

## **A Systemic, Socio-ecological approach for community resilience: the case study of the World Music School.**

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### ***Extended Abstract***

This paper presents research and a discussion on aspects of community resilience informed by literature and the case study of the World Music School (WMS) focusing on the human community resilience impact through (and with) their immediate environments (both social and environmental).

The observation of our close environment and the links between human beings and our current environment, seems to suggest an emergent result, one of disconnection (Holt 2015) . Despite using digital ecosystems (Vaidhyathan 2018) services to sustain themselves, individuals are cognitively severed from the remaining link they could have with their close biophysical environment (Kesebir 2017). In addition to this phenomena, the individual can also be isolated among its peers, sharing increasing superficial connections and relationships with fewer deep interconnections. As a consequence such a social system shows signs of acute weakness in its resilience towards shocks and disturbances, with emergent sets of characteristics. Its weakest components being the less connected (Walker and Salt 2006).

In a human centered paradigm, the disconnection of the individual first of the individual itself, then of its community greatly reduce their capacity to operate as a resilient system. In an overall perspective this disconnection weakens at the same time the socio-economic system, as well as the social-ecological system it is connected to or belongs to. A system's component having only dysfunctional connections is not only a hindrance, but for the entire system as a whole. Eisenburger (2012) discussed that social isolation is increasing the mortality rate, bringing in its wake an entire batch of psycho or somatic related disease that will take a toll on the surrounding society, might it be the health care system or the connections of the disconnected individual.

The development of the digital age has for the last decades greatly increased our overall communication capacity but has greatly reduced as well the depth of these exchanges (Twenge 2013), (specifically the digital divide). Having exchanged quantity for quality our level of interconnection being higher it is nevertheless weaker. In our global village where worldwide travel is possible the number of people being foreigner in another country has also extensively increased (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Population Division (2019). International Migrant Stock 2019), reducing as well the level of connection of the system's new components.

As a consequence the increased disconnection of these individuals are participating in the decreased resilience of the whole system, turning them into a dead weight, a hindrance or at best a neutral element. Indeed research (Lyon 2014) have shown that the connection to a place have a increasing beneficial impact on the resilience of the individual. Therefore special attention should be given to foreigners' connectivity in their new place of residency/ settlement.

Our paper will focus on the impact of the World Music School Helsinki, an NGO working in the capital of Finland, teaching Music and organizing events around dance and

music as an inclusive and connectivity enhancer, bringing together diaspora and locals leading to the creation of resilient subsystem in the overall social system.

## **1. Introduction**

Our study establishes through the literature a general understanding of how connectivity organize itself and can be developed thanks to Community of Practice (Weinger 1997) and what are its effect on resilience. Then we will focus on the impact and evolution of the World Music School Helsinki to understand how this NGO has such an effect as a community building structure.

The WMS Helsinki has been created in 2016 by a Portuguese architect (Pedro Aibeo) with the goal to teach music as a mother language. Behind this uncommon slogan we find the development of a innovative organization that has a significant impact at the scale of Helsinki with special influence on the international community (Hall et, al 2012; Nousala et, al. 2009).

The WMS Helsinki, as its name states is teaching music. Yet its educational methods are not following the traditional education that can be found in a typical Music academy. Indeed, in order to diversify its content, the courses are given online by teachers from all over the world to students residing in Helsinki or around. In addition to this one on one course, the WMS is organizing monthly events to teach the folk dance of 2 different countries. As a continuity of their learning the students are asked to participate to these events not as simple participants but as the musicians who will accompany the dance teacher and the participants. Using the concepts of Community of Practice this performance is opening the community to new comers through a peripheral position, encouraging them to include more and more.

The data collected shows that the underlying connectivity of these events have spread in different directions. Firstly, the students enrolled as musicians are themselves attracting their own friends and family that comes to see them performing. Secondly, people from the general public have been participating. Thirdly, depending of the different country selected for the events, diaspora members of the country selected which are present in Helsinki are also attracted. Finally, WMS's own connections and team are also attracting more participants.

### **1.1 Social Engagement, Connectivity and Community Resilience**

Through initial engagement, the subject of teaching gains its full importance as the creation of a higher level of connectivity. The meaning of the term, "*teaching music as a mother language*" starts to expose its implicit meaning. The teaching of music and dance split into two parts, one for the music students that perform with senior musicians for the dance events consolidating links while working together, and on the other side for the participants who are learning dance with the dance teacher a discovery of new people, creating links through mimesis and synchronicity. The experience shared, through sensory means enable a connection beyond simple words, that goes through physical contact, sharing the same space and going for the same rhythm (Nousala et, al. 2018). As Weinger express it (1997), the event of the WMS Helsinki fits to the notion of a joint enterprise. Since the dance is a shared activity the connectivity is further improved (Hall et, al 2012; Nousala and Hall 2008; Nousala et, al. 2009)

As a consequence each monthly events of the WMS Helsinki has itself become small connectivity enhancing event. Inter-connectivity has been responsible for strengthening participants' community networks month by month. The impact of the WMS as a connectivity platform fit to the notion of Community of Resilience raised by the Creative Systems Research Platform. It is indeed a motor for resilience since our study shows that in each event

two third of the participant were part of a diaspora (non Finnish citizens). The end result being the creation of a “glocal” community of practice sharing their interest for dance. From a system’s perspective the entity developed by the world Music school is a highly resilient social adaptive system with various subsystems that increase the connectivity and anchoring its components within its close environment.

## Conclusion

In the context of recent extensive emigration across the world, and while facing the Covid 19 crisis, the topic of human connectivity is more than ever, a subject of importance. Restriction on movement, involuntary or otherwise has produced a range of outcomes that maybe significantly impact human well being for some time to come. Our study has aimed at exposing, various elements of connectivity within systems and sub-systems that can be redeveloped and created under specific conditions. The development of connectivity enhancing structures such as the WMS Helsinki are interesting phenomena to pursue as a set of characteristics to increase the resilience of society and subsequently, its immediate environment.

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