

University of Groningen

The role of local communities in a global risk landscape

Imperiale, Angelo Jonas

DOI:
[10.33612/diss.131472776](https://doi.org/10.33612/diss.131472776)

IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:
2020

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):
Imperiale, A. J. (2020). *The role of local communities in a global risk landscape: Using Social Impact Assessment to understand, recognise, engage and empower community resilience in vulnerable regions*. [Thesis fully internal (DIV), University of Groningen]. University of Groningen.
<https://doi.org/10.33612/diss.131472776>

Copyright

Other than for strictly personal use, it is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

The publication may also be distributed here under the terms of Article 25fa of the Dutch Copyright Act, indicated by the "Taverne" license. More information can be found on the University of Groningen website: <https://www.rug.nl/library/open-access/self-archiving-pure/taverne-amendment>.

Take-down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Downloaded from the University of Groningen/UMCG research database (Pure): <http://www.rug.nl/research/portal>. For technical reasons the number of authors shown on this cover page is limited to 10 maximum.

De rol van lokale gemeenschappen in een mondiaal risicolandschap: Social Impact Assessment gebruiken om de veerkracht van de gemeenschap in kwetsbare regio's te begrijpen, herkennen, betrekken en versterken. (summary in Dutch)

In de afgelopen drie decennia maakte de dramatische toename van rampen, met name klimaatgerelateerde rampen, inzicht in wat veerkracht in sociale systemen is en hoe deze op alle niveaus van de samenleving kan worden verbeterd, belangrijker dan ooit. De goedkeuring van de Agenda 2030 voor duurzame ontwikkeling bevestigde opnieuw de dringende noodzaak om rampenrisicovermindering (DRR) te verbeteren en de weerbaarheid van de gemeenschap op te bouwen bij alle rampenbeheersings- en ontwikkelingsinterventies. Het opbouwen van veerkracht van de gemeenschap is ingebed in een breed scala aan duurzame ontwikkelingsdoelen (SDG's) en doelen. Samen met DRR is het opbouwen van veerkracht van de gemeenschap een transversaal probleem, dat van invloed is op de vooruitgang bij het behalen van de SDG's.

Deze studie onderzoekt de rol die Social Impact Assessment speelt bij het begrijpen, herkennen, betrekken en versterken van de veerkracht van gemeenschappen in kwetsbare regio's. Het vergroot het theoretische en praktische domein van SIA, met name om de cognitieve en interactionele dimensies van veerkracht van lokale gemeenschappen beter te conceptualiseren en te overwegen hoe veerkracht op alle niveaus van de samenleving kan worden opgebouwd. Deel 1 onderzoekt hoe de veerkracht van de gemeenschap in actie kwam onder plattelandsgemeenschappen in het L'Aquila-berggebied (regio Abruzzo, Italië) na de aardbeving in L'Aquila op 6 april 2009. Het definieert veerkracht in sociale termen en beschrijft hoe Social Impact Assessment (SIA) werd toegepast in het kader van een duurzaam plattelandsontwikkelingsproject om de veerkracht van lokale gemeenschappen in het berggebied van L'Aquila te versterken.

Deel 2 analyseert de tekortkomingen van de Italiaanse staat, de civiele beschermingsautoriteiten en de cijfers van de lokale autoriteiten in termen van het niet begrijpen van de verschillende dimensies van risico, het niet respecteren van de rampenbeheersprincipes van de Verenigde Naties, het niet verbeteren van de weerbaarheid van de gemeenschap en het niet opbouwen van beter, duurzamer en veerkrachtige samenleving in de ramp herstel, wederopbouw en ontwikkelingsactiviteiten na de aardbeving. Op basis van de bevindingen die in deel 1 en 2 zijn gerapporteerd, wordt in deel 3 nagedacht over wat er moet worden geleerd en getransformeerd in rampenmanagement en ontwikkelingstheorie en -praktijk, en hoe het veld voor effectbeoordeling, met name SIA, kan worden verbeterd om geplande interventies te ondersteunen om DRR verbeteren, veerkracht opbouwen op alle niveaus van de samenleving en de SDG's behalen.

Deze studie concludeert dat het mechanisme dat wordt toegepast door staten die top-down, gecentraliseerde, sociale beschermingsystemen gebruiken, die rampenkapitalisme mogelijk maakt en de elites beschermt, moet worden afgeschaft. Een cruciale verschuiving in het denken en oefenen bij rampenbestrijding van het beschermen van kwetsbare, getroffen gemeenschappen naar het versterken van hun capaciteiten om te leren en te transformeren, en van top-down, gecentraliseerde sociale beschermingsstelsels naar gedecentraliseerde, sociaal duurzame gemeenschapsstimuleringsystemen is nodig.

Het gebied van effectbeoordeling, met name van SIA, kan een dergelijke verschuiving ondersteunen, als de kennis ervan transformatief is en in samenwerking met lokale gemeenschappen wordt geproduceerd, en daadwerkelijk bijdraagt aan het opbouwen van een gemeenschapscultuur van welzijn en veerkracht, in plaats van een van rampenkapitalisme. Dit zal ertoe bijdragen dat getroffen landschappen veranderen in affectieve landschappen in plaats van te exploiteren karkassen.

**Il ruolo delle comunità locali in un paesaggio globale a rischio:
Usare la Valutazione di Impatto Sociale per capire, riconoscere, coinvolgere, e
rafforzare la resilienza di comunità in territori vulnerabili.
(summary in Italian)**

Negli ultimi tre decenni, l'aumento di disastri, in particolare quelli legati al clima, ha reso la comprensione in termini sociali della resilienza e di come rafforzarla in società, più importante che mai. Dagli anni '80, varie dichiarazioni internazionali delle Nazioni Unite hanno stabilito e promulgato un paradigma che definisce la riduzione del rischio di disastri e l'aumento della resilienza quali principi fondamentali che dovrebbero essere la base dell'operato di ogni agenzia di gestione di disastri e pianificazione dello sviluppo nel mondo. Questo paradigma raccomanda la riduzione delle vulnerabilità e dei rischi sociali, il coinvolgimento e rafforzamento delle comunità e la costruzione della resilienza in società in ogni fase della gestione dei disastri e di interventi pianificati per lo sviluppo. L'adozione dell'Agenda 2030 per lo sviluppo sostenibile ha ribadito l'urgente necessità di rafforzare la riduzione del rischio di disastri e costruire comunità resilienti in ogni intervento pianificato prima e dopo i disastri, perché si possano realmente raggiungere gli obiettivi di sviluppo sostenibile.

Questo studio indaga il ruolo della valutazione di impatto sociale nella comprensione e nel rafforzamento della resilienza di comunità nelle regioni vulnerabili. La prima parte esplora il modo in cui la resilienza di comunità è entrata in azione tra le comunità rurali nell'area montana dell'Aquila (Abruzzo, Italia) dopo il terremoto del 6 aprile 2009, e definisce cos'è la resilienza di comunità e come entra in azione nei sistemi sociali (Capitolo 3). Inoltre, introduce il quadro operativo di azioni di valutazione di impatto sociale (the *Social Impact Assessment Framework for Action*) che è stato ideato, sviluppato e applicato per la prima volta nella regione montana aquilana per rafforzare la resilienza delle comunità locali che vivono in questo territorio (Capitolo 4). La parte 2 analizza come lo stato italiano, le autorità nazionali di protezione civile e le autorità locali abbiano fallito nel comprendere le molteplici dimensioni locali del rischio (Capitolo 5), nel rispettare i principi delle Nazioni Unite per la gestione dei disastri (Capitolo 6), nel migliorare la resilienza di comunità (Capitolo 7), e nel ricostruire comunità più sostenibili e resilienti (Capitolo 8). Rielaborando i risultati riportati nelle Parti 1 e 2, la Parte 3 riflette su ciò che deve essere appreso e trasformato nella teoria e nella pratica della gestione dei disastri e della pianificazione dello sviluppo. La terza parte di questo lavoro, suggerisce anche come il campo della valutazione d'impatto, in particolare della valutazione di impatto sociale e il nuovo quadro d'azioni proposto (the SIA Framework for Action), possa essere ulteriormente potenziato perché si supporti meglio ogni tipo di intervento pianificato nel rafforzare la resilienza a tutti i livelli della società e nel realizzare gli obiettivi di sviluppo sostenibile (Capitolo 9).

Questo studio conclude che il meccanismo messo in atto dagli stati che utilizzano sistemi di protezione civile centralizzati, facilita il capitalismo dei disastri, protegge le élites e deve essere abolito. Un cambio cruciale nella gestione dei disastri e nella pianificazione dello sviluppo da sistemi di protezione civile a sistemi di rafforzamento di comunità decentralizzati e socialmente sostenibili, è più che mai necessario. Tale cambio dovrebbe basarsi su una conoscenza coprodotta e trasformativa in grado di costruire una cultura del benessere e della resilienza di comunità, piuttosto che una cultura del capitalismo dei disastri. Questo contribuirà a trasformare i paesaggi colpiti da crisi e disastri, in paesaggi di affezione – piuttosto che in carcasse da sfruttare –.

Acknowledgements

Many people helped, supported and inspired me in this research, before and after I got enrolled at the Department of Cultural Geography, Faculty of Spatial Sciences, University of Groningen (The Netherlands). First of all, I would like to express my gratitude to my promotor and supervisor Professor Frank Vanclay, who, since the very first time we met in 2011, empathized with me and was incredibly supportive. Frank, the writing of this thesis would have never been possible without your wisdom. Working with you has been (and still is) a wonderful journey, and an ongoing life lesson under many aspects, from personal to professional ones. Many thanks also to my other supervisor, Professor Dirk Strijker and the trust he gave me. Dirk, I enjoyed your classes on – and approach to – rural development, and you always encouraged me to go forward and follow the research path I was in. Thanks also to Ana Maria Esteves and the food for thought she gave me. Ana Maria, since my very first visit in Groningen in 2013, you welcomed me and made me feel at home. You not only gave me food to eat, but also important food for thought, which kept inspiring and challenging me in the personal reflections I developed on my research, work, and life trajectory.

Many thanks to my paranymphs, Annaclaudia and Sander, who helped me organise everything for the defence and the party. Thanks to all my colleagues at the Faculty of Spatial Sciences: those who welcomed me the first time I was in Groningen in 2013, and in 2014; those who welcomed me when I definitely moved in Groningen in October 2016; and those with whom, since 2016, I could share feelings and thoughts about our research, and share some teaching and fun, including Oscar, Dimitris, Tialda, Bernardette, Peter, Gerd, Koen, Richard, Arie, Arjen, Lidewij, Gwenda, Julia, Nienke, Philippe, David, Patrick, Luis, Tom, Ilya, Lara, Karina, Bei, Jingyu, Juhyun, Chen, Suzan, Jasper, Melanie, Paul, Joost, Mohamed, Reza, Hiska, Erzi, Eva, Christina, Rick and Roberta. Many thanks also to all the Faculty staff people: those who, in the very beginning, helped me with all the bureaucracies to get enrolled and were incredibly kind with me, and those who patiently answered my email and helped me in many ways, including Jeannet, Hernette, Arjen, Sanne and Imre.

During the time I was enrolled at the Faculty of Spatial Sciences, I had the chance to attend several conferences in which I had the luck to meet many people from whom I could learn and who inspired me for this PhD thesis. Many thanks to the 2014 Urban and Regional Studies Institute (URSI)'s research conference organizers, Nienke and Liesbeth, who welcomed me and introduced me to the Faculty's and the URSI's people at the URSI research conference on May 2014. Many thanks to Lidewij, who, for this occasion, read one of my paper drafts and provided me with relevant comments and suggestions before my presentation, and many thanks also to all my colleagues who made me valuable questions and remarks after my presentation. Thank you also to Inge van der Hoeven who, during my first visits to Groningen, both in 2013 and 2014, helped me to find an accommodation. Inge – inter alia – you were also among the first persons after the earthquake who came to visit me in 2010, some 10 months after the earthquake. You came in L'Aquila to make a short documentary about the post-disaster situation. We did it together, telling the many delays in the recovery and reconstruction processes we could already detect at that time! What a document! Inge, thank you for your support during that time and for the walk along the Tratturo Magno we did together!

Many thanks to Elen-Maarja, Britta, Gwenda, and Melanie who organized the International workshop, *Resilience: Just do it?! Governing for resilience in vulnerable regions*, which was held in Groningen in October 2014. Thanks also to the Coastal Resilience Research Group of the University of Groningen, including Jasper and Jessica, and thanks to all the people I met during this workshop for the feedback I could get, and the fruitful conversations I could have. All this inspired my first paper, Chapter 3 of this PhD thesis. Many thanks also to all the people I met in Perth (Scotland) during the international conference *Perth3: Mountains of Our Future Earth* which I attended in October 2015. Among the people I met there who inspired the writing of my

second paper, Chapter 4 of this PhD thesis, I would like to acknowledge Professor Rolf Weingartner, Professor Martin Price, Professor Courtney Flint, Dr. Susanne Wymann von Dach, Professor Anna Giorgi, Dr. Julia Klein and the Mountain Sentinels, Dr. Emanuela Zilio, Dr. Fabio Azzolin, Professor Michael Minch and all the colleagues who took part of the first meeting on mountain communities we organized during the days of this conference. Thank you all for having shared with me your love towards mountain landscapes and communities and having inspired me with so many brilliant conversations! Of great inspiration for Chapter 5, 6, 7 and 8 were the Second and Third Northern European Conferences on Emergency and Disaster Studies (NEEDS 2 and NEEDS 3), during which I could get precious feedback and suggestions for Part 2. For this, I would like to acknowledge Professor Tricia Wachtendorf and all the colleagues at NEEDS 3 who provided me with precious feedback on a paper draft that later became Chapter 6 of this thesis. Many thanks also to Kristian, Emmanuel, Arjen, Joeren, Kees, Darryl, Sara, Davide, Marta, Marco, Olaf, Roine, Erna and Kerstin, and many others I could meet during these conferences for the conversations we had and the precious feedback and advices they provided me.

Many thanks also to all the people I met during the IAIA conference presentations, workshops, events, and field visits I took part of at IAIA15, in Florence (Italy), IAIA17, in Montreal (Canada) and IAIA18, in Durban (South Africa) which also inspired Chapter 5, 6, 7 and 8. Many thanks also to the people I met at IAIA19, in Brisbane (Australia) which inspired Chapter 9, 10 and 11 of this PhD thesis. At these conferences I met brilliant people who inspired me over the years, including Francesca Viliani, Gabriela Factor, Christopher Moreno, Charles Kelly, Ilse Aucamp, Susan Joyce, Eddie Smyth, Alison McCallum and the members of the IAIA social impact assessment section; Bryan Jenkins, the Aashukan community, Angus Morrison-Saunders, Galina Williams, Zsouzsa Banhalmi-Zakar, Paul Sage, Nadine, Jillian, Olga; those who presented their research, or were present and made interesting questions during the sessions on disaster risk reduction and community resilience, or on social impact assessment and regional development I chaired with Charles Kelly and Frank; and those with whom I could share wonderful learning experiences at the Maloti-Drakensberg World Heritage Site (Cathedral Peak), the Mandela Capture site, and at Pondoland, Eastern Cape – the walk with the wild coast community changed my thinking forever. To all of these people and to many others, I would like to express my gratitude. Please, keep up the good work, and let the revolution in the field of impact assessment begin!

This PhD thesis is partly based on the personal experiences I had, the cultural activities I organized and the ethnographic fieldwork I carried out after the 6 April 2009 L'Aquila earthquake: (1) during the emergency management phase in the tent camps; (2) during the reconstruction phase in several mountain villages close to L'Aquila city; and (3) during the re-development phase, in the L'Aquila post-disaster mountain region. During each of these phases, I had the luck to meet wonderful people who helped, supported and inspired me in the cultural activities and ethnographic fieldwork I was carrying out in the L'Aquila post-disaster situation. To all of them I would like to express my gratitude.

I would like to acknowledge all my professors at the Department of Human Studies, University of L'Aquila and all the University personnel, who, since I was a Master student, enabled and supported me to follow this research path. I would also like to thank the Centre de Recherche en Épistémologie Appliquée (CNRS/École Polytechnique, Paris), especially Professor Giuseppe Longo and Professor Jean-Michel Besnier for the fruitful interactions I had with them during my internship in Paris. Many thanks also to the Donau University of Krems and especially Professor Christian Hanus and Professor Roberto Pirzio-Biroli – from whom I learned participatory post-disaster reconstruction strategies, and with whom I could apply social impact assessment in the reconstruction project proposals with which I was engaged. Many thanks also to Dr Sara Gutarra, Dr Andri Gurtmann, and the Donau University's students and personnel who took part in these

participatory reconstruction project proposals. Many thanks also to the local project team, and all the inhabitants who signed these proposals and took part of the many activities undertaken. Many thanks to ASIA (Architecture Social Impact Assessment) and the anthropologist, Professor Franco La Cecla who I met the first time in September 2009, and from whom I learned how to combine my commitment with local communities and a social scientific approach in a fruitful way; and how to enhance my knowledge and competence in Social Sciences and in conducting ethnographic fieldwork.

Special thanks also to my friend and filmmaker Daniele Vicari, and to Tiziana Triana and Fandango Libri and all the people who made possible the realization of the artistic initiatives we conducted in the tent camps immediately after the earthquake, including the regional public health sector who authorized these activities, Professor Sandro Sirolli, the local NGO 180 amici, and the many artists who made this possible, including Valerio Mastandrea, Daniele Silvestri e tutto il suo gruppo, Valerio Aprea, Tullio Solenghi, Daniela Poggi, Massimo Giuliani, Patrizia Zappamulas and Alessandro Baricco; the external organizations, including Slowind, Rock4All, la proloco di Tuscania e la scuola di Karate, e le maestre e i bambini della scuola di Silvi. Many thanks also to the local teachers and NGOs that managed these initiatives themselves in the tent camps, and to those who contributed to the realization of the cultural festival *Empatia n.0*, on 29 September 2009, and all those who were there. In this Festival, thanks to Tiziana Triana and Fandango Libri, I had the chance to meet and interact with the American sociologist Rebeca Solnit. Her book, *A Paradise built in Hell: The Extraordinary Communities that arise in Disaster*, which she presented there, keeps being of profound inspiration to me. Many thanks also to all the people with whom I worked during the rural development project *Vie e Civiltà della Transumanza*, patrimonio dell'Umanità on which Chapter 4 is based. Thanks also to all the local mayors, local NGOs, all the people who took part of the initiatives we organized to promote sustainable rural development projects in the L'Aquila mountain region, those entrepreneurs who took part of the Network Agreement *Paesaggi in Transumanza*, those who took part of the network of the local NGO Salviamo la Piana, and all the people, local NGOs and local municipalities and public authorities who supported (and keep supporting), took part (and keep taking part), and helped (and keep helping) the organization of the Transhumance (which became UNESCO world heritage in 2019) and of cultural events addressed to rediscover and promote the Tratturo Magno shepherds' path, and the local rural economy and culture.

I would also like to acknowledge all my friends and relatives who supported and helped me in my research during the years I lived in L'Aquila, and in the emergency, reconstruction and re-development activities with which I was engaged. Many thanks to all those friends with whom I could organize these initiatives; those with whom I could share my feelings and reflections; those who gave me their support on so many occasions; those who, no matter what, were always there, before and after the earthquake; those with whom I shared wonderful walks in the wild mountain landscapes surrounding L'Aquila and discussed the pros and cons of living there; those with whom, since 2009, I walked along the Tratturo Magno; and those with whom I can still reconnect with my heart and my head and have wonderful moments together every time I come back to Abruzzo. To all of them I would like to express my gratitude for their help and support throughout all these years.

I would never have been able to conduct this research and bear its weight after I moved to Groningen without the emotional and practical help and support I received also from all my friends I met in Groningen and/or with whom I had wonderful times after I moved to the Netherlands: the landscapes we crossed, the deserts we experienced and the music we shared; the sweets we cooked together, and the joy and fun we had; the arrosticini and the pasta ammano we made, cooked and ate together, the snooker we played and the sofa you shared with me; the documentaries we watched together, the passion for the surf we shared, the videogames we played and the nice chats we had; our walks in Neuchâtel and Brussels, the art and poetry we shared,

the tango we danced and visions we shared; the southern cross, the magic hills and wild coast we walked through and the waves we surfed; the magic of San Cristobal, the Maya and Zapotecan cultures, the post-disaster situation in Juchitan and los dias de los Muertos we experienced together; the festival of Harlingen we enjoyed together; the ancient theaters we explored and the small villages we chased, and the waterfalls, the wild landscapes we have walked through and the magic of the red moon eclipse we lived together; the live concerts, music festival, artistic events and the movies we watched together; the living room concerts; the camping and the dreams, the tent, the many conversations and wonderful breakfasts we made, and the magic we shared; the fun we had, the stories and emotions and the cappuccinos and the sweets and dances we shared, and the rain we ran through; the smoothies we drank and endless vocal messages we exchanged, and the support we gave each other; the football match we watched together at Euroborg and the good beers we had; the conversations we had about our regions and our stories; the laughs we had and the magic brown lakes where we were together. Many thanks for all this and the Love and Magic we share, and much more, to Luigi, Boris, Ana, Suele, Giulio, Maria Dolores, Stephanie, Pablo, Lesley, Louiza, Alessio, Cyrus, Marta, Stefano, Leo, Ines, Valentina & Luca, Simone, Sander, Tino, Kaspers, Agata, Suu, Sole, Rusne, Valentina, Moneike, Lisa, Marwil, Lydia, Renee, Razi, Jessica, Ziki, Yama, all my housemates Santi, Diego, Michaela, Ty, Mark, Alex, Raffaele, Paolina, Nina, Jenny, Ires, and commara Francesca & Petros, commara Clelia & Sander and their wonderful sons Francesco & Riccardo, and many others I had the luck to meet here in Groningen. To all of you and to the city of Groningen, I would like to express my gratitude, you made my soul lighter, you made me feel happy and helped bear the emotional and physical weight of this research! Thank you.

Special thanks also to Paco. Paco, you were the light in the deep darkness I was walking through while I was bringing you the evidence of the barbarity of disaster capitalism. You were my intellectual sword. You helped me unveil the hidden knowledge about the mechanism, and the paradise and the extraordinary communities that arise amidst the hell. You supported me refine the right approach that can bring this paradise back to light. You taught me the true meaning of being brave. You taught me integrity, and how to align my goals and objectives with my passion and mission in life. You never let me feel alone, even when I had to deal with the mechanism and could feel over-exposed. Paco, you gave my fire a melody, and you let it sing. You helped me recover my voice and wings. For this, and for many other things, thank you, Paco.

Last but not least, this PhD thesis and the whole research underpinning this PhD research project would never have been possible without the wonderful love, patience, trust, empathy and support my family provided me throughout all these years and through many different ways. Many thanks to my mother Gabriella, who keeps taking care of me in many important and practical ways; my father, Pierluigi, with whom I shared volunteer activities and I keep sharing the passion towards the Tratturo Magno and the rural world; my brother, Marino, who always brings me back to reality with his thoughts and reflections; and my grandmother Natalina, her food, her caring, and her warm, handmade, woollen slippers. A special thanks to my grandmother, Antonietta, who after the earthquake gave me extraordinary support throughout all the time, I was living with her, and my mother, in our mountain village after the earthquake and beyond. Nonna, *il tuo cuore continua a battere nel mio*. To my grandmother Antonietta, who taught me discipline in passion and dedication in caring; to my grandfather Marino Imperiale who taught me the sense of public duty and willpower in honesty; and to my grandfather Tito Befaccia, who taught me empathy in love and humility in generosity. *Questo lavoro è dedicato a voi*.

Yours sincerely,

Angelo J.
Groningen, 6 March 2020