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Linking resilience thinking and sustainability pillars to ecotourism principles

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LINKING RESILIENCE THINKING AND SUSTAINABILITY PILLARS TO ECOTOURISM PRINCIPLES

Valerie A. Sheppard

Introduction

In 1998, the United Nations (UN) declared 2002 the International Year of Ecotourism (IYE) (United Nations Social and Economic Council, 1998). In so doing, the UN anticipated that governments, international and regional organisations, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) would cooperate and collaborate in promoting ecotourism as a more sustainable form of tourism that would meet the needs of present tourists and host communities and regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future, managing resources to fulfil economic, social, and aesthetic needs, and maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life-support systems. (p. 2)

Certainly, these were lofty goals for the IYE, and particularly so for the ecotourism businesses that would be expected to deliver upon these goals. Indeed, many have observed the challenges associated with envisioning ecotourism as exemplary model for sustainable tourism development. For example, Butcher (2006, p. 155) contends it promotes the view that traditional knowledge is “as good, if not better, than modern technology,” which then discourages modernisation. He adds that it empowers communities to modify, but not transform their relationship with the natural environment.

The ability of individuals, communities, organisations, and systems of governance to transform (see Chapter 23) is associated with the concept of resilience. Recently, a growing body of scholars have sought to understand how resilience thinking may supplement and complement sustainability approaches for encouraging better tourism business practices. Indeed, resilience is a concept and a development approach that is increasingly drawing the attention of scholars and development agencies. These agents and agencies contend that a resilience approach may assist humanity in better managing its responses to changes within socio-ecological systems (SESs) and that it may be effective in correcting the unsustainable trajectory of human societies (see Lebel et al., 2006). On the other hand, some contend there is a lack of scientific consensus that a resilience approach will lead to more sustainable forms of development (Simmie & Martin, 2010).
Despite Butcher’s and others’ caveats, ecotourism continues to be promoted as a form of tourism that reconciles the conflicting goals of tourism development and the conservation of nature (Baral, 2013). It also continues to be associated with the concepts of sustainability and, increasingly, resilience, as some consider ecotourism to be a business model that is better able to adapt and adjust to system disturbances. Given these competing perspectives there is value in conceptualising how a set of ideal ecotourism principles are linked with resilience thinking and the pillars of sustainability. This step is important for assisting in the development of practical business models to guide all tourism operations along more sustainable and resilient paths. Such a business model or models, are not a new focus. Indeed, scholars, governments, NGOs, businesses, and other interested organisations and individuals have worked collaboratively for decades to develop a variety of business-focused sustainability models and assessment criteria (see the Global Sustainable Tourism Council criteria at www.gstcouncil.org/gstc-criteria/). However, most of these frameworks have neglected to consider and apply a resilience perspective.

Consequently, the purpose of this chapter is to take a step back from sustainability models and assessment frameworks, to examine the nexus between the concepts of resilience and sustainability. This is an important step in order to conceptualise how both perspectives may enhance ecotourism practice, as well as inform other types of tourism practice. As volumes have been written about both concepts, the chapter begins by presenting a brief overview of tourism sustainability before moving on to explore the concept of resilience, generally, and then as it relates to tourism. From there the chapter briefly explores the links between resilience and sustainability. The intention here is to conceptualise how and where the three concepts, sustainability, resilience, and ecotourism, overlap and diverge, and to then present them as a conceptual model of ecotourism resilience and sustainability. The chapter concludes by suggesting areas for future research.

Sustainable tourism overview

McCool (2013) attributes the concept of sustainable tourism to two merging issues in the late 1980s. The first was related to the economic development of nations and regions characterised by high levels of poverty, a lack of access to health and education, and a limited ability to participate in the global economy. The second was related to the fact that society was paying increasing attention to the economic impacts of tourism. The economic impacts arose from the rapid growth in tourism travel, and the fact that tourists were penetrating destinations, many of which characterised by low income and high biological diversity. Natural and cultural heritage were considered means for economic growth, but at the same time there was increasing recognition of the associated negative social, environmental, and economic consequences of this focus.

The first documented use of the words sustainable tourism is attributed to J. J. Pigram, whose 1990 chapter entitled ‘Sustainable Tourism – Policy Considerations’, appeared in The Journal of Tourism Studies (McCool, 2013). Sustainable tourism was considered a “mental model” for guiding environmental, social, and economic issues through policy (McCool, Butler, Buckley, Weaver, & Wheeler, 2013). Specifically, it is often envisioned as a type of small-scale tourism venture, focused on social justice and minimising the negative environmental impacts (McCool, 2013). Ecotourism came to be seen as epitomising the concept of sustainable tourism (McCool et al., 2013).

However, many have observed the challenges with defining and achieving sustainable tourism development. Butler (2013, p. 224), for example, contends that the concept of
sustainable tourism is now “distorted, politicized, and changed beyond general recognition from what may have been implied in the Brundtland Report” (see World Commission on Economic Development WCED, 1987). Others, such as McCool et al. (2013), consider sustainable tourism a utopian dream with little guidance to assess the actually sustainability of a venture. Similarly, Espiner, Orchiston, and Higham (2017, p. 4) contend that “steady-state sustainable tourism is an archaic form of thinking,” that it is neither realistic nor relevant. Some researchers have observed the lack of focus on governance models and management strategies that will be more effective in shaping progress on sustainability (Gill & Williams, 2011; Rijke et al., 2012; Sheppard & Williams, 2016). Indeed, the lack of tourism sustainability progress is considered a policy problem within systems of governance that continue to promote tourism as a vehicle for economic growth, while ignoring its contribution to negative environmental and socio-cultural change (Hall, 2011; van Zeijl-Rozema, Corvers, Kemp, & Martens, 2008). Fennell and Sheppard (2021) observe that the concept of sustainable tourism is often spoken of in terms of stakeholders; yet, observe that non-human animals, despite the fact that they bear the brunt of many of the negative impacts of tourism development, are rarely considered stakeholders.

Interestingly, sustainability discourse has mostly ignored the ethical behaviour that is required to move the “utopian dream” to reality. Although Becker’s (2012) research related to sustainability ethics lies outside the field of tourism, it is of relevance for the purposes of this chapter. Specifically, Becker believes that many of the challenges associated with sustainable development, both in theory and in practice, arise from our failure to determine the most appropriate ethical approach. He argues that sustainability would more appropriately be defined around three key dimensions: continuance; orientation; and relational. He presents each of these dimensions as an ethical question, as follows: 1) Continuance: What systems, processes, or entities should be continued and for what purpose? 2) Orientation: How should one act and live? and 3) Relational: How should one live in relationship to contemporaries, future generations, and nature? It is this latter question that Becker suggests should function as the basic ethical question associated with a modern conceptualisation of sustainability. In other words, sustainability-focused decisions should be based upon a consideration of the moral relationship between humans and their contemporaries, humans and future generations, and humans and nature (Becker, 2012).

At its most fundamental level, sustainability ethics is centred around person identity and self-understanding as a “relational, interdependent, and virtuous person in the context of sustainability relations” (Becker, 2012, p. 67). Becker contends that the sustainable person possesses four core competencies. The first, a relational identity, incorporates the temporality, interdependency, and cultural contingency of human existence. Second is a set of relational virtues, which include respect, care, responsibility, and tolerance. Third is relational competencies, which include attentiveness and receptiveness. The fourth and final competency is a basic understanding of humans as emotional, rational (possessing practical wisdom and reason), communicative, and creative beings. Becker points out that a sustainable person is not perfect, nor are sustainability relations perfect. Rather, the sustainable person strives for ongoing self-development and perfection of relations, within a sustainability context.

**Resilience overview**

In response to these criticisms associated with sustainability, some researchers have turned their attention to the concept of resilience. They contend it may offer more hope for substantive progress on helping humanity better live within its means. The resilience literature can be
traced back to the C. S. Holling, an ecological theorist, who first applied the concept of resilience within the ecology literature in the 1970s. He defined resilience as a measure of the ability of a system to persist in the presence of change and disturbance. Since that time the literature reveals an evolution in the concept and an understanding that it is not simply about persisting in the face of change and disturbance; rather, it is also about the ability of the system to continue to develop (Simonsen et al., n.d., p. 3). In other words, resilience is defined in terms of flexibility, or the capacity of the system to undergo some change (or adapt). Flexibility refers to the degree of manoeuvrability within the system or in activities (Smithers & Smit, 1997). However, Walker and Salt (2006, p. 32) warn that if the system crosses a threshold, it will enter into a different regime or state—or a system with a “different identity” (Walker & Salt, 2006, p. 32). This may not necessarily be a desired outcome. These two aspects of resilience, flexibility, and the ability of a system to undergo some degree of change, are considered important (McGlade, Murray, Baldwin, Ridgway, & Winder, 2006). As such, resilience is now defined as the ability to bounce back, renew, and reorganise (Folke, 2006). This occurs through the building of capacity within a system in order to successfully deal with unexpected ecological and or social change (Berkes, Colding, & Folke, 2003). Interestingly, a smaller body of resilience literature, within the developmental psychology field, is focused on individual resilience. It appears to run parallel to the ecological and social change literature. Within this body of literature, resilience is defined as the ability of individuals to adapt to adversity (see Kumpfer, 1999; Ungar, 2003, 2004, 2005).

As noted above, flexibility and the ability of a system to adapt to change are important concepts associated with resilience thinking. Adaptation is defined in terms of the capacity of humans to influence and manage potential damages or to take advantage of opportunities associated with changes in the environment (Janssen, Schoon, Ke, & Börner 2006; Walker, Holling, Carpenter, & Kinzig, 2004). The forces that affect the ability of a system to adapt also determine its adaptive capacity (see Adger, 2003; Walker et al., 2004; Smit & Wandel, 2006). Indeed, adaptive capacity is closely linked to adaptation and is defined as responses to risks associated with environmental hazards and human vulnerability (Adger & Vincent, 2005; Janssen & Ostrom, 2006). A variety of techniques exist to assess adaptive capacity (e.g., theory driven approaches, assessment of secondary data, self-assessment processes, and futures modelling) (see Lockwood, Raymond, Oczkowski, & Morrison, 2015). Indicators (e.g., social, educational, institutional) can also be assessed to determine adaptive capacity (Simpson, Gossling, Scott, Hall, & Gladin, 2008) at a variety of scales (i.e., individual to national level) (Adger & Vincent, 2005).

The concept of resilience has been a focus of tourism researchers since approximately the mid-1990s. Much of this early tourism research was focused on linking economics with resilience, or a lack thereof (e.g., tourism market fluctuations) (see O’Hare & Barrett, 1994). Since the turn of the century, resilience has been applied to a broader range of tourism topics. For example, it is linked with the environmental impacts of tourism (see Nystrom, Folke, & Moberg, 2000), climate-environmental change and tourism sustainability (see Cheer & Lew, 2018; Holladay, 2018; Klint et al., 2012), disasters, and risks in association with tourism destinations (see Biggs, Hall, & Stoeckl 2011; Cochrane, 2010; Hall, 2011, Larsen, Calgaro, & Thomalla, 2011); communities as it relates to tourism development (see Biggs et al., 2011; Holladay & Powell, 2013); and ecotourism (see Baral, 2013; Jamaliah & Powell, 2017; Kumari, Behera, & Tewari, 2010).

Linking back to the general resilience literature, tourism resilience may be defined as the ability of tourism stakeholders (including destinations, tourism operators, employees, the natural environment, etc.) to bounce back, renew, and/or reorganise (adapt) after a significant shock or
stressor. Shocks are defined as sudden events, that often precede a crisis (e.g., terrorism, natural disasters) while stressors are slow-moving events (e.g., climate change, the anti-flying movement). Tourism researchers contend that the tourism industry is increasingly confronted with a range of shocks and stressors (see Scott, de Freitas, & Matzarakis, 2008). Responses to them (successes and failures) can overlap and “compound over time” (Calgaro, Lloyd, & Dominey-Howes, 2014, p. 348). Shocks and stressors, while often associated with negative impacts, do present opportunities for renewal and innovative thinking (Moberg & Simonsen, n.d., p. 3).

There are conflicting perspectives on whether ecotourism is more resilient to shocks and stressors compared to other forms of tourism operations. An increasing number of tourism scholars are focusing their research around various aspects of this debate. For example, Jamaliah and Powell (2017) sought to understand whether the theoretical dimensions of resilience (social, environmental, governance, and economic) would enable local communities in the Dana Biosphere Reserve, located in Jordan, to persist and adapt to the effects of climate change. Their study suggested that the local communities had a “moderate” level of resilience as it relates to the environmental dimension, while the social, economic, and governance dimensions required further development. Another example is the research of Baral (2013) who assessed the level of resilience of ecotourism activities in the Annapurna Conservation Area, Nepal, in response to the Maoist insurgency from 1996 to 2006. His assessment involved four key areas: local capacity building, waste management, education, and infrastructure development. His findings suggest that local ecotourism entrepreneurs demonstrated resilience to the insurgency through self-organisation, local capacity building, and diversification of livelihoods. The activities of the entrepreneurs helped to maintain the stability of ecotourism businesses and assisted the operators in dealing with the uncertainty associated with the insurgency.

Indeed, a resilience approach, with its emphasis on flexibility, adaptation, and adaptive capacity may promote and enable successful responses to shocks and stressors, including the ability to recognise opportunities for positive change. Furthermore, it may be a solution for linking together society, the economy, and the biosphere (Moberg & Simonsen, p. 7). However, as with the concept of sustainability, some researchers observe the challenge of applying a resilience approach to tourism because of the social nature of tourism and the unpredictability of social interactions. For example, Calgaro et al. (2014) suggest that the notion of tipping points (or resilience thresholds) is not easily applied to social situations, in what Zahra and Ryan (2005) refer to as the unpredictability associated with human actions and outcomes. Further, McKercher (1999, p. 427) contends that tourism destinations, “shaken to the core by events” have “re-emerge[d] in an even more competitive manner.” He adds that a focus on “orderly linear change”, cannot account for “rogue” players who often influence the development of tourism destinations. In other words, tourism destinations often do not proceed through change in a linear fashion, due to the influences of outside and often unpredictable forces. Therefore, determinations and/or predictions of destination resilience, or otherwise, are difficult to make.

### Linking resilience and sustainability

While it is true that the concepts resilience and sustainability are well linked in the literature, there is considerable debate swirling around these concepts. For example, some researchers contend that the concepts are synonymous (Holling & Walker, 2003; Maler, 2008; Perrings, 2006), others suggest they are divergent but complementary concepts (Espiner et al., 2017). Redman (2014) advocates for treating them as two separate concepts, sharing similar principles and objectives, but founded upon separate assumptions around the functioning of systems.
On the other hand, Rees (2014) links the two concepts, suggesting that sustainability infers the importance of maintaining socio-ecological systems and the avoidance of crossing critical thresholds. Similarly, Lebel et al. (2006, n.p.) suggest that the pursuit of more sustainable forms of development cannot occur without “strengthening the capacity of societies to manage resilience.” Others suggest that resilience is a “theoretical construct for sustainability” (see Rees, 2014). In other words, it is a theoretical underpinning of sustainability, but that it lacks practicality as far as making progress on less impactful ways of human living. Adding to the confusion, some researchers contend that resilience is a precondition for sustainability, while others contend sustainability is a precondition for resilience (see Arrow et al., 1995; Lebel et al., 2006; Perrings, 2006).

In addition to the lack of consensus regarding the relationship between the two concepts, some literature questions whether a resilience approach will influence a more sustainable future. For example, some researchers have questioned how something can be judged resilient when the impact of future shocks and stressors is unknown (Christopherson, Michie, & Tyler, 2010). Carpenter et al. (2001) agree, stating that sustainability is always desirable; however, this is not the case with resilience. Resilience can be desirable if it promotes adaptation and regeneration (Hassink, 2010), or undesirable if promotes a return to existing structures that encourage the repetition of past mistakes.

Despite the confusion and points of debate and disagreement, the perfect system to push human behaviour toward a more sustainable form of living, that is likewise more resilient to system shocks and stressors has yet to be uncovered. Indeed, the concepts of sustainability and resilience may be complementary and together offer hope for changing the current trajectory of human behaviour and the societies in which they live. Researchers, governments, NGOs, and others have and continue to build upon these concepts in order to develop the best framework from which to develop a practical and operational set of guidelines, principles, and/or rules, for implementing sustainability and resilience, on a variety of levels (individual, community, regional, national, etc.). The following sections more fully explore the concept of resilience, particularly as it relates to community and individual resilience.

**Community resilience-enhancing characteristics**

Defining, characterising, and conceptualising community resilience is a more recent scholarly endeavour. The Resilience Alliance, the Stockholm Resilience Centre (2015), and the Centre for Community Enterprise (CCE) (n.d., p. 11) define a resilient community as being one “that takes intentional action to enhance the personal collective capacity of its citizens and institutions to respond to, and influence the course of social and economic change.” They contend that a resilient community involves four aspects: people, organisations, resources, and processes. Patton and Johnson (2001, p. 273) add that a resilient community has the ability to “bounce back [after a shock or stressor] and recover using its own resources” (2001, p. 273). They define community resilience in terms of the physical infrastructure, the economic resources, and “ensuring that community members have the resources, capacities and capabilities necessary” to respond to adversity (p. 272). These researchers also contend that it is the ability of a community to conceptualise its “response to adversity,” in advance of an event, that enables the community to draw upon its “internal resources and competencies to manage the demands, challenges and changes” associated with the event (p. 273). However, Tobin (1999, p. 23) warns that responses can perpetuate “the disaster-damage cycle, rather than addressing the root causes of the problem.” He links the resilience of the community to the businesses that comprise the community, especially as it relates to large employers. As he observes, community
resilience may be in the hands of “absentee” employers, rather than local businesspeople. Large employers “make decisions based upon shareholder profits rather than local concerns” (p. 16). He suggests sustainable and resilient communities must:

- Seek to lower the level of risk to all community members through reduced exposure to geophysical events. This can be achieved through structural and non-structural measures;
- Seek to reduce the level of vulnerability of all members of the community, especially those who are politically or economically marginalised;
- Plan for sustainability and resilience; Ensure commitments are long term and that sustainability goals stay at the forefront of all community planning efforts;
- Ensure high-level support and political will from agencies and political leaders; embrace partnerships and cooperation across the various levels of government and across organisations. This will ensure the involvement of leadership, skill and resource utilisation, and local knowledge to help develop mitigation projects and to ensure buy in for sustainability initiatives;
- Strengthen networks of independent and interdependent segments of society, and plan at the appropriate scale.

Identifying the factors or characteristics that build resilience at the local or community level is a critical undertaking in order to determine what resilience looks “on the ground” (Berkes & Seixas, 2005, p. 973). These factors can be assessed qualitatively and/or quantitatively, despite the difficulty associated with collecting the data (Berkes & Seixas, 2005). Ruiz-Ballesteros (2011) appears to be amongst the first tourism researchers to utilise a set of community-based socio-ecological resilience (SER) characteristics in a tourism context. His research involved an exploratory ethnographic case study, which took place in the tourism-focused community of Agua Blanca, Ecuador, a community of approximately 260 residents. The purpose of this research was to explore the practicality of examining SER in tourism-focused communities in order to develop a new methodology for analyzing tourism development. Ruiz-Ballesteros’ (2011) research explored four groups of interrelated factors that other researchers suggest may nurture the development of SER at the local or community level. These factors are drawn mainly from the SES resilience research of Berkes and Seixas (2005) and Folke (2003); however, it is important to note that the factors can be traced back to a body of resilience research that began in approximately 2000 (see Adger, 2000). The four groups of resilience enhancing factors are: 1) learning to live with change and uncertainty, 2) nurturing diversity for reorganisation and renewal, 3) combining different kinds of knowledge, and 4) creating opportunity for self-organisation. Table 4.1 provides detail associated with each of the four factors.

**Individual resilience-enhancing characteristics**

The lack of studies linking individual and community resilience is perplexing given the fact that SESs are comprised of individuals. Only a few recent studies have linked SES resilience at the community level with resilience at the individual level (see Sheppard & Williams, 2016; Sheppard, 2017a, 2017b). Until these more recent studies, individual resilience was mostly studied within the field of developmental psychology, which is focused on understanding the positive life adaptation factors in children and young adults. Here, resilience is defined as the behaviour and internal capacities of children and youth, as well as the structural conditions (socio-cultural, political) that enable adaptation in the face of adversity (Ungar, 2003, 2004, 2005). Of most relevance within this body of research is the work of Kumpfer (1999) who
developed a resilience framework based upon a set of five internal resilience characteristics. These internal characteristics (spiritual or motivational, cognitive, behavioural/social, emotional stability/emotional management, and physical wellbeing/physical ability) enhance individual resilience, particularly in times of stress or challenge. They are positively or negatively affected in the presence of another set of factors (family, culture, community, school, and peers) that function as either risk or protective factors (see Table 4.2).

**Ecotourism principles and resilience**

As noted, there are conflicting perspectives on whether ecotourism is more sustainable and/or more resilient to shocks and stressors than other forms of tourism operations. While it is difficult to make comparisons to other types of tourism operations, the consensus of aforementioned studies is that ecotourism may be more resilient to shocks and stressors; however, the research
also reinforces the importance of governance systems in enabling and enhancing such resilience. If this is true, and ecotourism is more resilient than other forms of tourism, it is important to understand specifically what it is that makes it more resilient. Understanding how and where resilience factors overlap with the principles of ecotourism is important because it may enable other types of tourism businesses to develop and emulate these factors. Table 3.0 draws together the characteristics or principles of ecotourism business operations from the work of Stacey and Needham (1993), Fennell (2001), and Donohue and Needham (2006) with the themes of community resilience from Ruiz-Ballesteros (2011).

As evidenced in Table 4.3, all of the ecotourism principles (see Fennell, 2001; Stacey & Needham, 1993; Donohue & Needham, 2006) can be matched to the resilience themes that have been identified in the community resilience themes identified (see Ruiz-Ballesteros, 2011). For example, the ecotourism principles of nature-based and focused on preservation and/or conservation are both aligned to the resilience theme of nurturing diversity for reorganisation and renewal. All are focused on healthy ecosystems, which involves nurturing ecological memory and nurturing diversity, as well as collaboration between ecotourism providers and the community and building trust amongst among users. While ecotourism principles are focused on incorporating and/or implementing preservation/conservation into management plans, resilience thinking is focused on creating political space for exploration, innovation, and novelty.

Similarly, the educational component associated with ecotourism is aligned with the community resilience characteristic of learning to live with change and uncertainty. For example, both are focused at educating and creating awareness amongst stakeholders as well as empowering them. While the educational component (ecotourism) is focused at interactions and between guests and nature, learning to live with change and uncertainty (resilience) is focused on building the

Table 4.2 Resilience enhancing characteristics at the individual level (Kumpfer, 1999)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics Nurturing Individual Resilience</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual or motivational</td>
<td>Encompasses mostly cognitive capabilities or a belief system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Motivates individuals to proceed in a specific direction; success depends upon the direction taken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>Helps an individual achieve his or her dreams and goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Includes intellectual, academic, and job skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Includes moral reasoning, and ability to: 1) judge right from wrong; 2) internalise standards of the way things should be done or what is normative 3) value compassion, fairness, decency; and, 4) the desire to serve others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Connected to insight and reflective skills, high levels of self-esteem, creativity, and the ability to plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioural/social</td>
<td>Similar to cognitive competencies, except that they require a behavioural action, as opposed to just thought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Includes problem solving skills, communication skills, street and peer resistance smarts, and ability to be empathetic to the needs of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional stability/ emotional management</td>
<td>Includes happiness, the recognition of feelings, ability to control anger and depression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Includes ability to restore one’s self-esteem, humour, and hopefulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical wellbeing/physical ability</td>
<td>Includes good health, health maintenance skills, physical talent development, and physical attractiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Good physical state is predicative of resilience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.3 Comparison of ecotourism principles and community resilience themes (based upon Donohue & Needham, 2006; Fennell, 2001; Ruiz-Ballesteros, 2011; Stacey & Needham, 1993)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature-based principles</th>
<th>Community-level resilience characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activities occurring mostly in nature, where there is minimal human interference</td>
<td>Nurturing diversity for reorganisation and renewal:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focusing on healthy ecosystems</td>
<td>• Nurturing ecological memory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing opportunities to visit natural areas</td>
<td>• Nurturing diversity in institutions to respond to change</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Focused on preservation and/or conservation:
- Maintaining and/or enhancing ecosystems
- Focusing awareness on ecosystem requirements
- Collaboration between providers and community (protected area managers, local people, etc.)
- Incorporating/implementing preservation/conservation into management plans

Educational component:
- Educating re biological-cultural aspects to all stakeholders (staff, guests, community)
- Encouraging interaction between guests and nature (experiential/educational benefits)
- Increasing stakeholder awareness and understanding area’s natural heritage (including visitors)
- Empowering stakeholders to become involved in issues affecting natural and cultural heritage (including visitors)

Focused on sustainability:
- Achieving equity and social justice
- Maintaining ecological integrity
- Satisfying human needs
- Achieving social self-determination
- Integrating conservation and development

Ethics, responsibility, and awareness:
- Taking an ethics-based environmentally, socially and culturally responsible approach
- Making decisions based upon ecological principles
- Considering impacts and consequences of travel to and within natural areas
- Leading by example/increasing awareness of values-based ethics action and business approach

Benefits distributed amongst a variety of stakeholders:
- Ensuring equitable access to resources, costs, and benefits
- Benefits complement rather than replace traditional local practices, activities

Learning to live with change and uncertainty:
- Creating learning environment, particularly for shocks and stressors
- Building rapid feedback capacity to respond to environmental change
- Managing disturbance
- Building a portfolio of livelihood activities
- Developing coping strategies

Combining different kinds of knowledge:
- Incorporating systems of local knowledge into management and external decision-making authorities
- Building capacity to monitor the environment
- Building capacity for participatory management
- Building institutions that frame learning, memory, and creativity
- Building institutions that create cross-scale mechanisms to share knowledge

Creating opportunity for self-organisation:
- Promoting participatory strategies that permit self-organisation of groups and communities
- Promoting participatory strategies that consider diversity and alteration inherent in resilience
- Building capacity for user self-organisation
ability to respond to and manage disturbance, as well as an emphasis on the development of coping strategies.

The ecotourism principles of sustainability and ethics, responsibility, and awareness can be linked with the community resilience characteristic of combining different kinds of knowledge. In this regard, ecotourism seeks to combine equity, social justice, self-determination (social pillar), with satisfying human needs and development (economic pillar), and maintaining ecological integrity and integrating conservation (environmental pillar). Likewise, combining different kinds of knowledge (resilience) is characterised by a focus on local knowledge, sharing of knowledge, and institution building (social pillar), with monitoring the environment (environmental pillar), and participatory management and decision making (economic pillar). Importantly, ethics, responsibility, and awareness (ecotourism principle) can also be linked with sustainability and with combining different kinds of knowledge. For example, an ethics approach involves environmental and socio-cultural approaches, as well as a values-based business approach (sustainability pillar). Responsibility and awareness, aspects associated with ethics, are linked with the sharing of knowledge, building capacity for participatory management, incorporating local knowledge, and also monitoring the environment (resilience).

Finally, the ecotourism principle of benefits distributed amongst a variety of stakeholders can be linked with the community resilience characteristic of creating opportunity for self-organisation. For example, ensuring equitable access to resources, costs and benefits and improving the quality of life for local people (ecotourism) are both linked with building capacity for self-determination and self-organised fairness in resource access and allocation (resilience). Similarly, benefits of ecotourism complement rather than replace traditional local practices and activities are linked with building conflict management mechanisms and a focus on creating multi-level social and ecosystem governance (resilience).

The comparison, as depicted in Table 4.3, linking the principles of ecotourism with the characteristics of resilience, could be reorganised in a number of different ways. Indeed, the various principles and characteristics overlap, merge, and diverge on many other levels than described above. What is clear is that the principles of ecotourism and the characteristics of resilience bear many similarities. However, what is missing in this analysis is a consideration of the role individuals play in the success of ecotourism. In other words, what are the characteristics that individual ecotourism operators and other stakeholders should or must have in order to be resilient on an individual level? A resilient ecotourism operation requires a resilient owner-manager, a resilient community, a resilient governance system, and a resilient ecosystem. The following section conceptualises the addition of the individual resilience characteristics from Table 4.2 into the sustainability-resilience of ecotourism.
Reconceptualising the sustainability and resilience of ecotourism operations

Figure 4.1 conceptualises the centrality of individual resilience in the sustainability and overall resilience of ecotourism operations. Specifically, if individuals are resilient and focused on their personal sustainability, the community is more likely to also be resilient. Likewise, if both the community and the individuals who comprise the community are resilient, then it is likely that their businesses, tourism focused, and otherwise, will be more resilient and also focused on sustainability. Central to the resilience of the community and the tourism businesses within the community, is the degree to which individuals, their businesses, and the community are all focused on decision-making with a consideration of the pillars of sustainability. As demonstrated, Figure 4.1 includes a fourth pillar, governance, as sustainability and resilience cannot occur within governance systems that are not modelled in such a manner as to enable sustainability approaches and resilience thinking. Consequently, the ecotourism business model that adheres to the principles of ecotourism and pillars of sustainability, and which is supported by a community of resilient individuals and leaders, may serve as a model for other tourism operations, particularly those that function within and/or are dependent upon the natural environment.

Figure 4.1 Diagram showing the centrality of individual resilience in the sustainability and overall resilience of ecotourism operations
Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to examine the nexus between the concepts of resilience and sustainability, in order to conceptualise how both perspectives may enhance ecotourism practice, as well as inform other types of tourism business practice. It has been suggested here that the lack of focus on the individual, both in terms of resilience and sustainability, may be hindering more timely and effective sustainability progress. Indeed, there appears to be an urgent need for a sustainable tourism business model that encompasses aspects of ecotourism principles and resilience characteristics, which are then applied at a variety of levels (personal, business, community). Within such a model, business owners and managers would take personal responsibility for minimising the environmental and socio-cultural impacts of their operations, in addition to striving for profitability. Most importantly, their behaviour would emulate ethics-based values, responsibility, and awareness.

This chapter has also attempted to move the ecotourism agenda forward by suggesting a framework for more resilient and sustainable tourism business operations. Admittedly, it has not taken the next step, which is to develop and test a prototype tourism business model for not only ecotourism operations, but also other forms of tourism operations. Therefore, a recommendation is made that future research could explore the practicality of such business models. Specifically, researchers would test the ability of tourism businesses operating under a resilience and sustainability focused business model to respond and adapt to system shocks and stressors (e.g., economic, political, socio-cultural, environmental, communicable disease and illness, etc.) as well as recover, and successfully move on.

The years 2018 and 2019 were challenging years for the tourism industry as evidenced by the collapse of Thomas Cook, a major travel group, and a number of small airlines around the world (i.e., Jet Airways, Fly Jamaica Airways, WOW Air, Asian Express Airline). The 2020 outbreak of the coronavirus in China and its rapid spread across the globe is further evidence of the vulnerability of tourism operations to system shocks and stressors and the need for actions that enhance their resilience and overall sustainability (see www.ctvnews.ca/canada/chinese-tourists-cancel-trips-to-canadian-hotspots-such-as-banff-yellowknife-1.4791629). While the business model, as described, may seem like just another utopian dream, its need is undeniable and urgent. Determining which model will be most effective, in terms of individual, business and community resilience and sustainability, is the next logical step for making timely and substantive sustainability progress.

Notes

1 See Fennell (2019) for a tourism-focused application of Becker’s sustainability ethics model.
2 There is a body of research dating back to the 1970s that discusses resilience in terms of the management and conservation of parks and protected areas, particularly as it relates to area degradation (see Western & Henry, 1979).

References


