

The issue, problem or topic the research seeks to address

We aim to bring together stakeholders from across policy, practice and research, including a focus on community groups, in order to discuss best practice as it pertains to community resilience in Scotland. Two workshops will include discussion on gaps in practice and research knowledge and next steps to promote growth in this area. Thematic analysis of these discussions will provide robust evidence of the workshop outcomes and inform qualitative research to explore these themes in more detail. We believe there remains a gap in identifying what community resilience is currently enacted (particularly in Scotland) and how such experiences can be used to encourage further community resilience/understanding of community resilience. This development of community resilience will inform future research funding bids and hopefully form the foundations for sustainable, positive collaboration between academics, community groups and policy makers moving forward.

The background or rationale behind the proposed research

This project will focus on the knowledge and skills of communities, governments, academics and partner agencies at national and international levels to support and promote community resilience within the context of extreme events (ranging from natural disasters to cancer diagnoses). We will also discuss how we use community resilience to improve civic participation and drive positive change beyond just mitigation of extreme events (even creating positive extreme events).

The overall aim for the project is to build and facilitate community resilience to mitigate negative extreme events, using existing community resilience to promote sustainable empowerment of communities in line with the 2015 Community Empowerment Legislation Act. By drawing on the organising team expertise and the attendees from non-academic sectors, this project aims to co-produce knowledge from across policy, practice and research. There is an interest in wanting to gain an understanding as to the scope of practice in terms of community development and practice, not only in regards to issues surrounding climate change (often the focus of extreme events research), but around any event that a community would identify as extreme in their particular context. The project aims to do this by having a series of workshops spread over a period of 6 months. Each workshop will have a key theme as inspired by the Scottish Government's Resilient Communities Strategic Framework and Delivery Plan for 2017 – 2021 and will be analysed thematically to provide research evidence from the unique discussions.

Community resilience has many definitions and will mean different things in different contexts (Wilding, 2011). Cinderby et al (2014) suggest it is "the ability of people living together to cope with economic, social and environmental problems. Ideally this would move beyond merely coping, towards communities becoming stronger and more adaptable over time". Patel et al's (2016) systematic literature review of 80 published works suggests that there are some core elements to community resilience, independent of one definition, that include: local knowledge; community networks and relationships; communication; health; governance and leadership; resources; economic investment; preparedness; and mental outlook. This complex interplay of inputs will obviously lead to a variety of outcomes, often context specific, that make evaluating community resilience via individual communities, publications or projects difficult. Therefore, there is a need to consolidate what we know, identify the key themes that make communities more resilient and transfer these lessons to other communities to build stronger networks (Kapilashrami et al., 2015; Belford et al., 2017)

The project will link communities and academia to develop new networks that lead to future collaborations and develop fresh knowledge and understanding under the shared topic of community resilience.

The aims and objectives of the proposed research

Aims

- Identify models of good practice in community resilience to extreme events that can inform approaches across policy, practice and research
- Develop a network of expertise that links Scotland into international developments and good practice

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Objectives

- Engage in knowledge exchange between national/international experts from across disciplines and sectors, who have been involved/interested in working with communities in the context of resilience, community development and responses to extreme events
- Provide scenarios from around the globe of community resilience practice to help us better understand how community resilience works, in what contexts and to encourage further community resilience good practice in the face of extreme events
- Facilitate workshops and a public event, and generate three briefing papers that will be combined with a web/social media presence and email network to generate a new network of collaborators

The research hypotheses or questions

What are the policy, practice, legal and conceptual systems/frameworks that support communities to promote resilience to extreme events?

The Methodology and Timetable (see timetable on proposal)

The project involves two workshops, supported by briefing papers and dissemination activities, and empirical research (qualitative interviews or focus groups), the style of which will be informed by the success of the workshops. The workshop sampling technique will be a mix of purposively sampling with some communities that we know have had to show resilience in the light of extreme events, and an open invite to interested parties made through collaborators. The empirical research will be conducted through convenience sampling in which participants from the workshop are recruited for further discussion.

At each workshop participants will be instructed that comments and discussion outcomes will be recorded and used for publications after the event, although these would not be attributed to any individual/organisation. We propose an opt-out ethical consent process when approved by the University of Stirling General Ethics Panel. Facilitator summary notes and participant post-it notes and flip-chart recordings will be retained and recoded after the workshops to identify the common themes that run through the discussions. These themes will then be reviewed for any overlapping themes or themes in need of refinement. Themes will then be scrutinised, refined, and discussed by all authors until agreement has been reached on the final themes. These themes will help inform the topic guides for the interviews and/or focus groups.

The project involves an evaluation stage in which the workshop's success will be assessed for effectiveness in best practice and knowledge exchange.

The feasibility, significance and potential for innovation

This project is deemed feasible due to the expressed interest of many community members and stakeholders that have already been consulted. The timeline offers some flexibility for when certain activities will run to maximise participation and wider engagement. There is a commitment to prioritising this project by the project team, supported by in-kind contributions from the University of Stirling. To support the project team we propose employing a research assistant to further support the outputs. A key aspect of the project is the multi-disciplinary nature of the activities planned. By facilitating activities which bring together a range of specialisms, the project will allow for a unique combination of perspectives about the challenges and the best approaches to community responses to extreme events. An evidence-based approach supported through academic participation, combined with practice knowledge and experience, will extend the networks that are often found in individual disciplinary silos and encourage new ways of thinking about and addressing the various ways that communities are involved in research and the promotion of community resilience and empowerment.

The relevance for the Scottish universities, academic and resilience communities

During times of uncertainty, the concept of resilience offers promise in preparing individuals and communities for challenges both expected and unexpected, while providing the foundations for developing more radical changes to improve people's lives. This project will focus on the knowledge and skills of communities, governments, academics and partner agencies at national and international levels to support and promote community resilience within the context of extreme events (ranging from natural disasters to cancer diagnoses). We will also discuss how we use

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community resilience to improve civic participation and drive positive (even extreme) change beyond just mitigation of extreme events.

There is a need for more interdisciplinary research that involves actors from various disciplines and those with alternative perspectives and skills, such as those most vulnerable to social, economic and environmental changes. Much of this work has also focused on natural disasters and climate change, rather than taking a broader view of extreme events. For example, Coffee and Rees (2008) have demonstrated that adaptive thinking (a form of resilience), if developed with the right support, can enhance self-efficacy, task persistence and goal attainment. We aim to combine this psychology perspective (and others provided by participants) with that of the project team, who have an expertise in population health, engineering, social work, community development and policy, to develop a more holistic and interdisciplinary interpretation of, and mechanisms for creating greater, community resilience.

A wide range of partners have been consulted in developing the proposed project, to ensure that the activities proposed are multi-disciplinary, cross-sector and have direct relevance to policy and practice in the context of communities resilience, development and responses to extreme events. Stakeholders that have expressed support range from governmental bodies, local community groups, international agencies and organisations that work within the field of community development. We also have a number of additional organisations and individuals in mind to approach, with links to partners in countries including Angola, Canada, Pakistan, Botswana, Sweden, Colombia, Nepal and India. All our speakers and participants will also bring their experiences from working with partners around the world and plan to facilitate links between the new network and these existing networks. By working with NCR and having Ready Scotland as a member of the programme team, this provides a direct avenue of communication between policy-makers and the proposed project. Further representatives from governmental and non-governmental organisations will be invited to deliver workshops, presentations and be participants within the wider discussions. Each workshop will have a key theme as inspired by the Scottish Government's Resilient Communities Strategic Framework and Delivery Plan for 2017 – 2021.

Stakeholders that have expressed support range from governmental bodies (Ready Scotland), local community groups (Appin Community Trust, Mull and Iona Community Trust, Life Mosaic, Creative Stirling, Scottish Communities for Health and Wellbeing, Deaf Scotland, Action for ME, The Garioch Partnership, Colintrave and Glendaruel Community Council), international agencies and universities (DAFPAK Project, University of Agostinho Neto Medical School, University of Iceland, University of Sweden) and organisations that work within the field of community development (James Hutton Institute, Scottish Community Development Centre, COPE Scotland, People's Health Movement). We also have a number of additional organisations and individuals in mind to approach.

It is anticipated that the synthesis between multiple sectors will ensure the planned project is a unique opportunity to combine theory and practice in order to develop innovative opportunities for improving community responses, resilience and effectiveness when faced with extreme events. We estimate that over 100 practitioners and influencers will take part across the events, presenting information, running workshops or attending other related activities.

Only through an ongoing processes of dialogue with various stakeholders are we likely to develop clear and appropriately targeted policy proposals for improvements in community development and sustainable resilience models to extreme events.

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References

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Patel SS, Rogers MB, Amlôt R, Rubin GJ. (2017) What Do We Mean by 'Community Resilience'? A Systematic Literature Review of How It Is Defined in the Literature. *PLOS Currents Disasters*, Feb 1:1.

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Timetable

Workshop 1 (February 19th 2019)

A one-day workshop that explores current understanding of, and engagement with, community resilience from communities, practitioners, policy-makers, researchers and the wider world and how we build an evidence-base and network to push this agenda forward. The workshop will hear from Serge Marti from [LifeMosaic](#), a charity which supports indigenous peoples. Serge will speak on the intersection between global extreme events (climate change, ecosystem destruction, culture and language loss, etc.) and national/local extreme events (loneliness, depression, self-harm, etc.), relating these to disconnection from self, society, culture and land. He will then discuss examples of how to increase resilience and to tackle these issues in part by supporting the spread of community-led approaches, which allow communities to regain control over their lives, and can deliver powerful changes that ripple across society.

Workshop 2 (April 15th 2019)

Building on workshop 1, this one day workshop will explore best practice in community resilience that not only mitigates the effects of extreme events, but aims to build positive, sustainable change across communities. We will hear from community groups about their experiences of building resilience and will hear from those working in government and the statutory sector about how we link grassroots approaches to current and emerging policies and programmes.

From the workshops and related briefing papers/interactions we want to be more informed on:

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- What practices work across multiple settings and contexts
- How we bring communities together outside of these workshops to collaborate and learn from each other
- How we enable research, policy and community stakeholders to work together more effectively

Empirical Research (March – June 2019)

Empirical research data gathering that will evaluate the discussions had over the past two workshops and develop best practice and solutions that engender a network of community resilience to be developed. Using qualitative interviews or focus groups we will build on the themes emerging from the workshops to ask questions around:

- How do we pool knowledge, experience and evidence from diverse communities?
- How do we prevent the voices from the lived-experience from being ignored or over-shadowed?
- What are the key issues from the project that need to be taken further in practice, policy-making and research?
- Which formats can they be taken forward in (e.g. collaborative research projects)? Who can take them forward?

Public Event (July 2019)

Public event at the MacRobert Arts Centre, Stirling, showcasing the work of the group, including photos and walking diaries. Workshop attendees, participants and associated community members and stakeholders will be invited as part of a formal closing event.

Final Report (September 2019)