


Social resilience in fisheries

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Overview

- The concept of social resilience
- Why I think resilience is a useful concept! (a story from Indian fisheries)
- Key idea: Resilience and wellbeing in fisheries – synergies, trade-offs, the ambitious pursuit of both...[Coulthard 2012, Coulthard and Britton 2015]

Concepts of resilience

- In its day to day sense, resilience refers to the capacity to **recover quickly** from difficulties (Oxford dictionaries).
- The ability to **prepare for, withstand and recover** from shocks and stresses (European Commission 2012).
- At a system level: “The capacity of a **social-ecological system** to **absorb or withstand perturbations** and other stressors such that the system remains within the same regime, essentially **maintaining its structure and function**” (Holling 1973, Walker *et al.* 2004, The Resilience Alliance).
- Capacity for adaptation to change, crisis as opportunities for change – rather than restoring previous function, bouncing back should mean ‘**bouncing back better**’ (Joseph and McGregor 2019)

Concepts of 'social' resilience

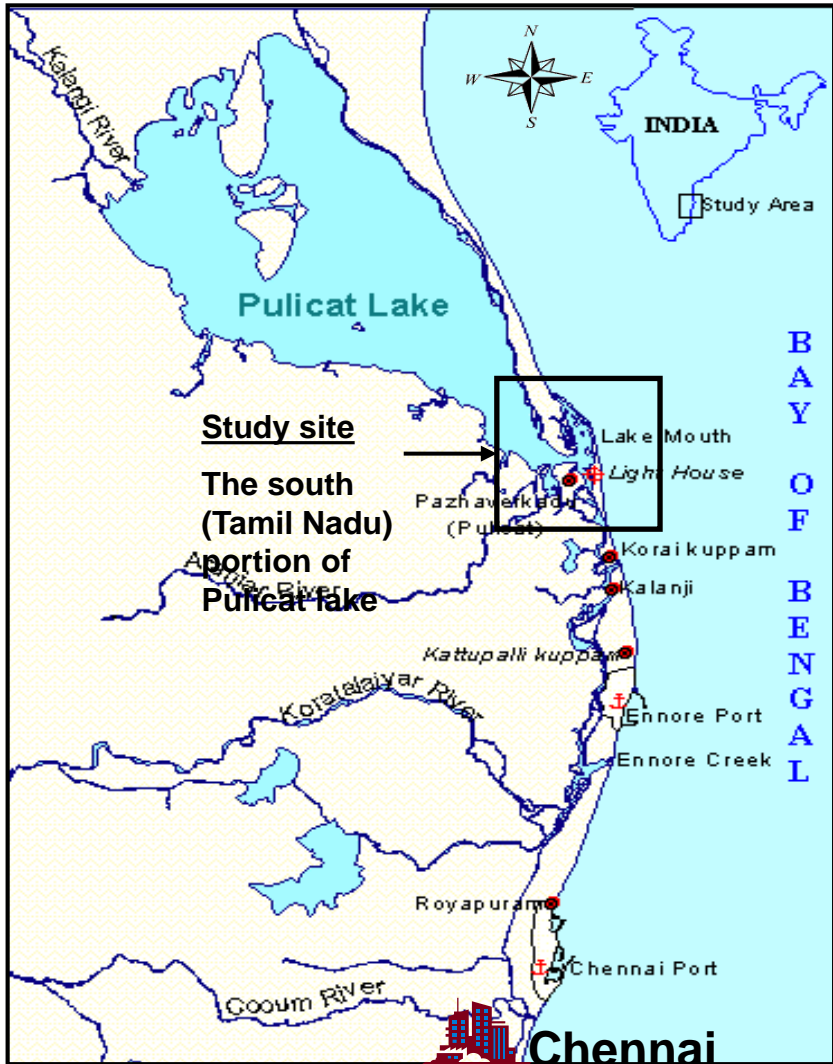
A focus on Individual, households, community, institutional levels

Understanding factors that allow communities to deal with shocks and adversity (Brown and Westaway 2011) .

Societal forms of resilience - “any capacity and skills, and action, strategy, investment and anticipation, which helps individual[s], households and communities to anticipate, absorb, accommodate, or recover from the impacts of a particular adverse event (shock, stress, or (un)expected changes)”.

(Bene 2013)

A story from Indian fisheries – Pulicat lake



52 fishing villages – valuable prawn stake-net fishery.

Split between higher fishing caste villagers (pattinaver) - (best fishing spots (padus), wealthier, status),

Scheduled caste (Dalit) villages – far less access, campaigning for greater fishing rights, less affluent.



Pulicat lake through a resilience lens... (see Coulthard 2008)

- Lagoon dynamics: Highly seasonal, fresh water/ saline water, infrequent rains caused regular collapse in the lagoon fishery 'black years'.
- Scheduled caste fishers, more adaptive to change, diverse livelihood portfolio, better savers, active campaigners, more resilient to fishery collapse *despite* less wealth.



“A man may leave his wife but never his Padu place”

Pattinaver fishers show a strong attachment to their way of fishing (Padu system), but compromise their resilience...

Higher wealth and status but more vulnerable to lean fishing periods – overly specialized into a lucrative but unstable fishery.

Questions:

How do peoples pursuits of what they think is important (e.g. Padu tradition ‘wellbeing’) compliment or frustrate resilience?

And vice versa....What are the costs of being resilient on wellbeing?



Resilience strategies and wellbeing trade-offs amongst fishers in Northern Ireland. (See Coulthard 2012, Coulthard and Britton 2015)

Context: Diminishing returns from declining catches.

Modification of fishing behaviour:

1. Reducing crew size (cutting costs, sometimes operating alone)

- Increased economic returns / take home pay
- Decreased safety / higher risk.

2. Spending more time at sea

Potential for greater catch (economic resilience)

Decreased quality of life

Decreased quality of relationships with others
(especially at home)

I was home for 10 days out of 7 months. I'm living out of plastic bags. Where's my human rights as a fisherman?

(Prawn skipper, Ards Peninsula, Coulthard and Britton 2015)

Household level – resilience-wellbeing trade offs within the family.

(Coulthard and Britton 2015)

A rich literature on women's contributions to the resilience of the fishing household, and how this can result in negative consequences for their individual wellbeing (Binkley 2000; Nadel-Klein 2003).

Fisher wives in Northern Ireland are sometimes known as '*grass widows*' due to the long periods of time their husbands spend at sea (Britton 2012).

This contributes to their sense of isolation, which is intensified in situations where women feel compelled to adopt adaptive strategies (often additional jobs/ as well as child care and existing work to support the fishing business of the household)

Relevance for fisheries management

What opportunities exist to strengthen both resilience and wellbeing outcomes?

What is the interplay between environment, economic and social resilience - a powerful 'multi-dimensional' insight into the types of strategies that are, and could be, adopted.

Trade offs or 'hard choices' are inherent in fishing adaptations, and can exist at individual and household levels.

How could the negative impacts of these hard choices be softened?

For example, support to help strengthen important 'relationships' that can influence resilience, such as for families facing the difficulties of a spouse spending significant periods of time at sea.

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