeling uncomfortable at being recorded, I altered my method of data capture taking a pragmatic stance to find what worked. My agency respondents were via email due

to work schedule requirements to allow them the flexibility to be engaged without taking an hour to 90 minutes out of their working week.

As I had previously identified, this is an emotive issue, talking to people about being displaced from their homes and livelihoods, and the caution that Thompson offers in People Skills was central to my handling of the interviews.

“If we try to turn our back on the emotional issues involved in people work, we not only reduce our chances of being effective, we also run the risk of doing more harm than good, to ourselves and to the people we are trying to help” (Thompson, 2002 pg147)

I had sourced the numbers for local support, and places to go for advice and information for people affected, which I had available to all participants, and gave them my own contact details and clear information on the process, detailing what would happen with their transcript and how it would be shared.

Working within community planning, the word “resilient” is often used, and to me became jargon and a term that we used without conscious thought. For the purpose of my own research, I felt I needed to examine the words we use in every day discussion, but without the level of awareness of what we are actually trying to convey. Therefore, part of my reading and investigations were into what people thought of resilience and to examine what we all meant by it. I soon uncovered it being a contested term that many people saw having different meanings. I shall further examine this in the course of this paper. I also chose to examine the definition of community. There are issues to be examined within this; community is often seen as a wonderful, homogeneous group, and does not address the underlying tensions.

“The danger is that if we accept analyses of communities as homogenous, not only is this naïve and obscures the reality of life in community, but it provides a smokescreen for the forces of structural inequality” (Ledwith, 2005, pg25)

As we move towards a greater pressure on communities developing their own resilience plans, in my opinion, the statutory agencies need to remain cognizant of the true costs of this in terms of technical support and sharing of resources, both in terms of human resource and financial, and that empowering communities and neighbourhoods should not come at an unequal cost to those we set out to assist, ensuring that supporting the development of cohesive communities is not unduly burdensome, and that we actively remove barriers for communities. Co-production needs to be exactly what it presents, co-operation and joint production, not statutory agencies passing the responsibility and costs to our locally engaged groups, organisations and individuals.

I use an asset based approach to community development and in agreement with Garven, McLean and Pattoni “Community development seeks to un-tap and mobilise

the human capital, the skills, knowledge, experience and social and personal attributes possessed by individuals, which exist within every community, to create strong social and community networks. It supports people to organise around the issues that affect them, their families and communities, and helps them implement locally led solutions using the whole range of assets they may have available to them (human, social, physical, cultural, political)." (Garven et al, 2016, pg31) Keeping this approach through my research felt important to maintain my own sense of integrity and authenticity. I wanted to make sure that there was a purpose and advantage to the community in this piece of work, and that it did not compromise them, or me.

Literature Review

As I had previously identified in my initial reading for this project, my focus is more on resilience and reaction within communities than climate change, so I limited my reading on this area, taking my information from government guidance, assuming that we will continue to see unplanned events.

First and foremost, I felt it essential for my own understanding to really unpick the contentious term of “resilience” – there was a limited amount of literature disagreeing that resilience is useful, or that its bad practice, and similar for co-production.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines resilience as “rebounding or bouncing back”; “elasticity: the power of resuming an original shape or position after compression, bending,” and “the quality or fact of being able to recover quickly or easily from, or resist being affected by, a misfortune, shock, illness” (Oxford English Dictionary, 2016)

For me, this term was very much focused on the individual theme of resilience, and does not take on board the widening definition as it is being used in developmental psychology, children’s services, criminal justice, health, ecology and many other fields, including community development. It is also used for a wide range of factors, not just environmental and climate change. This agrees with Pertrillo and Prosperi in 2011 where they claimed resilience “suffers from too many definitions” (2011, pg601)

It also became apparent that often the definition of resilience was different between individuals and the local authority, yet everyone thought they were working towards the same goal. For me, this was a real flaw in the shared understanding and I used it in an engagement event we were hosting as a contentious term, and we really discussed and agreed on our definition to ensure that we were actually working towards a shared vision. I agree with Lyon and Fazey (2015, pg16)

“given that Local Authorities and other Category 1 and 2 responders have statutory obligations and that projects were specifically set-up to address issues arising from past emergencies and to prepare for future ones. The focus on emergencies then leads to a focus on interagency familiarisation and training (e.g., through ScoRDS), so that Category 1, 2, and other kinds of responders know enough of each other’s roles, capabilities, and needs to work most effectively in the face of different kinds of emergencies”

whereas the tension for communities is about developing “emergency response plans” and...

“because of past traditions in emergency management, local communities are still often viewed primarily as the recipients of help during an emergency, and not as partners. The relatively narrow focus of enhancing resilience in relation to emergencies also leads to a focus on the consequences of an emergency rather than the

underlying systemic issues that are important for enhancing resilience in a community before an emergency occurs.” (Lyon and Fazey, 2015, pg16)

However, I also found the lack of agreement on what the term meant allowed me to actually explore my own understanding of the term, and use it as the base of my discussions, explaining it to participants to ensure we were using the same core idea, that resilience was the ability for communities to deal with unplanned events, in this example, flooding, and how they were able to move towards bouncing back, recovery and bouncing-beyond, developing their capacity locally to manage. The definition I found most resonance with was Grotberg’s “a universal capacity which allows a person, group or community to prevent, minimise or overcome the damaging effects of adversity” (1995, p2), and I felt this tied closely with the Scottish Government definition of resilience in terms of climatic events as “Communities and individuals harnessing resources and expertise to help themselves prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies, in a way that complements the work of emergency responders.” (Scottish Government, 2013a, 2012)

However, I also agree with Walsh (1998) that the measure of resilience is not just a recovery model after the event, but to have built new networks, identified new resources, to be stronger and transformed.

In agreement with the GCPH Resilience paper,

“Individuals or groups identified as resilient may simply have faced less challenge. As well as taking account of the unequal distribution of risk and challenge in society, it is important to question the normative assumption underpinning the identification of a resilient outcome.” (2014, pg15)

This became an important backbone for my interpretations, examining the socio-economic factors over the areas and comparing and contrasting this with the responses.

I have also used “Community & Sustainable Development” Edited by Diane Warburton. In the chapter by Etzioni, he states

“...vulnerable communities should be able to draw on the more endowed communities when they are truly unable to deal, on their own, with the social duties thrust upon them. Many social groups, moreover, require partnership between public and private groups. Though government should not seek to replace local communities, it may need to empower them by strategies of support, including revenue-sharing and technical assistance” (Ed. Warburton, 1998, pg49)

The statement here involving technical support and revenue sharing is a central issue for me in empowering communities as all too often resilience comes at a real cost to communities, with them being expected to be resilient with little or no financial input from the statutory agencies.

There is a tension around co-production. In an ideal world, co-production is the equal partnership of agencies and communities, and service providers and service users. This is perhaps naïve, and does not consider the inherent power distribution in favour of those who hold the purse strings. It is being heralded by many government policies, like Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, as a positive step forward, as shared ownership, planning and collaboration do increase locally accountable participation, but it can come at a cost to our more vulnerable to become further disenfranchised from society, and widen gaps in terms of equity and equality. In terms of the current, and ongoing, austerity agenda it will become even more challenging to address these opportunity gaps and to protect the most vulnerable.

Within this research, I also uncovered a tension around many commonly used, and accepted, terms. One of these was “vulnerability”. Usually, in terms of policy and social planning, we think of vulnerability in terms of educational attainment, literacy, numeracy and economically. However, within unplanned events, like the flooding, some of our most vulnerable people were those in private and often expensive housing. As PE3 identified, they had never considered themselves as vulnerable until their home was flooded, and they realised they had “limited local contact as their extensive network was faith based, rather than local”

This tension around “vulnerability” was also explored in terms of climate change resilience at “Policy synergies for community resilience workshop, 20th September 2016, Edinburgh” hosted by Centre for Environmental Change and Human Resilience (CECHR) led by Ioan Fazey presenting on the JRF supported research around “Scottish Borders Climate Resilient Communities” and how they had seen a sense of resilience grow from a sense of helplessness after the flooding in the Borders.

As often can be the case, there are tensions in how we measure resilience. While there is a massive array of measurement scales for individual resilience, mainly from psychology and psychiatry which are predominantly medicalised as you would expect from their development. Whilst there are some scales in early stages of development for wider community resilience, these are very much a work in hand, and as of yet, there is not an agreed standard for measurement, which does make it difficult to compare and contrast across a wide range of affected communities to uncover strengths and weaknesses or to be able to illustrate the approaches that have a level of success.

Methodology

Using Bryman (15:2008) I identified most with an interpretivist stance using the following definition

“...when the social scientist adopts an interpretivist stance, he or she is not simply laying bare how members of a social group interpret the world around them. The social scientist will almost certainly be aiming to place the interpretations that have been elicited into a social scientific frame. There is a double interpretation going on: the researcher is providing an interpretation of others’ interpretations. Indeed, there is a third level of interpretation going on, because the researcher’s interpretations have to be further interpreted in terms of concepts, theories and literature of a discipline.”

Scott and Usher (2011, pg29) describe...

“In interpretivism, research takes everyday experience and ordinary life as subject matter and asks how meaning is constructed and social interaction negotiated in social practices. Human action is inseparable from meaning, experiences are classified and ordered through interpretive frames, through pre-understandings mediated by tradition.”

I looked at the range of responses to see where the commonality lies across our communities, but also to see where there were differences. I was particularly interested in people’s perception of how their community was treated and viewed following the flooding (KR1 clearly identified feeling “left out” of a lot of the localised response, and felt overlooked for some of the immediate support in the aftermath). I have been interested to see how people have dealt with difficult times, and in some cases used it to enable personal growth, becoming more engaged (one respondent is now involved in their parent council at school because of the contacts they made during the flooding) and another (PE1) identified how important a sense of belong is to them, and have become more engaged in a range of community projects “Never wasting a good crisis, using it as a springboard to be involved in more that matters”, and felt better able to deal with redundancy as they had “seen much worse happen to folk locally”

Methods

I used a series of interviews for the core of my research, examining narratives and using the stories and direct experience of people affected.

The questions were slightly refined from my initial idea, so the ones I used were...

1. What happened the night of the flooding?
2. What happened in the immediate days after it?
3. Has it had an ongoing affect?
4. What worked well?
5. What didn't?
6. How do you define a resilient community? (prompt strong if req'd)
7. What would you do different in future if you were in a similar situation?

The majority of people involved were known to me on a work level, and two were identified by other interviewees as someone important to talk to. Thankfully all the people I approached agreed to participate, and have been happy with the recordings taken, and continued with their permission for me to use their input.

Also, after some initial discussions with participants, and due to the one to one interviews taking longer than I initially thought, 90 minutes maximum compared to the hour I had thought would be necessary, I dropped the small focus group part of my research. The interviews were conducted in a variety of locations to suit the participants with the majority happening in my office, although two happened in the participant's home to work around their requirement for childcare to reduce the barriers that could have stopped them to be involved. Barring two interviews, all interviews took place in November and early December 2016.

Ethics

I used the Economic and Social Research Council core principles as a framework for my ethical statement.

“The six key principles for ethical research are:

- Research should aim to maximise benefit for individuals and society and minimise risk and harm
- The rights and dignity of individuals and groups should be respected
- Wherever possible, participation should be voluntary and appropriately informed
- Research should be conducted with integrity and transparency
- Lines of responsibility and accountability should be clearly defined
- Independence of research should be maintained and where conflicts of interest cannot be avoided they should be made explicit.”

(From <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-applicants/research-ethics/our-core-principles/>)

I will also be guided by the professional ethics standards for CLD by the CLD Standards Council. (http://109.233.117.82/standards_council/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Code_of_Ethics.pdf)

Participation in this research was voluntary, and all responses have been anonymised, and are identifiable only to myself. All respondents understand the purpose of this research, and where and how I will disseminate it after marking.

Participants were given full disclosure on why I am interviewing them and what I shall do with it, and had the right to withdraw at any time up to the date of submission, and I shall have their consent to keep their anonymised data.

In accordance with data protection, any written information is securely stored online and is password protected. All information has been shared with the participant to verify that it reflects what they were saying and allow them to alter any emphasis.

I ensured as much as possible that all parties are equitable, and that no one felt disempowered. I endeavoured to empower my participants to be an active and full part of any solutions that come out of the research, as some communities are now looking at resilience planning, which we are in a position to support and facilitate if required. I went into all interviews as an observer, not from a position of knowledge, and I made this clear to my participants, telling them they were the experts and I wanted to share in their insights.

After marking, I will share my findings with those who participated and also with the Garioch Community Planning group, the board of the Garioch Partnership as my employers, as well as with my Post Grad university cohort and lecturers. All participants were made aware of this.

Discussion

I was astounded by the compassion and care shown within our communities. PE1 clearly had been moved on many levels by the sheer number of people coming forward to assist – people who they did not know, who had not been directly affected by the flooding, coming forward to give time, money, donations and support. They said they “felt part of something bigger and belonged to the town for the first time in a very long time” and that at the time of the interview (10 months beyond the flooding) they had built new friendships and networks, and had found new volunteering opportunities, and progressed into paid employment because of the skills and confidence they had been able to develop.

KR1 evacuated the children from their home, and then returned to help others, talking about knocking on doors of people they did not know particularly well, to help lift furniture and treasured belongings to safety. They spoke of the surrealism of the river being in the garden, and watching the water engulf the road, damaging cars, and floating garden furniture. KR1 also felt disappointed in the wider response, and that they were left to fend for themselves, and saw huge inputs and support for other communities locally that were similarly affected, but seemed they were left to it, and now have set up their own resilience committee. KR1 also helped to support the local school that had been badly affected by the flooding, gathering donations and trying to replace equipment that had been damaged, such a bean bags and books.

K2 was still feeling shocked at the level of impact the flood had, identifying their mental health had been affected, and they were still having nightmares and spending time visiting the GP to deal with an episode of depression following losing many treasured belongings, and struggling with the insurance company. They also identified how some of their neighbours missed out on government help as the water had been prevented from entering their house, but had damaged sheds, kids toys in the garden, and garages containing gardening equipment.

PE2 said it had enabled them to know their neighbours more, and after living there for many years actually learned the names of the people in their street, and had been amazed at the compassion shown to their family who lost nearly everything in one of the worst affected homes in the area, and having been told to wait in the house, had then required emergency assistance to be evacuated safely, which was still the source of nightmares for her children. PE2 also spoke of the pressures of living on a low budget, and knew that some of the neighbours had been uninsured but presumed it would never happen to them, and the fears of being able to replace belongings. PE2 also spoke of the recurring fear every time the weather forecast was for rain, and about constantly worrying, waking through the night to check there was no water ingress.

All of the respondents had a belief that their community would not only recover, but would grow. This clearly ties with the ideas of Mguni and Caistor-Arendar in 2012,

that a resilient community is “one that has a collectively held belief in their ability to adapt and thrive in spite of adversity”

The majority of respondents felt no anger towards the emergency services, realising they were stretched and under pressure themselves as many people who work in our emergency services also live locally. They felt that they were able to step up and assist where they could, but have had thoughts about safety since, which has certainly been a core of the discussions on community resilience for many groups. This is not a unique experience, as Edwards (2009) explored being clear that at such times active citizens compliment and support the work of frontline services. Two of the respondents were quite surprised, on reflection, that they stepped up the way they were able to, and would never have seen themselves as any kind of volunteer, let alone someone who became identified as a community leader, or the “go-to person” (PE1) which Wilding identifies as a community leader as someone “who steps forward to take initiative with the support of local people” (pg12, 2011)

In accordance with the conversations, again Wilding provides further exploration that it is not the usual folk who step up in times of crisis..

“Instead of the need for gatekeepers in communities or in key positions in organisations of any size, the leadership role becomes one of enabling collective innovation through many personal actions focused in favour of collective goals.” (Wilding, 2011; p26)

This was very much apparent in the people who stepped up in the flooded areas. KR1 said they were “surprised at the level of trust that bloomed” from the floods, and that they have a larger friend network locally now – having lived in the area for 6 years, but felt that it really brought people together. They felt that the necessity of crisis, and where people were open to accepting help and allowing people they did not know into their homes to try and salvage or protect belongings almost accelerated the level of trust. KR1 said they now feel more connected and part of their community when before the flood they felt like an “incomer” still. KR1 is now more actively involved with the school, and has increased participation to support some of the less able groups within Kemnay to assist them to move forward as well, and to share the learning from the experience of the floods, and has found groups more open to new people and ideas to move forward. At the CECHR event in September, it was clearly identified that some communities can use a challenge as a mobilising force for change and to increase participation.

There are still issues to be faced about linking the local level of experience and networks into the bigger picture and higher level decision making, therefore it is important to use an asset-based approach and for locally based community development organisations to support beneficial opportunities for leaders from local levels, all the way up to higher organisational levels to come together, and form mutually beneficial relationships.

There also needs to be awareness that rushing into formalising these structures can stifle the opportunity and actually make the groups more vulnerable by actively disenfranchising newly connected members by being “another committee” and not a body of like-minded people moving forward with a collective aim. This was certainly felt very strongly by PE2 when they said the group were moved from premises in Inverurie into the community centre, and the more formal setting lost a lot of people, and they lost a sense of belonging, and that they had a feeling of, and heard from numerous other volunteers “Give me things to do, not sit in meetings!”

PE2 also said they heard stories from people affected where the response from statutory agencies, in particular the local authority, had not always been an easy process to navigate, with vulnerable, “scared people being passed from pillar to post to try to find the right department” whilst juggling the demands of being suddenly homeless. PE2 also said it was a hugely unsettling and upsetting time for many families as they had to arrange alternative care for pets at the time when they most required the comfort and unconditional love that these give.

K2 reported that there are still very widely felt, and spoken about, fears of a repeat of the flooding, and that a number of their friends are still anxiously watching weather, SEPA and flood watch almost expecting another event, and that this is causing a physical strain. K2 said they know of 4 people in their network who are now accessing their GP for anxiety and/or depression and have spoken of their struggles to sleep, suffering from the after effects of the traumatic event, with one having chosen to sell their home and move to somewhere less vulnerable to flooding.

There is a wider policy debate on whether the focus on resilience is correct due to the misunderstandings and lack of clarity of definition, and many (Newman et al 2009, Walker 2012, Garven et al 2016, Seamen et al 2014) have cited the move towards thinking in terms of sustainability rather than resilience, with sustainability being a more structural concept more rooted in place-based inequality, and in terms of climate change, depletion of resources, mitigation of the effects of austerity and supporting building of capacity and promotion of locally based action, but keeping awareness of the “sense that those most vulnerable may be least responsible for the causes or most poorly positioned to change behaviour, not just of themselves, but others.” (Seamen et al, pg 70, 2014)

There has been a move examine the presence of resilience within the current discourse of strong and cohesive communities, focusing on their ability to cope in emergencies, both locally and regionally, as well as the possibility of wider national threats. The Scottish Government has a Resilience Division who have developed a web-based resource “Ready Scotland” (2013) to promote and encourage future planning around their 6 identified core issues - terrorism, utility failure, animal disease breakout, pandemic illness, severe weather and flooding.

Conclusion

It has become very clear to me through my research that all levels of social capital are required for really strong, cohesive communities. Bonding capital is the base, the relationships that individuals build where they share similar outlooks and common values and are developed around social groups. Bridging capital shows links to different viewpoints and experiences, so moving between groups or settlements and linking capital is about how individuals link into larger organisations, and can exercise institutional power which can be influenced through democratic participation in decision making on a local, or more national, level. (Woolcock, 1998; Halpern, 2005)

In terms of community resilience after unplanned events, bridging capital was identified as being a driver for communities as it can be impossible to return to how things were, and it is about more transformative change, and moving forward into something different, but there was a real acknowledgment about the importance of linking capital to release the potential to identify solutions, release budget and resources to allow this to happen and to strategically plan together as equal partners.

Whilst all respondents clearly identified a need for communities to be supported to be resilient and to have the support to react in the moment of an emergency, but also to have ongoing support to recover, develop and transform after a crisis...

“Community resilience requires an altogether more nuanced and subtle approach that is premised on institutions and organisations letting go, creating the necessary framework for action, rather than developing specific plans and allowing community resilience to emerge and develop in local areas over time. ...community resilience resembles a patchwork of ideas, action and exercises.” (Edwards, 2009; p80)

So, the answer may not be in a proliferation of plans, whether they are co-produced, or statutory productions, but in something more flexible and responsive. The Australian Government seem to be slightly further ahead of us in policy terms when they identified in 2009,

“Community resilience means the capacity of communities to respond positively to crises. It is the ability of a community to adapt to pressures and transform itself in a way which makes it more sustainable in the future. Rather than simply ‘surviving’ the stressor or change, a resilient community might respond in creative ways that fundamentally transform the basis of the community” (Australian Government, pg5, 2009)

As identified by Garven (Centre for Public Impact, 2016) when it comes to co-production, there is a concern that communities are sitting waiting to co-produce “talking about better social and health outcomes, we need to be careful not to impose external agendas but instead work with the public to decide what those outcomes are and what we need to do to achieve them”

There was a real feeling that the assets of local communities need to be better recognised at a policy and strategy level, and not overlooked, whilst not being pushed into formalisation and constituting their group just to match the requirements of the statutory agencies. There were requests for the agencies to be able to be more flexible in who they engage with, and for it not just to be formal groups, especially around sudden, unplanned events.

The complexity of defining resilience is a real challenge for measuring success at a community level, as it is affected by so many different factors, both positive and threatening to community strength. The complexities of the definition also have a huge impact onto developing an appropriate tool to measure which can accommodate such widely varying circumstances whilst remaining useable, efficient and applicable. There is also a real danger that too tight a push to conform to measurement scales disconnects it from social policy, political decisions and economic trends that have a huge influence on income and health inequalities, resource distribution and the power of communities to set the agenda and drive change.

Resilience is also multi-faceted and many of the issues that impact it are not within the hands of communities to address. As Mguni and Bacon (2010) identified in developing their “Wellbeing and Resilience Measure (WARM)” that is based on the principles of “the key to flourishing communities is to boost local assets and social wealth, while tackling vulnerabilities and disadvantage” (Mguni and Bacon, pg8, 2010) One of the strengths of WARM is that it looks at the possibility of future responses as well as what has happened, and does not rely on the more standard measures of deprivation and vulnerability. The WARM tool has identified the three factors that they see as most relevant to community resilience – being Self, how people feel about their own wellbeing, income, health and how they view their own life opportunities; Support, the quality of local networks for social and emotional support and the Structure and Systems – the infrastructure that is available to support people to have a good quality of life and to be aspirational with a belief in the ability to achieve. One of the advantages of WARM is the ability to tailor it to show local trends that may vary from national trends and take it into account in planning and implementation, whilst being aware of the local vulnerabilities and issues in ways that some more “pigeon-holing” type measurement tools may miss. There are other tools that address resilience too, such as the Canadian Centre for Community Renewal manual of 2011 which proposes the use of 23 characteristics ranging from processes to people. There are concerns that these tools may miss communities that

are not geographically based, and could indeed, in some cases, increase the level of disadvantage for communities of interest, ethnicity or faith based.

Tools like this that community development organisations can utilise will become more and more important in local planning terms, especially with austerity and reducing availability of public money to support communities and people to deal with unplanned events, whether they are climatic, global, local, economic, terrorism, social or physical challenges.

Part of the ongoing challenge for community development is the wide range of factors that can and do influence our communities, and how many of them are institutional and beyond the control of local folk.

It also became apparent, that in terms of resilience for the future, there are numerous factors to contemplate in community planning, as those most at risk are often the furthest away from being the cause, and the least able to challenge the behaviours that affect them, which is why community development and ongoing support for community learning will be a core of developing and growing communities that are not just able to bounce back – but to go on and thrive and flourish, with equity of opportunity regardless of birth or educational circumstances.

On a professional level, my research has been an eye opener, and really made me examine some of the assumptions I have made, and resilience, and more specifically a wider look at sustainable communities will be a major core of my day to day work, in particular as part of our community action plan process that I support on behalf of the local community planning partnership.

I am in agreement with the conclusions of Seaman et al (2015) that we need to view resilience in terms of a process, not an outcome. It is shown in our ability to transform after crisis not to maintain the pre-crisis “business as usual” stance.

Within this, we need to ensure that we endeavour to support the conditions that support, promote and encourage the flexibility to change, flourish and grow, taking heed that community resilience and sustainability are not a separate entity to individual resilience, so, as community development practitioners, we have a vital role in supporting the development of individual strength and ability, supporting the development of confidence, interpersonal skills, empathy and the ability to identify sources of support that are available which are the building blocks of social capital.

In terms of the current economic downturn, and austerity politics, the core of community resilience will be challenged from more sides than we may have expected. Within this, I believe we need to take account of the wider economy, and whilst local employment is of vital importance, a flourishing high street being a sign of resilience as identified by Portas (2011) we need to bear in mind the savings to the public purse that volunteering brings for our communities, and that our biggest asset is our local people.

Bibliography

- Australian Government (2009). *Building inclusive and resilient communities*. Australian Social Inclusion Board, <http://www.bankofideas.com.au/Downloads/Buildingcommunityresiliencebrochure.pdf> (accessed November 2016)
- Bryman, A. (2008) *Social Research Methods, third edition*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK
- Edwards C.(2009) *Resilient nation*. Demos, London
- Fazey, I and Lyon C (2015) *Learning Lessons from Developing Community Resilience Plans in Scotland*, Centre for Environmental Change and Human Resilience, University of Dundee, Dundee
- Garven, F. McLean, J. Pattoni, L. (2016) *Asset-Based Approaches: Their Rise, Role and Reality*, Dunedin, Edinburgh
- Halpern D. (2005) *Social Capital*. Policy Press, Cambridge
- Ledwith, M. (2005) *Community Development: A Critical Approach*. BASW/Policy Press, Bristol
- Mguni N, Bacon N. (2010_ *Taking the temperature of local communities: The Wellbeing and Resilience Measure (WARM)*. The Young Foundation, London
- Mguni N, Caistor-Arendar L. (2012) *Rowing against the tide. Making the case for community resilience*. The Young Foundation, London
- Newman P, Beatley T, Boyer H. (2009) *Resilient cities: responding to peak oil and climate change*. Island Press, Washington DC
- Newman T, Yates T, Masten A.(2004) *What Works in Building Resilience?* Barnardo's, Barkingside
- Oxford English Dictionary Online. Entry for resilience. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/163619?redirectedFrom=resilience#eid> (accessed Dec 2016)
- Pertrillo AS, Prosperi DC. *Metaphors from the Resilience Literature: Guidance for Planners*. In: Schrenk M, Popovich VV, Zeile P (eds.) Proceedings of REAL CORP 2011 (16th International Conference on Urban Planning, Regional Development and Information Society); 2011. p601-611.
- Portas M. (2011) *The Portas Review: An independent review into the future of our high streets*. Department for Business, Innovation and Skill, London

Putnam R. (2000) *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. Simon and Schuster, New York

Ready Scotland <http://www.readyscotland.org> (accessed November 2016)

Scott, D. & Usher, R. (2011) *Researching Education: Data Methods and Theory in Educational Inquiry, 2nd edition*. Continuum, London

Scottish Government, 2012. *Preparing Scotland: Scottish guidance on resilience*. Scottish Government, Edinburgh

Seaman, P, McNeice, V, Yates, G and McLean J. (2014) *Resilience for Public Health, Supporting Transformation in People and Communities*. Glasgow Centre for Population Health, Glasgow

Thompson, N. (2002) *People Skills, Second Edition* Palgrave MacMillan, Basingstoke

Walsh F. (1998) *Beliefs, spirituality, and transcendence: Keys to family resilience*. In: McGoldrick M (ed.) *Re-visioning family therapy: Race, culture, and gender in clinical practice*. p62-77. Guildford Press. New York.

Wilding N. (2011) *Exploring Community Resilience*. Carnegie UK Trust, Dunfermline

Woolcock M. (1998) *Social capital and economic development: Toward a theoretical synthesis and policy framework*. *Theory and Society*, volume 27(2) pg151-208.

Other sources

Centre for Public Impact, 2016. *Rethinking Public Services, Building public services around people, Interview with Fiona Garven, SCDC*.

Appendix 1

Acknowledgments

There are a number of people who I owe such a debt of thanks for supporting me through not only this research, but the entirety of the PG Dip.

Academically, I would have been lost without Dr Aileen Ackland and Dr Rachel Shanks for their gentle guidance and good humour. Also my academic cohort who were on the end of numerous questions I would have been embarrassed to ask anyone else. One day I may get referencing!

Professionally, Anne Simpson who was my line manager at the time of starting the course, who encouraged me to apply, and supported my learning, with suggestions and support, and a kind reminder to not try and do it all.

I am also deeply indebted to the Board of the Garioch Partnership for having the belief in my to support me, both in terms of contributing to course fees, travel and time to study, as well as supporting the development of my final research.

My mentor, Diane Miller with her steadfast belief in my ability to manage the challenges of the course, her unwavering ability to listen to my panic/waffle/lack of direction and the ability to steer and encourage me not to lose faith.

I also owe a special vote of thanks to Linda Singer of Grampian Opportunities, who is the person that gave me the nudge to get into work. Her gentle (and sometimes not so gentle) encouragement, humour and support have been a real backbone for me. The kitchen table of GO will always be my “recharge point” and for that I will be eternally grateful.

Personally, there are a few thanks – my dad, Robert, for his belief in me, his support, and his care – reminding me that it is not the end of the world to not know it all. My son Robert, affectionately known as “the weeman” for sharing his homework table with his mummy, being the source of many hugs and for reminding me that life is about more than a textbook! The date nights with him have been a vital part of my self-care to check he’s not missing his mummy too much during this consuming period of study.

And last, but by no means least, my friend, Alasdair McKinlay who supported me on so many levels throughout this course, being the listening ear, propping up my fragile ego on the occasions it required it, and by kicking my behind when I was procrastinating too much. I value your guidance and knowledge, and your patience for so many conversations that ended up being about work and study. I also value your un-erring belief in my ability to do this, and your constant reminder of my worth and strength, especially when I felt worthless and powerless, drowning in a world I felt completely out of my depth in.

So with heartfelt thanks, WE MADE IT!

Appendix 2

Application for Ethical Approval for a Masters Dissertations or Work Based Project in the School of Education (2015-16)

Name: Dawn Brown

Programme: Post Graduate Community Learning and Development

Title of Project: "What makes a resilient community? Examining community responses following unplanned events"

Supervisor(s): Aileen Ackland

Application date: 22/08/16

Appropriate consideration of ethical issues will help you fulfil your responsibilities to your field of research and the community of educational researchers.

Section 1: Responsibilities to participants

Please include a statement on how you will address any ethical issues relevant to your participants. This should make reference to the appropriate paragraph(s) in your adopted ethical guidelines and should cover:

- The recruitment of participants,
- Procedures to be adopted for gaining voluntary and informed consent
- Steps to be taken to avoid harm or conflicts of interest
- Any procedures for collection, storage and use of personal or sensitive data
- Issues of confidentiality and anonymity
- Use and presentation of findings
- Any other relevant issues

Participation shall be voluntary, and I will discuss my role and aspirations, and ask all participants to sign a sheet explaining my research, and what will happen with the data, explaining that they can withdraw at any stage if they so desire, ensuring we both keep copies.

As these are emotive issues, I will have lists of local support agencies to offer participants if they require it, and will also be aware of ensuring people are not leaving any session upset.

All statements will be anonymised in the report within categories (individuals, community groups, community planning, statutory agency). All information gathered shall be stored securely, online with passwords and any written material in a locked cabinet.

Presentation of the final report shall be shared to the University for my course, with my class cohort, with the Garioch Community Planning Partnership, and with the board of The Garioch Partnership, as they co-funded the course (50% work, 50% personal funding)

Section 2: Responsibilities to yourself, your colleagues, sponsors and/or employer, and your field of research

Please include a statement on your role and responsibilities as researcher, any conflicts of interest that may arise in your role as practitioner-researcher, and how you will deal with these. Include issues relating to presentation and dissemination of findings if appropriate. Make reference to the appropriate paragraph(s) in your adopted ethical guidelines.

My role as a researcher is as an observer, but with a responsibility to do no harm, so all participants shall be voluntary and can withdraw at any point. I was not personally affected by the flooding, so remain impartial and have no personal input on what worked and what happened in the communities after the floods.

I will use the Economic and Social Research Council ethical guidelines, as well as the CLD Standards council ethical statement.

There may be a tension presenting some of the issues to the community planning partnership, but as I am third sector staff, I do have a level of autonomy from the Partnership, and have the ability to respectfully challenge. The Garioch Community Planning Partnership have been approached and are aware of the possibility of my research and are supportive. The Garioch Partnership (my employers) are supportive of the research and aware that the feelings from communities may be critical of the statutory partners. As we did not have a direct role in the community after the flooding, we have a level of impartiality in examining what was implemented in communities.

Appendix 3

Questions used in interviews

1. What happened the night of the flooding?
2. What happened in the immediate days after it?
3. Has it had an ongoing affect?
4. What worked well?
5. What didn't?
6. How do you define a resilient community? (prompt strong community if req'd)
7. What would you do different in future years if you were in a similar situation?

Appendix 4

Thank you for taking part in my project. The aim of my research is to support me to examine what makes strong and resilient communities, with particular regard to the flooding of January 2016.

Your name will not be included in the research, I have allocated a letter and number relating to your location and a way to keep comments separate. I will be the only person who knows the designation of these.

Please be aware you can stop the interview at any time, and have the freedom to withdraw your permission at any time, right until the time I submit it for marking.

If you need a break at all, just let me know.

Aim: To examine how you were affected after the flooding, and what has happened since.

What to expect.

I will be taking notes – typing into my laptop. These will be stored on this password protected laptop until the research has been submitted and passed. It will then be deleted.

I have some questions just to support the conversation, but I want to allow you an opportunity to share your story with me. I will be typing, and I will send you my notes after the interview for you to read over and check I have recorded it adequately. You can edit, remove or alter anything you feel you do not wish to share wider.

I am exceptionally grateful for you agreeing to talk to me today, and realise this is an emotional subject – at any time we can stop the interview.

To begin

I will ask you my initial question.

Appendix 5

Thank you for taking part. Your time and experience has been very valuable to my project, and I appreciate the time you have given me today.

Next Steps

This research will be shared with my tutors, my employers, The Garioch Partnership, and the Garioch Community Planning Partnership

The finished research will be available early 2017 after marking. There is a possibility it will be shared with other students', academics and colleagues.

If you wish, I will ensure you get a copy of the completed research in the format that is best for you (email or printed).

If you have any questions after today please feel free to get in touch.

Thanks again.

Dawn Brown
Development Worker
The Garioch Partnership
Wyness Hall
Jackson Street
Inverurie
AB51 3QB

01467 628801
Or
07514 449127

dawn@gariochpartnership.org.uk