

From Social Infrastructure to Social-Ecological Infrastructure: A Mapping Strategy and Tool

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Overview

- The ‘social’ of social infrastructure and the need for social-ecological infrastructure
- Mapping social infrastructure
- Conceptualising social-ecological infrastructure: 3 key gaps
- Designing a measurement tool for social infrastructure
- Enabling social-ecological measurement
- Risks and enablement

Designing a Mapping Process

- Led by AECOM for NSW RA
- Co-production process with Murawin and SEI along with AECOM and RA
- Local Social Asset Assessment Tool (LSAAT)
- Designed to use an engaged and inclusive public process to elevate local knowledges
- Uses social infrastructure to identify and measure social infrastructure
- Assists in both measurement and democratic legitimacy

Three Key Gaps

- 1) **Conceptual gap:** What counts as ‘infrastructure’.
Acknowledge the social, including knowledge networks and social connections/relations
- 2) **Instrument gap:** How to assess, value, and invest in relational assets.
- 3) **Ecological gap:** The ‘assets’, places and relations between human and more-than-human communities that support resilience.

The Tool: Four Steps

- Step 1: Establish the assessment plan and working groups
- Step 2: Source asset data and pre-populate from existing datasets
- Step 3: Conduct collaborative evaluation of assets
 - This part is key – it's a public-engaged process rather than a government employee filling out boxes
- Step 4: Prioritise investment opportunities

The Tool: 3 Social Asset Categories, 3 of Each Type

- Social Groups and Institutions
 - Local social services
 - Local resilience organisations and networks
 - Local community organisations
- Traditional Social and Cultural Infrastructure
 - Physical community spaces
 - Places of worship
 - Parks and open spaces
- Social Processes
 - Local First Nations representation on adaptation
 - Key community information and engagement
 - Regular community festivals or events

From Social to Social-Ecological

Add a fourth ‘asset category’ for collective measurement of the social-ecological and relational:

- Knowledge of more-than-human impacts – who/what is vulnerable
- Knowledges of ecological behavior and relations related to environmental risk – including Indigenous knowledge
- Green infrastructure for resilience, existing and proposed

Conclusions: Risks and Enablements

- Potential colonization of the tool by technocratic systems
 - De-emphasizing public engagement and collective knowledges
- Lack of funding or willingness to implement
 - Potential impact on democratic legitimacy of formal institutions
- Low emphasis or priority on social-ecological infrastructure
- BUT, the positives:
 - Resilience building beyond the physical
 - Adaptation planning that is democratic/inclusive of knowledges
 - Acknowledging the ecological and relational resilience
 - Relational tools that shift government logic to distributed resilience building

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