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## Resilience Turn in German Development Strategy and Humanitarian Intervention

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Global Cooperation Research Papers 20

**Jonathan Joseph**

# **The Resilience Turn**

## **in German Development Strategy and Humanitarian Intervention**

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## Abstract

Resilience has emerged as a key theme in recent policy making. It spans a range of policy fields from infrastructure protection through to humanitarian intervention. This Research Paper looks at resilience as a theme of development strategy and humanitarian intervention and examines how it has emerged in German policy making. It argues that the dominant approach to resilience is a form of neoliberal governmentality that seeks to govern populations from a distance, devolve responsibility to people and communities, promote market mechanisms, encourage entrepreneurial behaviour and promote adaptation innovation and transformation among traditional communities. However, it is also recognised that this is a strongly Anglo-Saxon approach, targeted at specific individuals and communities. The purpose of the paper is to consider the extent to which German policy making is simply a reflection of this dominant Anglo-Saxon approach, or whether there is a more distinctive German view of resilience. It does this by exploring tensions in the German discourse, indicating that there might be other political dynamics in play alongside the neoliberal ones.

## Keywords

*Resilience, development, aid, policy, humanitarian, international relations, global development*

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# The Resilience Turn in German Development Strategy and Humanitarian Intervention

Jonathan Joseph

## 1 Introduction

Resilience has emerged as a strong organising idea across a number of policy domains, none more so than international development, humanitarian intervention and disaster risk reduction. However, the idea of resilience, while seen as an answer to many problems of intervention and coordination by some, has also been heavily criticised for embracing neoliberal values. This paper looks at the emergence of resilience in German overseas interventions and assesses the degree to which German resilience-building policy can also be considered a neoliberal intervention.

Resilience has emerged only recently in this field, even more lately in the case of German development assistance. Indeed, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) takes its understanding of resilience from existing definitions provided by the EU and the British Department for International Development (DFID). This defines resilience as:

the ability of people and institutions – whether individuals, households, local communities or states – to withstand acute shocks or chronic stress caused by fragile situations, crises, violent conflict or extreme natural events, and to adapt and recover quickly without compromising their medium and longer-term prospects.  
(BMZ 2013: 7)

Rather a broad definition, this considers resilience to operate at different levels such as the individual and community level. It presents a number of scenarios—natural and human-made—and sees resilience as the ability to withstand shocks and stress. Whether resilience should be about withstanding and recovering from such events, or should instead embrace adaptation and transformation is something that will be discussed in the next section. Indeed, the aim of this paper is to show that resilience remains a contested notion. The next section will outline the dominant traits of resilience as are found within a more Anglo-Saxon context before contrasting this with the more conflicted German approach to resilience. Indeed, the next section will briefly outline the view that resilience represents a form of neoliberal governmentality that seeks to manage crises in an age of

austerity by shifting the burden of responsibility on to poorer societies while relieving the international community of the responsibility to intervene directly.

The paper then goes on to look at how resilience has emerged in Germany and how the approach has embraced certain neoliberal assumptions, albeit not in a wholehearted way. This should be taken as an indication that while much of the critical literature on resilience (Evans and Reid 2014; Joseph 2013, 2016; Walker and Cooper 2011; Zebrowski 2013) is correct in taking resilience as a form of what Foucault would call neoliberal governmentality (2008), this is only the dominant, Anglo-Saxon form. There are in fact varieties of resilience present in the governance strategies of other, non-Anglo-Saxon countries such as Germany, France, the Netherlands and the Nordic countries. These varieties reflect a strong neoliberal influence, but also other political traditions that are less individualistic than the Anglo-Saxon approach and which place more emphasis on the role of the state, the need for legal protection and consideration of state-society relations. We find below that there is some evidence of this when considering German policy documents aimed at promoting resilience overseas.

## 2 Resilience as Governmentality

Many proponents of resilience point to its emergence in ecological debates. These debates mainly focus on the nature of complex systems and their ability to reorganise themselves when faced with different shocks and stresses (Holling 1973: 1). A notion of societal resilience emerges to account for complex resource systems and their ability to cope. It is argued that the coping ability of societies depends upon the nature of their institutions and their adaptive capacity (Berkes, Colding, and Folke: 2003). Adger argues that social resilience can be understood as the ability of communities to withstand external shocks to their social infrastructure and that this will inevitably require innovation, social learning and coping with change (Adger 2000: 361).

The meaning of societal resilience is disputed because of where to place emphasis. Should resilience be about returning to normal functioning, or embracing the need for change? An influential pamphlet from the British think-tank Demos (Edwards 2009) argues that resilience should be seen not only as the ability of a society or community to 'bounce back', but as a positive process of learning and adaptation. Chandler (2014: 6–7) insightfully suggests a distinction between older, classical understandings of resilience which place emphasis on preparedness, 'bouncing back' and the restoration of operational functioning, and a post-classical understanding that takes a more relational, non-linear and adaptive view of the complex social world in which we live. This view now dominates Anglo-Saxon thinking on resilience and presents itself as radical because of its focus on the adaptive capacities of communities and their potential to harness unique human capabilities.

This approach has been taken up by the majority of international organisations and aid donors, driven in particular by thinking coming out of the World Bank and

United Nations as well as the EU and the Department of International Development in the United Kingdom. These approaches represent a form of governmentality understood as a concern for the health and welfare of threatened populations and the purported desire to improve their condition (Foucault 1991: 100; Li 2007: 275). The governance of such populations occurs not in direct fashion, but 'from a distance' (Foucault 2007: 108; Miller and Rose 1990: 9) by invoking civil society and the private sector while seeking to responsabilise governments, communities and individuals. Governmentality, understood as 'the conduct of conduct' (Foucault 1991: 102; Li 2007: 275) embraces notions like wellbeing, sustainability and resilience to place increased emphasis on the need for local populations and governments to develop learning, self-awareness and the ability to adapt. While neoliberal governmentality seeks to govern populations from a distance 'by reference to the market' (Foucault 2008: 147), human qualities like resilience are seen as existing at the limits of purely economic calculation.

However, while this allows the resilience discourse to be presented as a radical departure from previous ways of thinking, it remains based on neoliberal assumptions about human behaviour and the wider social environment. Thus resilience presents itself as emphasising change, but this is about changing individual behaviour rather than attempting to change the system. Indeed, resilience presents a very pessimistic picture about our (lack of) ability to change or control systemic factors. Resilience thinking tends to present macro level shocks as things beyond control. The UNDP talks of shocks and threats having 'become the norm, rather than the exception' (UNDP 2011: 1). Both natural disasters and human-made economic shocks and security threats are regarded as too complex to manage. Current resilience discourse thus urges us to turn to considerations of our own adaptability and reflexivity. As a form of governmentality, it promotes self-management through making risk assessments, acquiring knowledge and engaging in responsible decision-making. O'Malley (2010) argues that resilience, rather than being a reactive model that teaches us how to 'bounce back', works to create subjects capable of adapting to and exploiting situations of radical uncertainty. Zebrowski talks of resilience as an enframing of life correlated to neoliberal governance and looks at 'the politics constitutive of resilient populations as a referent of governance' (2013: 170).

Hence resilience, as a form of governmentality, works first to frame the world in a certain way so that various problems and complexities come to the fore. This is a word that we can neither control nor properly understand. Such conditions require resilience to work, secondly, as a means of constructing a particular type of subject that operates according to the norms and values of such a framing. This subject will be evaluated according to its resourcefulness and ability to cope in the face of adversity. These subjects have to be created and this is done through active state intervention that seeks to responsabilise individual actors. In this particular case, we are concerned with the role played by international organisations, development agencies and government departments such as USAID and DFID. We will briefly examine the thinking of these two bodies by outlining five elements of governmentality that they can be seen to promote.

First of all we noted how governmentality is about governing populations from a distance. If we look at the strategies pursued by DFID and USAID we find this a



prominent feature of their resilience-building approach. Thus DFID's stated aim is to help countries prepare themselves to withstand shocks and disasters (DFID 2011a: 1). While the international community can help support national governments and local actors, it is ultimately the responsibility of that country's government to develop its population's capacity to resist and adapt to shocks (DFID 2011a: 1). The international community will help to facilitate this process through coordination with governments, civil society and the private sector while offering expertise and other forms of support. It will also reinforce discipline through a developing system of monitoring and assessment to make sure that countries receiving international support make use of it in the proper way. DFID departments and country offices will decide upon appropriate indicators and DFID is in the process of developing progress indicators to measure how well resilience is being locally embedded (DFID 2011b: 14).

The second and related aspect of governmentality is the strategy of devolving responsibility and attempting to reach right down to the individual. The way this is promoted in current international development parlance is through capacity building. Specifically, resilience is about developing adaptive capacities, noted by DFID as the 'ability to adjust to a disturbance, moderate potential damage, take advantage of opportunities and cope with the consequences of a transformation' (DFID 2011b: 8). This works at different levels from the institution down to the individual and is about how these actors are able to anticipate, plan, react to, and learn from shocks or stresses. Recent trends in development discourse have shifted emphasis down to the level of individual or human capacities, although whether in fact such interventions can successfully enhance capacities at the individual level is a matter for debate (see Joseph 2016).

The third element of governmentality relates to the promotion of the free market and the role of private enterprise. The Anglo-Saxon approach to resilience places great emphasis on the private sector's ability to get things done and actively promotes such things as public-private partnerships as the best way to share risks and encourage investment. Such partnerships are seen as means for actors like DFID to operate in an 'increasingly complex humanitarian system' (Ashdown 2011: 1). This partly connects to the more general development aim of making poorer countries more open to market forces, partly to the neoliberal assumption that the private sector offers more dynamism, particularly in managing risk (Ashdown 2011: 37).

This connects with a fourth element of governmentality which is to encourage pragmatism, innovation and initiative. Resilient subjects should be able to learn from experiences and adapt their behaviour in appropriate ways. A USAID report argues that innovation 'allows institutions, communities, and individuals the opportunity to think critically and to challenge existing structures that are in place and create new ideas in order to "bounce back better"' (Bujones et al. 2013: 13). These human attributes are especially important when existing service delivery is poor and communities need to think critically about their situation and develop new coping mechanisms.

This last element that distinguishes the Anglo-Saxon approach is the transformative view of resilience as an opportunity to organise and rebuild. For the World Resources Institute, people can actually thrive in the face of a crisis (WRI

2008: 49). For USAID, enhancing the adaptive capacity of communities and individuals means 'the ability to quickly and effectively respond to new circumstances [based on] ... ensuring that social systems, inclusive governance structures, and economic opportunities are in place' (USAID 2013: 8). This approach makes much mention of 'adaptive facilitators', understood as 'intangible elements of social capital and patterns that create an enabling environment for institutions and resources to mitigate shocks, recover from them and potentially "bounce back better" after a shock occurs' (Bujones et al. 2013: 12).

Together, therefore, we have a view of resilience as governmentality based on the key factors of distant governance, devolved responsibilities, private sector initiative, pragmatism and innovation and finally a dynamic, transformative understanding of resilience. This can be observed in the policy documents of DFID and USAID as well as in the Anglo-Saxon discourse of the World Bank and UNDP. The next task is to examine whether this Anglo-Saxon view of resilience has influenced the German understanding of resilience and whether German humanitarian intervention and development strategy can also be seen as a form of neoliberal governmentality. It might already be considered the case that such forms of international intervention inevitably have a neoliberal character, taking their lead from the policies of the World Bank and UNDP. But by examining some policy documents we might identify certain tensions and contradictions in the German approach, suggesting that the idea of resilience does not sit as comfortably here as it does in the Anglo-Saxon literature.

### 3 German Security Strategy and the General Context for Resilience

While resilience is now well established as a major theme of Anglo-Saxon policy making, both domestically and in overseas policy, it has taken far longer to emerge in German policy making. Indeed it is still largely absent from domestic policy<sup>1</sup> and has only recently entered policy on overseas intervention and national security. It noticeably lacks some of the discussion and debate present in the Anglo-Saxon literature, rendering the casual use of the terminology more problematic.

The 2016 'White Paper on German Security and the Future of the Bundeswehr' provides an overall framework for the German adaptation of the resilience discourse. Security strategy is framed in the following way: The country is highly interconnected, but also vulnerable to the spread of risks including cyber-attacks, terrorism and violent extremism. Germany's economic, political and military significance gives it more opportunities to exert influence but also more vulnerability and an increased responsibility to help shape the global order.

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<sup>1</sup> The main exception is in the area of critical infrastructure protection where there is a limited discussion of resilience in relation to critical assets. Here certain neoliberal trends are taken for granted, but the limits of the market are also recognised and mention is made of the needs of society as a whole (Federal Ministry of the Interior 2009).

National identity and the way security is understood is a product of history and is enshrined in the constitution. German identity is also regarded as inseparably connected with European identity with Germany considered to have a major responsibility for the European project. This project is now under serious pressure due to the challenges of the financial crisis, refugee crisis and external borders instability as well as member states placing more emphasis on their own national interests (Federal Ministry of Defence 2016: 33).

Domestically, it is noted how Germany's strong economy benefits from a stable society, high-quality infrastructure, and a highly skilled workforce. The strategy speaks positively of the impact of immigration and multiculturalism as well as the complex mix of bilateral, transatlantic and multilateral ties and strong network of institutional structures that provide both legitimacy and effectiveness (Federal Ministry of Defence 2016: 22). However, changes in global circumstances enhance the need for a whole-of-government approach to security. This means strengthening the resilience and robustness of the country to deal with current and future threats with greater cooperation between the government bodies, private operators of infrastructure, and citizens (Federal Ministry of Defence 2016: 48). This leads to an understanding whereby:

the objective of resilience is to improve the ability of both state and society to withstand and adapt to disruptions, such as those caused by environmental disasters, severe system failures, and targeted attacks. The objective is to enable the state, the economy and society to absorb adverse events while continuing to function. Overall resilience can be strengthened by continuously building up resilience in the areas mentioned above. (Federal Ministry of Defence 2016: 49)

This tends towards a definition of resilience as robustness rather than adaptation, albeit one that is premised on the recognition of changing circumstances. It notes that while absolute security is unattainable, a comprehensive security policy can significantly reduce risks. This is conceived of as a 'resolute approach' based on a 'whole-of-society-endeavour' and carried out in a 'whole-of-government manner' (Federal Ministry of Defence 2016: 59). The spectrum of tasks includes national and collective defence, civil protection and disaster control with 'whole-of-society resilience' built around a common understanding of risks among the government, industry, the scientific community and society (Federal Ministry of Defence 2016: 59). There needs to be continuous identification of areas requiring protection, further development of civil defence planning, harmonisation of crisis management procedures, regular exchange of information and expertise and the institutionalising of a 'whole-of-society discussion on future security requirements' (Federal Ministry of Defence 2016: 59).

We can say that there is something of a transformative notion of resilience, but always with a return to the importance of state and society which is clearly distinctive from the more devolved and individualistic Anglo-Saxon approaches. A transformative approach recognises the need 'to be prepared to continuously and flexibly refine existing structures, infrastructure and processes' while recognising 'the limits of security and acceptable levels of risk for the state, the economy and

society' (Federal Ministry of Defence 2016: 60). Again it is emphasised that 'building long-term resilience in our open and democratic system is therefore a whole-of-society task' and that 'society's ability to protect and help itself in the event of a crisis complements public and commercial measures to prevent and manage crises' (Federal Ministry of Defence 2016: 60).

Globally, we have seen that German security strategy is framed by the discourse of new, transnational challenges. States and societies are ever more interdependent so that resilience-building is interconnected and multi-layered. Enhancing resilience at the international level will benefit security at the national level (Federal Ministry of Defence 2016: 60). The framing of these security challenges requires 'greater agility and flexibility in dealing with the known and the unforeseeable' (Federal Ministry of Defence 2016: 56).

Despite this terminology, this still relates to a fairly standard global agenda—strengthening good governance and human rights and using foreign and development policy to support the establishment of viable and legitimate states and social structures (Federal Ministry of Defence 2016: 62). A European security strategy should place more emphasis on human security to 'reaffirm that a comprehensive understanding of security, comprising not only political and military but also human, economic and environmental dimensions' (Federal Ministry of Defence 2016: 78). This 'comprehensive and sustained approach' should prioritise longer-term prevention and stabilisation measures, including civil society and cultural factors and ensuring that local and regional actors 'are enabled to assume responsibility for themselves' (Federal Ministry of Defence 2016: 50). Obvious tensions between support for the role of state and social institutions and the need to get regional actors to assume responsibility themselves can now be explored in overseas development and humanitarian aid strategy.

## 4 The Emergence of Resilience in German Overseas Interventions

In Germany the Federal Foreign Office (Auswärtiges Amt, AA) is mainly responsible for humanitarian aid and immediate disaster response while the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung, BMZ) focuses on longer term measures. The German Agency for International Cooperation (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH) is the main implementing agency, responsible for implementing development projects in agreement with BMZ. In 2011 reform of the ministries gave the Federal Foreign Office control of emergency aid and BMZ responsibility for what became known as 'Transitional and Development Assistance' (TDA) which takes a longer-term approach to building the resilience of populations in affected areas. There was actually a large shift of resources in favour of emergency aid and away from BMZ's TDA budget. New strategy papers outlined the objectives of TDA with a focus on

fragile states, countries at risk from climate change and natural disasters and support for reconstruction projects.

The Federal Foreign Office works within a broad framework for humanitarian assistance, seeking to offer quick, effective and flexible assistance in accordance with international standards and through international cooperation, notably through UN-led humanitarian assistance (Federal Foreign Office 2012: 4). However, it also noted that while humanitarian needs rise, budgetary constraints are also increasing and that greater coordination between actors is required. Thus a new strategy is required in an age of austerity and increasing international wariness. One way of doing this is to place greater emphasis on preparedness and improved response capabilities. These would include better risk analysis, assessment and management, more early warning systems, quicker response to warnings, better training for aid workers and other enhanced humanitarian response capabilities (Federal Foreign Office 2012: 5). At the centre of this emerging new strategy is resilience. As the main strategy of the Federal Foreign Office states:

The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development has at its disposal the newly developed recovery and rehabilitation instrument, which being part of development cooperation follows the principles of that sphere. Recovery and rehabilitation is aimed at strengthening the resilience of local communities, civil society players and (state) institutions at the dynamic interface between the Federal Foreign Office's humanitarian assistance and long-term development cooperation through recovery and rehabilitation. (Federal Foreign Office 2012: 7)

This raises many of the resilience themes that have emerged in recent years and is outlined in detail in the new approach to Transitional Development Assistance, outlined in a BMZ strategy paper. The above point is restated—the need to strengthen the resilience of individuals, local communities, civil society actors and state institutions—in relation to natural hazards and climate change. The context is set out as one of complex crisis of a non-linear character (BMZ 2013: 5). The multi-dimensional nature of these crises requires effective coordination of interconnected measures bridging the short, medium and long-term in line with the established approach of Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD). This policy, initiated in the 1990s, is related to sustainability and, in the new formulation of transitional development assistance, links such assistance to longer-term structures and programmes developed by state and civil society actors (BMZ 2013: 8). TDA is seen as a comprehensive and holistic approach that seeks to integrate national approaches into the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005, covering all aspects of mitigation, prevention and preparedness (BMZ 2013: 12).

The argument for resilience takes a capacity-building approach, combining an emphasis on people's capacity with the more traditional focus on institutional capacity building. Local capacity building requires longer-term measures, allowing people to improve their livelihoods through their own efforts. This is in order to enable people and institutions 'to cope with situations and adapt accordingly' (BMZ 2013: 8). TDA seeks to strengthen the capacities of state, civil society and private-

sector actors and facilitate their better working together. We also find the theme of a flexible and pragmatic approach, taken in response ‘to the uncertainty and challenges that affect planning and implementation in fragile contexts’ (BMZ 2013: 8). The paper summarises the approach as more effectiveness, more visibility, more commitment, more private sector, more education, more democracy (BMZ 2013: 17). The last issue concerning democracy is perhaps the most striking since the document makes frequent reference to the other priorities, but makes no other reference to democracy. This is in line with a general trend away from democracy promotion (as institutional capacity building) in favour of more pragmatic and localised approaches. In this sense, the arguments for resilience are rather similar to other international organisations, although it is presented as a radical reorganisation of German overseas policy. As noted, BMZ acknowledges similarities with EU and DFID formations of resilience, although we will see that there are some differences of emphasis that have emerged in subsequent discussions of German strategy.

This can be observed in a report that BMZ commissioned. Written by the Humanitarian Policy Group, it explores the challenges of promoting resilience in places where strong institutions and governance practices are absent. In such cases, resilience must focus much more on the role of people rather than at the level of systems. The starting point is to look at people’s exposure, vulnerabilities and coping abilities. This raises issues such as how people adapt to problems, their ability to maintain an acceptable level of well-being and how they might recover an acceptable level of welfare following a crisis (Mosel and Levine 2014: 3). This focuses more on the social, political and economic aspects of people’s lives, rather than purely technical issues of DRR and development (Mosel and Levine 2014: 7).

However, this response to BMZ’s work reflects tensions in the resilience debate. On the one hand it is quite critical of technical and institutional approaches that overlook genuine human needs. On the other hand this human turn is still caught within a governmentality of populations. On the former, critical approach the paper argues:

Much programming is based on a naïve belief about how a project will play out institutionally, failing to take into consideration the way in which resources and power are contested – and that the people whose resilience needs building are precisely those with the least ability to contest. This requirement is true in all situations, but is most crucial – and hardest to do well – in difficult places. (Mosel and Levine 2014: 14)

Resilience is therefore seen as opening up new human potential by examining how people make choices and what constraints they might be under. However, this still tends to fall under the framework of individual autonomy and human capital. It looks at vulnerability at the micro level, while macro conditions are considered an ‘enabling environment’ (Mosel and Levine 2014: 11). Wider conditions are considered in terms of constraints on human capacities and the solution is to turn from generic institutional solutions to more of a focus on local institutions, particular governmental agencies and human capacity building. Ultimately this

human turn is also a pragmatic turn, realist in the sense of 'having less ambitious objectives, being more modest about the ability of external actors to effect change on their own and being much more open about the degree of risk that must be run' (Mosel and Levine 2014: 16).

This turn reflects a governmentalisation of populations insofar as it remains narrowly focused on human capacities and indeed, an even narrower focus on adaptive capacity. The broader context is understood as 'ensuring that development policy and interventions support people's own ability to deal with unknown futures (or, to use the current jargon, their 'adaptive capacity' (Levine and Mosel 2014: 12). As Mosel and Levine elaborate:

Adaptive capacity means people's ability to make and realise well-informed decisions in the future. Adaptive capacity is important in all development situations, but it is especially critical in difficult places, which are typically rapidly changing situations, where the ability to cope with change is key – and where people may not be able to rely on others (e.g. their state, elites) without exploitation. Supporting adaptive capacity is slower and more difficult than transplanting new technologies or providing assets, and it needs very different skills from the ones technicians generally possess. It will thus have significant implications for staffing and resources (Mosel and Levine 2014: 12)

Elsewhere the adaptive capacity approach is understood as 'self-help', so the Federal Foreign Office talks of measures to boost self-help capabilities through the involvement of local stakeholders and aid recipients (Federal Foreign Office 2012: 4). The German Red Cross, a major partner in German resilience strategy also emphasises self-help, but talks of this in relation to the 'underlying general social, cultural, environmental, physical, financial, and political conditions' (German Red Cross 2015: 15).

All these discussions point to a complex picture in Germany where the Anglo-Saxon language of capacities and self-help, normally understood as a means of governmentalizing populations through shifting responsibility onto communities and individuals, is being gradually introduced. Yet at the same time, there remains a focus on people's real needs, on social conditions and on the need for protection. This comes out in debates about the role of civil society where again there is a clash between the more established socio-cultural framework, and the new Anglo-Saxon discourse.

The BMZ approach emphasises the importance of civil society's active involvement in political decision-making. It argues that state structures can only be resilient if they are in constructive dialogue with society, responding to people's needs. These relations should be understood as 'inherently political processes' rather than purely technical ones (BMZ 2009: 15). To summarise:

German development cooperation therefore does not limit its support to state institutions, but also regards their roots in society, the legitimacy of state actions, society as a whole and the interfaces between state and society as central elements in sustainable state-building processes. In this sense it is linked to the promotion of political involvement in all its dimensions of cooperation. (BMZ 2009: 15)

This is important and reflects the recent social turn in thinking about these issues, placing greater emphasis on 'different political and social situations, the socio-cultural settings and the individual needs of the partner countries' (BMZ 2009: 13). However, alongside this social understanding lies a much more instrumental account of civil society:

Strengthening civil society enables it to better fulfil its role as a critical but constructive watchdog and as a lobby. It also promotes democratic consciousness among the citizens, promotes the integration of disadvantaged groups and helps to bring greater transparency to policy-making. (BMZ 2009: 8)

Here civil society, rather than being an important socio-cultural context, becomes an instrumental means for ensuring that states adhere to a good governance agenda as determined by international organisations like the World Bank. Civil society is regarded as a 'watchdog' for holding the state to account in such areas as democracy and the rule of law, efficiency and transparency and cooperation with the international community (BMZ 2009: 14). This is ironic given that the same document later notes the problematic relationship between certain civil society actors and external funders where dependence on external funds leads such groups to assume the priorities of the donors rather than representing the concerns of the local people in political processes (BMZ 2009: 25). Again, we might note the tensions in German overseas policy between a genuine concern for social and political processes, and a more instrumental approach that reflects the pervasive influence of neoliberal governmentality within the wider field of international development and the Anglo-Saxon dominance of the main international organisations and donors.

Finally, we can highlight some of the tensions between neoliberal governmentality and a more sympathetic understanding of socio-cultural context by looking at the approach of the German Red Cross (GRC) which, as mentioned, is a major player in the development of German resilience strategy in this area. GRC's Resilience Framework outlines its main objectives which, in line with BMZ strategy, focuses on building resilient communities and enhancing their ability to overcome shocks, adapt and recover. The GRC looks at how these resilient communities can develop by looking at their coping mechanisms and capacity to identify and deal with problems. The interesting point here is that it is suggested that communities already have traditional coping mechanisms for reacting to crises and emergencies so that stress should be on local ownership. As the GRC says: 'people know precisely what needs they have in their community and what measures to take in



order to further strengthen their coping capacities' (German Red Cross 2014: 318). This is in contrast to the arguments found in USAID approaches which question traditional coping mechanisms and suggest that people develop a more entrepreneurial approach in dealing with local problems (Headey and Kennedy 2012: 2).

The GRC approach also places emphasis on building networks with external stakeholders while also recognising the way communities are able to organise themselves through self-help measures in order to optimise their coping capacities (German Red Cross 2014: 318). Access to knowledge is recognised as another important factor in building resilience among communities, allowing people in less developed countries to understand their vulnerabilities and risks and develop appropriate strategies to adjust and adapt (German Red Cross 2014: 318). Although the emphasis is on communities, there is recognition of the importance of robust physical infrastructure and access to the services (German Red Cross 2014: 319).

As with other German arguments about resilience, there is a tension between the more social emphasis of established policy and the individualist, neoliberal language characteristic of much Anglo-Saxon resilience discourse. When the GRC talks of 'the strengthening of the self-help capacities and coping mechanisms of particularly vulnerable individuals and groups in developing countries' we find a peculiar use of neoliberal language, if not intentions. Elsewhere, the GRC talks of the strengthening of resilience means not only providing protection against natural hazards, but 'comprehensively reducing the underlying factors of vulnerability' such as health risks, food security, access to water and sanitation and to social services. These social measures are regarded as at least as important as adaptation to the consequences of climate change and disaster risk reduction measures. Indeed, strengthening resilience has political, socio-cultural, economic and ecological dimensions. It is therefore necessary to work with governmental authorities to strengthen health systems, land use and disaster management (German Red Cross 2014: 329). It is stressed that we cannot replace the role of governmental structures and that donors must work with political decision-makers, who are called upon to support the population in strengthening resilience. This responsibility may not be delegated to civil society actors (German Red Cross 2014: 330).

This is particularly interesting because in effect such delegation lies at the heart of Anglo-Saxon governmentality. In particular, the Anglo-Saxon approach wishes to govern through a denial of the responsibility of the international community by governmentalising the behaviour of national governments and civil society groups. This sums up the tensions in the German approach to resilience. As it becomes an increasingly influential idea, it brings with it Anglo-Saxon arguments about devolving responsibility to civil society. Yet German discussions of resilience understand this slightly differently and still talk about such things as the need to recognise that the process of change should come from within society that we ought to value those initiatives that come out of civil society, rather than just seeing them as a means to achieve a larger strategy (BMZ 2014: 5).

But in other ways the emergence of resilience in this sphere of German policy-making is in line with dominant trends within the international community. BMZ writes that the quality of transitional development assistance is maintained

through compliance with international standards and principles of cooperation, particularly those of the OECD. This covers mechanisms of planning, implementation and evaluation based on an analysis of needs, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. Moreover, these are in line with the *Post-Hyogo Framework for Action* and the *Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction*, on the basis of the *Principles of Good Humanitarian Donorship* (Federal Foreign Office 2012: 5; BMZ 2013: 9). TDA compliance with international standards requires detailed analysis of its effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability with all results and impacts subject to an ongoing monitoring process that we have described above as a form of governance from a distance (BMZ 2013: 9).

## 5 Conclusion: German Resilience in Context

The German Federal Foreign Office is promoting the idea of a significant shift in overseas policy. The world itself is said to be growing more complex and challenging with climate change, population growth, urbanisation, scarcity of raw materials, extreme poverty, conflicts and protracted crises. Against this background of crises, it is claimed:

international humanitarian assistance is undergoing a paradigm shift. Beyond the reaction to sudden disasters and crises humanitarian assistance increasingly needs to be forward-looking. Responsible humanitarian assistance is not only reactive but also has a formative effect. Risk analysis and management are just as essential as the quick availability of assistance in the case of acute need, while coordinated cooperation with national, regional and international partners is vital. (Federal Foreign Office 2012: 3)

In pursuing this strategy the Federal Foreign Office places emphasis on preparedness, strengthening local structures, improving response capabilities, empowering civil society players and other local stakeholders and, notably, boosting self-help capabilities so that recipients of aid learn how to help themselves (Federal Foreign Office 2012: 4).

Resilience is being promoted as the means to do this. It is argued that 'strengthening the resilience of local communities, civil society players and (state) institutions [is] at the dynamic interface between the Federal Foreign Office's humanitarian assistance and long-term development cooperation through recovery and rehabilitation' (Federal Foreign Office 2012: 7). The question for this conclusion is whether this turn to resilience-building really is such a new and dynamic shift in strategy?

The answer to this question is 'no' in two quite different ways. First, it is not so different from existing neoliberal practices in the global sphere. Secondly, it is not such a departure from the slightly less neoliberal arguments of existing German policy. If this sounds like a contradiction it is because the reality *is* something of a

contradiction with the German approach to resilience caught between two slightly different logics.

First is the nature of the global sphere. It has been argued that resilience thinking in this particular field is far more obviously neoliberal in scope. Development policy and humanitarian assistance is led by such organisations as the World Bank, UNDP and OECD-DAC. These organisations reflect the Anglo-Saxon way of thinking, also reflected in the strong influence enjoyed by USAID and DFID and which is acknowledged to have shaped German thinking. The key issue in the global sphere is whether resilience represents a break from the dominant neoliberal way of understanding the world. This paper suggests that resilience reflects on neoliberalism's limits, but does not break from its logic and indeed helps strengthen certain neoliberal practices of global governance. This works partly because resilience can claim to be doing certain things differently and even to be sceptical of the calculating logic of neoliberalism. However, while this might suggest a slightly different way of thinking, in practice it remains consistent with what Jacqueline Best calls 'the non-judicial logic of international standards, the calculating metric of transparency and the entrepreneurial ethic of self-responsibility' (Best 2007: 102).

Although resilience points to a fuzzy picture of global systems that might be beyond human control or calculation, it shifts attention to the need for greater self-reflection at the micro level, something that actually reinforces existing neoliberal techniques of governance. The argument that we live in an uncertain and complex world works to further responsabilise individual behaviour at the micro level. Resilience is not as such a rejection of a neoliberal logic, but an awareness of the limits of markets that actually works to further embed this rationality in a system of variegated practices. It is actually through failures and crises that this can be done—naturalising crisis while responsabilising governments and key actors. Although resilience works to give the appearance of a new strategy, the emphasis placed on complexity and social embeddedness is part of an overall approach to governance that actually works to reinforce rather than undermine an instrumental rationality and associated methods of monitoring and evaluation.

We defined resilience as a form of governmentality. It seeks to install a system of governance from a distance. It talks of helping countries prepare themselves, something found in arguments from organisations like DFID (DFID 2011b: 1), but also in the new German discourse of self-help (Federal Foreign Office 2012: 4). The international community thus denies responsibility for direct help, but acts as a facilitator, placing emphasis on the role of communities, civil society and the private sector. The German approach supports this view although it places greater emphasis on the importance of civil society, emphasising its diverse and dynamic character (BMZ 2014). However, there is also strong support for a system of monitoring and assessment to make sure that these local actors behave appropriately with BMZ supporting a system to monitor TDA compliance. (BMZ 2013: 9).

Anglo-Saxon governmentality would seek to devolve responsibility through encouraging self-governance. In the international sphere this takes the form of capacity building. Resilience places emphasis on developing adaptive capacities, both institutional and individual. The German approach is moving in this direction

with less emphasis on traditional concerns such as democracy promotion and other larger-scale institutional frameworks. We can also say that there has been a strong element of neoliberalism shaping German overseas policy making and embedded in the transitional development assistance approach which pre-dates the introduction of resilience into the German policy discourse. However, despite this neoliberal tradition, we can also see that there clearly remains a strong notion of society, understood in political rather than technical terms, as based on people's needs, with the legitimacy of state action rooted in society as a whole (BMZ 2009: 15). How this is understood depends on whether we adopt the more liberal understanding of capacities promoted in the Anglo-Saxon discourse, or a more socially embedded notion of people's actions and needs based that reflect a more interventionist and universalist German policy-making tradition.

The Anglo-Saxon approach actively promotes the private sector and public-private partnerships as more effective and efficient. These are also seen as the best way to share risks and encourage investment. The German approach is slowly embracing these arguments, recognising that infrastructure is often privately owned while maintaining that the state still has a strong role to play. One area where this is developing is risk insurance where the creation of effective climate risk insurance markets and the smart use of insurance-related schemes is seen as complementing climate change adaptation strategies (GIZ 2015: 3). For this, public and private finance is required with public funds being used to increase the risk-bearing capacity of insurance markets (GIZ 2015: 5). This could also be seen as an example of encouraging innovation and initiative. Whether these initiatives go so far as to constitute a more transformative view of resilience as an opportunity to organise and rebuild is questionable. This, we noted, was an important feature of World Bank and USAID approaches. By comparison, the German approach seems more 'conservative'.

If BMZ is using resilience in this more conservative way to reinforce some of its existing strategy, then certain lessons should be learned. As BMZ are advised:

Previous attempts to tackle some of the same problems being readdressed under the label of resilience have not been sufficiently successful, and it is essential that the lessons of experience are taken on board. Relabelling the challenge as 'resilience' is leading some to see this as a brand new idea without precedent. That, at least, is the only conclusion possible from the marked lack of attention to an analysis of the lessons of recent history (Mosel and Levine 2014: 17).

Summarising the German situation, it is suggested that resilience is being used to 'speak about many things', perhaps even to over-theorise the simple and under-theorise the complex, but that it may help in giving new political momentum to old problems (Mosel and Levine 2014: 21). From an Anglo-Saxon perspective, what is coming out of German policy discourse might not seem particularly exciting. From the point of view of tensions within the governmentality approach, German policy formulations appear almost quite interesting.

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