

Resilience as Governmentality

THE DFID'S DISCOURSE OF RESILIENCE AS A NEW FIELD OF
POWER

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to shed light on the relation between resilience as a discourse and governmentality. Drawing on theory by Foucault, a comparison and application of liberal governmentality will be made with contemporary resilience policy. The DFID, a global leader in resilience-building, will serve as a case to show in what ways power-relations are embedded within the organisation's discourse. In doing so, I am interrogating the *nature* of resilience. Moreover, a Foucauldian discourse analysis will demonstrate how ideology and political interests are invested in resilience, which otherwise is presented as a normative referent to sustainable change. My theory and method will, hence, bring together a counter-narrative of resilience. Because this paper adopts a critical perspective, my interpretations of resilience will point to concepts such as bio-power, how it gives meaning to resilience as a term, and how it renders populations amenable to calculated intervention. Based on this, emphasis will be put on reading language and knowledge as aspects of power. Together, they shape a wider discourse of resilience that can be understood as a modern governmentality operating within liberal frameworks.

Key words: resilience-discourse, the DFID, risk-management, liberal governmentality, bio-power.

Words: 9597

This thesis is dedicated to victims of disaster, to people who are pushed into experiencing conditions of conflict and turmoil, poverty, social insecurity and natural catastrophes – to those who we dump our risks on and push our ideals of development onto. They deserve real change.

List of Acronyms

DRR – Disaster Risk Reduction

DFID – The Department for International Development (UK)

INGO – International Nongovernmental Organization

MDG – Millennium Development Goals

NGO – Nongovernmental Organization

WC – Washington Consensus

TNA – Transnational Actor

SAP – Structural Adjustment Programs

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1 Introduction

1.1 Research Problem

1.1.1 Background: Development, Aid Assistance and Neoliberal Thinking

A rather contentious issue has come to the fore of recent development and humanitarian thinking. That is the question of how one rebuilds a community that continues to find itself in a state of insecurity; how to improve a society's capacity to 'bounce back' (Welsh 2014: 16) despite the presence of external as well as internal stressors; how to cope with disturbance, whether man-made or natural, so to reduce its consequences for the livelihood of a population? Instability is exposed through many facets and throughout multiple levels of society. The risks that are associated with shocks may impact the poor more than the rich, women may bear a larger burden than men and rural areas can be more vulnerable to change than urbanized cities.

As suggested, doing development has proved a complex issue. The most dominating response to development issues today is based on a market-driven and neo-liberal framework. Events such as the Washington Consensus (WC) especially manifested the influential status of liberal pro-market governance. And despite broadly debated failures such as the 1980s structural adjustment programmes, neo-liberal thinking in development and aid remains prominent. To what degree, however, will be a theme this paper seeks to problematize. It will do so in an environment that can be characterized by an ongoing paradigm-shift to development-thinking. The idea of empowerment and participation for the poor and marginalized has had extremely positive connotations in political thought since the 1960s (Dean 2010: 82). Transnational actors (TNA's) and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) increasingly draw on participatory aspects of democratic traditions, while stressing the autonomy and self-determination found in many variants of liberalism implemented abroad. At its core, alternative bottom-up approaches seek to advance the potential of agency and the need to empower the poor to become agents. This is by way of local solutions, -needs and -decision-making, making it easier for poor people to work their way out of poverty and risk themselves (Combaz 2014: 5). It is these experiences on a global level that has laid the ground for the upsurge of resilience as a prominent risk and poverty reduction solution.

1.1.2 Resilience: Governing the Ungovernable through Neo-liberalism?

Risks are dramatically increasing. Over the past decade communities around the world have experienced an increase in the frequency and severity of hazards such as flooding, droughts and cyclones (Combaz 2014: 1). The number of weather-related disasters has tripled in 30 years; long-term stresses such as climate change has for instance played a key factor in disasters such as the Horn of Africa drought (Oxfam 2013; 2). The ability of poor communities to cope has been challenged by environmental degradation and protracted conflicts. Poor people have been more prone to systemic shocks through food prices that are more volatile than ever before, while a lack of social security nets leaves populations highly vulnerable to major shocks (Oxfam 2013: 3).

The impact of such disasters on communal stability, development projects and poverty reduction has drawn attention on improving the so-called 'resilience' of poor people. In this context, resilience has been perceived as a new strategy on how to achieve sustainable change that "offers real promise to allow the poorest women and men to thrive despite shocks, stresses, and uncertainty" (Oxfam 2013: 1).

In sync with the wider participatory trend, resilience discourse aims to react to fluctuations by calling on a holistic consideration of "the hazards, exposure, capacity and vulnerabilities of a social system" (Combaz 2014: 6). Much like the participatory approach, resilience programming depends on the inclusiveness and participation of the 'at risk-groups'. That is because a population comprises a significant part of the larger social system that will need to adjust to change. Hence, practitioners and donor-countries that seek to build resilience must not only focus on supporting institutional capacity-building, but similarly the adaptive capacities of social groups and individuals (Oxfam 2013: 24). For some (Oxfam 2013: 5), this focus on the 'process' of resilience implies the possibility to promote a population's rights. It enables practitioners to address socio-economic, gender and environmental inequalities that impede stability.

From a global governance perspective the theme of resilience is presented as a component to sustainable change (Manyena 2006: 433). It is a strategy to adopt so to attain higher levels of social protection, disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation (Combaz 2014: 27).

This in itself is an important tenet in order to understand the growing interest in resilience. It reflects the greater attention being paid to macro-economic growth in today's world, where short-term economic growth is threatening natural resources and human existence (DFID 2011: 5). Moreover, 'growth at any cost' is obscuring the prevention of disasters and risks. This is especially in terms of economic 'crisis-proofing' which is deemed necessary to reach the MDGs (DFDI 2011: 5). At the same time, there has been a growing interest in understanding the principles of resilience in connection to conflict-affected and fragile states (DFDI 2011: 5). The importance behind the rise of resilience on the international agenda can thus be seen in this light.

1. 2 Aim and Significance

My reasons for studying resilience are none of the above. What I am interested in is a much more fundamental question about *the nature of resilience*. This does not mean the paper will take for granted the context from which the object of study has arisen. On the contrary, it is by using its origins as my premise that I am interested to write about how resilience-discourse works. The notions that underlie the concept of resilience carry with them a significant philosophy or rationality so to speak. This is what has caught my attention and pushed me to want to look *beneath* the discourse of resilience. By examining the discourse of resilience, this paper will suggest that there must be alternative explanations to resilience that go beyond the positivist explanation. In doing so, empirical evidence is expected to be found that can serve to identify existing gaps between resilience as theorized in relation to how it is actually implemented in policy. The thesis rationale is built on these grounds. It reflects the belief that the discourse of resilience and its emergence - as a new sustainable form for governance - should not be taken at face-value. Rather, this paper aims to argue that resilience as a concept serves to promote other covert purposes or interests. This is both through the workings of institutions and social practices put into place by resilience. Together, these can be understood to exist in accordance to larger power relations. Resilience by nature can therefore not be understood as neutral or value-free. As proposed, I believe this aspect can be discovered by asking critical questions about how resilience-discourse is formed and what consequences it has for a population. This paper will therefore examine the concept of resilience from a critical vantage point.

1. 3 Research Question

This thesis will attempt to answer the following research question:

How has resilience-discourse become a vehicle to promote liberal governmentality? A case study of the DFID on disaster resilience.

1.4 Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine how resilience serves as a vehicle to implement external recommendations of neo-liberal governance under the banner of sustainability. Resilience will be used to exemplify how complex power-relations have come to be perpetuated in contemporary development practices. This will be done by shedding light on a leading agent for resilience initiatives, the DFID and how the organization's discourse exemplify how communities are made open to calculated government intervention.

1.5 Theory

The theory underpinning this study will be built on the notions put forward by Michel Foucault on governmentality. As part of a wider conceptual framework that describes how power operates in relation to knowledge and sovereignty, governmentality offers a critical query of what constitutes the behaviour, norms, regulation and life-understanding in modern society. Although Foucault's account of power has been characterized as dense, controversial and somewhat vague (Gutting 1994: 19), this paper will attempt employ the concept of governmentality by looking into so-called disciplinary power and bio-power. Respectively, each mode of power is unique. At the same time, however, they are connected and constitute practices of subjection (Gutting 1994: 95). Over time, they have more specifically evolved into "techniques" that advances the utility and productivity of those subjected to them (Gutting 1994: 97). This framework will be applied to investigate the nature and policy of resilience, which will be understood as a result of neo-liberal modes of governmentality.

1.6 Method

The method of this study takes the shape of a qualitative research design that reflects a deductive approach to theory. The empirical data used are secondary sources, retrieved during my desk study period of eight weeks. The majority of these sources consist of reports,

evaluation papers and academic written work. My main source of data will be reports published by the DFID on its resilience policy and approach. This means that my analysis will be based on these official documents which I intend to work with through a Foucauldian discourse analysis. Other secondary sources that speak with, to or against the theme of resilience and governmentality will thereby be used in a supplementary fashion to the arguments I seek to make.

1.7 Limitations of Study

The thesis provides a detailed account of a case study targeting a specific organization. In doing so, delimitations follow in the sense that my analysis and findings will not be applicable or generalizable to other, although similar, cases. One has to acknowledge that each case presents a peculiar environment with its respective social complexities. Nonetheless as a rather novel theme within the social sciences, this study can serve as valuable insight and added knowledge to an accumulated whole of research on resilience. Adding possibilities for generalization and comparison across different cases was neither possible due to time and length constraints. However, i am fully aware that the robustness of my research findings would have increased with the amount of cases investigated. Furthermore, there is also the possibility that my research is biased due to the influence of ontology, values and practical considerations. This is specifically in terms of data-collection techniques and my analysis of data. As argued by Bryant (2012:39) it is simply not feasible to keep the values and subjectivities of the researcher "totally in check".

2 Previous Studies

This section will seek to outline the current and wider academic debate surrounding resilience theory and especially its contribution to development work. The authors discussed are influential in the field of resilience and mostly published through peer-reviewed journals. They have been selected on the basis of their prominence in this theme, but also because their academic background increases the reliability and quality of the following discussion. Although there is a wider literature on the significance of resilience, both within the social sciences and other disciplines, I have deliberately chosen to only include the most relevant parts for my paper.

2.1 What is Resilience? Governing the Uncertainties of Tomorrow

Over the past decades, the term resilience has entered the social sciences and especially the theme of security governance (Combaz 2014: 3). Work on disaster has increasingly emphasized the *capacity* of affected communities to recover on their own without external assistance (Manyena 2006: 433). The application of resilience however, has yet been clearly established. It has been contested due to its usage by a multiplicity of disciplines which in turn has blurred a clear definition, understanding and substance of the term. In other words it has clouded the conceptualization of resilience (Manyena 2006: 445).

As a discourse, resilience is being associated with rhetoric based on sustainable governance, state-building, and conflict prevention (Kaplan 2009). Accordingly, resilience has evolved into a central referent on how to conceptualize and manage uncertainty in complex societies (Chandler 2013: 1). In such cases, the concept has increasingly influenced and structured not only academic, but also government policy discourses that deal with goals for different forms for governance. However, the idea of resilience has heightened two major ways of thinking about the management of 'governing uncertainty in a complex world' (Welsh 2014: 15). Before presenting the scholarly debate on resilience and risk, though, it can be necessary to understand why theories of resilience has come to be, the context behind its emergence and why it has been instrumentalized. In other words, one can understand the next section as a 'genealogy' of resilience.

2.2 The Emergence of Resilience: The New Referent to Security Governance

Although originally used in both ecology and physics, resilience initially gained affluence in the field of ecology with the 1973 release of Holling's normative work entitled *Resilience and Stability of Ecological Systems* (Manyena 2006: 433). Literature on resilience after this distinguished resilience as belonging to two specific epistemological communities, each examining two distinct social entities; the natural world and the inner world of a traumatized subject. By the 1970s, this early typology for thinking about resilience was assigned distinct methodological considerations and evolved into two parallel narratives termed 'psycho-social resilience' and 'socio-ecological resilience' (Welsh 2014: 16). *Psycho-social resilience* is concerned with the individual, their close community relations and how they respond to challenges created from localities and places. Pioneers of this study stressed the processes of adaptation; that resilience is a capacity that can be constructed, a skill that can be trained by producing 'positive adaptation' through information, knowledge and design in the face of adversity (Welsh 2014: 7). The second type of resilience, *socio-ecological resilience* has origins in Holling's idea of extending the connotation of resilience beyond conventional "engineering resilience" (Joseph 2013a: 38). Instead of following the previous notion of returning a system to the similar steady state it had prior to disturbance, ecological resilience is more concerned with measuring a system's capacity to absorb disturbances and re-organize during periods of change "so as to still retain the same function, structure, identity, and feedbacks" (Joseph 2013a: 38).

Two properties are central from these studies on resilience to this paper. One is that psycho-social resilience has been argued to produce new 'resilient subjectivities' that place responsibility on the individual in a world of uncertainty (Welsh 2014, Joseph 2013a, Zebrowski 2009). This will be a recurring theme in later chapters. Another is how overlapping between the psycho-social and socio-ecological relations of resilience establishes a meta-concept for resilience. This narrative focuses on the governance of risk and threats to the social body. It is fashioned by public and political discourses on resilience as 'robustness' (Welsh 2014: 16) – that of security, disaster planning and international development where this discourse of resilience stands as the new politically accepted term of choice.

2.3 A Subjective Discovery: The Natural Status of Resilience

Resilience emerged as a reaction to the traditional, conventional, and rather convenient understanding of the relationship between man and nature. The theoretical and empirical background of resilience is framed as part of developments in classical physics and its applied variants during the nineteenth century (Holling 1973: 15). It gained the status as ‘science’ knowledge and inherited thus a focus on quantitative, positivist approaches to the study on natural systems, rather than qualitative (Holling 1973: 15). However, as argued by Holling (1973: 1) this traditional view of natural systems may be less meaningful in reality, constructed for perceptual convenience, and hence avoid confronting its underlying complexity.

The more mature, contemporary version of resilience strives to offer a more realistic understanding of a system’s behaviour that deviated from the earlier equilibrium-based view. As argued by Joseph (2013a: 39) introducing the notion of stability breaks with former notions on ecological theory. Scholars realize that 'complex systems' do not only involve productive or material systems, but also human 'systems' that is more accurately termed social-ecological systems (Joseph 2013a: 39). It is on these grounds that the concept of resilience has been further extended to entities such as economic systems, institutions and organizations.

Summary of Chapter:

Resilience emerged as part of the proliferation of knowledge labelled as ‘sciences’ in the eighteenth century. It is against this background that resilience theory began to gain a technical status as a insight into the ‘vulnerability puzzle’ of natural systems. The theory of resilience has since evolved into a rather neutral and de-politized referent for security governance. Finally, it must be noted that the attempt to unveil the nature of resilience and how it is continuously being de-politized as an objective scientific discovery (Zebrowski 2013: 160) to manage change is what my research has in common with existing academic literature.

3 Theoretical Framework

This chapter provides a general approach to the concept of governmentality. The first section will do so by outlining key terms as well their implications. The nature and role of this perspective will similarly suggest a way of analyzing government in terms of how power and authority is reflected. This will become apparent once more operational terms of governmentality will be introduced. These include disciplinary power and bio-power, which can be understood as precepts for an in-depth analysis in later chapters of this paper. Nonetheless, it must be noted that this introduction to concepts and methodological considerations of governmentality should not be understood as an attempt to capture a variety of stances on Foucault (Dean 2010: 17). Rather the ambition of the following is to shed light on one particular perspective to problems of power, authority and government.

3.1 Foucault on Governmentality: Abstract Theory and Perspectives

Governmentality is about how to govern. Most commonly, the idea of government is associated with the state: a sovereign body that holds dominance over both a territory and the population that comprises it (Dean 2010: 16). The manner in which this entity exercises control is by working through apparatuses or institutions of organized political authority. In turn, what then stands as crucial to the study of governmentality is to locate the source and claim of power that resides through the state (Dean 2010: 16). The language or rhetoric of a government stands as a significant indicator of power. It can be pronounced through the practice of ideology, as a language that arises from a set of dominant power relations.

The critical nature of Foucault's theory extends beyond conventional state theory that legitimizes the basis of a sovereignty (Dean 2010: 16). Rather, it problematizes conventional assumptions about legitimacy, the concept of ideology and the exercise of power as well as authority as anything but self-evident. The object and activities of government are not based on a natural imperative or instinctive, but are rather things which has been invented and learned. To unveil this complexity, Foucault posed a more philosophical enquiry into the historical practices, activities and meanings that has been invested in the rationality of government. He termed this novel domain of research 'governmental rationality' or what he in his own neologism refers to as 'governmentality' (Gordon 1991: 1-2).

According to Foucault (1982: 220-1 in Gordon 1991: 2), the term government was to be understood in two ways. In a more wide and general sense, he suggested to define government as meaning '*the conduct of conduct*'. In a more narrow sense, government stands as "a form of activity aiming to shape, guide or affect the conduct of some person or persons" (Gordon 1991: 2). Taking this into consideration, it becomes clear that the term 'conduct' is peculiar to the study of governmentality. The practical sense of the word can be understood as the act of leading, directing or guiding to a necessary mean (Dean 2010: 16). The tool of calculation to reach planned ends, in turn, becomes integral to this aspect. The ethical and moral sense of the word, on the other hand, reflects a form of self-conduct that concerns the individual's relation with 'the self' so to speak. Here, emphasis is put on appropriate self-direction. From this, government can be said to concern both "the relation between the self and of others" (Gordon 1991: 2). The conduct of conduct was in this sense perceived as an omnipresent force. It could concern the individual's relation with 'the self', private interpersonal relations that consisted of some form of control or guidance, and relations concerning social institutions or communities.

3.2 Bio-power and Modern State Rationality

The genealogy of power and archaeology of discourse display attempts by Foucault to apply the idea of government in different historical domains. The purpose of these approaches to writing history was to look at the processes that had led to our current conditions of life, in particular through discursive traces and representations of knowledge. For Foucault, modern governmentality was defined by the specific ways in which populations had come to be administered in modern European history. The administration of human populations; resources and economic relations between these reflected a possibility for government intervention.

The concern of regulating population and establishing a government with detailed knowledge of a society's social body was the context that laid grounds for the rise of 'the State' in Western liberal societies. The state in all its numerous appearances exemplifies how disciplinary bio-power and modern state rationality has functioned largely since the eighteenth century (Dean 2010: 266). Due to the scope of this paper, I will delimit the

meaning of the word; governmentality by only focusing on bio-power. Bio-power is more complex than depicted in the following section, however, and extends to other historical events. With this realization one must keep in mind that methods of power cannot be thought of as moments of total discontinuity in governmental thought. That would be foreign to the usual methodology of Foucault, which instead seeks to show how objects are socially constructed through history (Gordon 1991: 16). On a similar note, the formation of power/knowledge has been additive throughout history. I will attempt to show this in the following.

The state reflects a starting point to modern governmental rationality. Two distinct features shaped it, but did not define it: one of these instruments was the theory of 'reason of state'. With the rise of the state, a different *raison d'État* is presented to justify the intimate relation the government seeks to establish with its entire population. In other words, the philosophy of governing for the state was centred on directing the prosperity of its population. The second object that exemplifies bio-power in its disciplinary function is the emergence of police theory. Born out of the interest and calculation of mankind, the state offered a radical shift in terms of regulation. The science of police stands as a modern creation in response to a state facing a problem with managing its population (Gordon 1991: 10). Seeking to govern its population by assuring order, the state saw it necessary to overcome the problem of unpredictability. Unforeseeable circumstances in this sense were thus perceived as a threat to the existence of a state. To counter this problem the reason of state engaged with new practices: that of calculating detailed action which is appropriate to events of disturbance and instability. Again, the proliferation of natural science knowledge such as biology and its definition of 'life' exemplify measures taken up against this. Born from these disciplines, resilience as a form of governance will in later chapters be analysed as using the same means as the state to touch upon the reality of its individual members. Much like the police state, resilience identifies its relation with its subjects as one based on prosperity. As noted by several scholars (Gordon 1991:10, Rutherford 2000: 123), the strength of the state was linked to the wellbeing of its population. From this perspective, the state power relied on the 'strength and productivity of all and each' within the population. In turn, the state needed to secure political as well as social conditions for the population to enable abilities of productivity and adjustability. The same principles will be applied risk in chapter 6 concerning the matter of security.

Foucault regarded bio-power as indispensable for the development of capitalism (Rutherford 2000: 114). Institutions of state, working through techniques of bio-power, developed in parallel with the economy and population. Explaining the growth of capitalism in Europe, Colin Gordon (1991: 14) rightfully invokes Hobbes by inciting the moral stiffening that was occurring in society by writing "[m]an is not fitted for society by nature, but by discipline." Disciplinary power displayed the ability to penetrate the most intimate properties of an individual's life and regulate society as a whole (Rutherford 200: 114). By the end of the nineteenth century, this modern political form of power was characterized by 'the task of administering life' (Rutherford 2000: 112). Foucault termed this ambition bio-power and attached two central properties to this new reason of state (Rutherford 2000: 113). One is the method where the human body is disciplined through a similar function as that of disciplinary modes of power. This idea hence seeks to advance the utility of a subject by positioning it to a system of efficiency and economic controls. The second and more contemporary form focuses on the supervision of the body. The human body here, nonetheless, is understood as a constituent of life and its biological processes. Foucault termed this manner of regulation as one linked to 'the species body'. In order to regulate the evolutionary processes that impacted the body of species, the government must work through a range of interventions. This control mechanism is what Foucault saw central to what he characterized as *the bio-politics of the population* (Rutherford 2000: 113).

Two central features must be highlighted from the rise of bio-power, which will be of great support for the analysis of resilience as a contemporary development-response. It is necessary to note that the idea of a measurable and manageable population came into existence at this historical juncture. Bio-power served as a measure to keep order in a changing society. But what is more, is the awareness bio-power raised of the environment that defined the circumstances of living for the ruled population. It showed a concern for the milieu, recognizing the fragility of physical resources which the population depended on for living. In turn, this led to the government seeking new tactics and knowledge about the more detailed reality it now governed. Programs of statistical description and efficient management were created as a consequence of this. These would serve as dispositions of the entire population and its relations to available resources (Rutherford 2000: 113). These similarly serve as means to embed resilience programming through the DFID. An elaboration of this will be made in what will be referred to as the bio-politics of resilience.

3.3 The Bio-politics of Resilience

What can be called 'life as a political object' is internal to a bio-power of resilience. This concept is operationalised against the background of technical and normative disciplines which emerge to control relative conditions of life. Government discourses on risk, security and population result from this and signify the extended reach of state into the management of population. Hence, matters of welfare and order become responsibilities taken up by the state that identifies itself as modifier of 'the life processes'. Naturally, part of these new responsibilities was also knowledge of ecological conditions of life and their relationship to the individual and collective level of welfare that would now be posed as political issues. Again this goes to show the degree of influence bio-power can exercise over the subject, both as a political and biological entity. It is similarly against this background that one may speak of a politicization of life (Rutherford 2000: 117).

3.4 A Foucauldian Discourse Analysis

Through Foucault's approach to genealogy and his methods of historical analysis, a central feature to his work was to recognize the social construction behind knowledge systems and any claim to 'truth' (Graham 2005: 2). By recognizing that there cannot be universal truths or absolute ethical positions, Wetherall (2001: 384 in Graham 2005: 2) states that "belief in social scientific investigation as a detached historical, utopian, truth-seeking process becomes difficult to sustain." On this basis, the Foucauldian discourse analysis emerges as concern with *how* language works within power relations, instead of engaging in a battle of truth and fiction. The orientation of the discourse analysis informed by Foucault aspires to disrupt and render what is understood as familiar by making it 'strange' (Murray 2007: 7). This brings attention to interrogate the historical premise behind the social construction of an object, enabling Foucauldian discourse analysis to struggle, reveal and underline with what is 'most invisible and insidious in prevailing practices' (Graham 2005: 4). The focus of this approach in this paper will be to tackle the discursive formation behind the concept of resilience. This involves mapping the knowledge system and productive powers which has made the object possible (Graham 2005: 7). Thus, the objective of this paper will not be to consider whether or not social phenomena such as resilience are *true*, but *how* its objects might have become formed.

3.5 Bio-power and Discursive Formations

Modern governmentality now defined itself and the reality it constituted through men and their relations to “wealth, resources, means of subsistence, the territory with its specific qualities, climate, irrigations, fertility etc; men in relation to that other things, customs, habits, ways of acting and thinking (...) and misfortunes such as famine, epidemics, death, etc.” (Foucault, 1991: 93 in Rabinow 1991: 16). This invokes the importance of modern biological insights on ‘life’ and the proliferation of scientific knowledge during this era. New areas of knowledge were particularly biology, agriculture and public health which increasingly were posed as political instruments for improving the welfare of populations. The remainder of this paper strives to show how in international governance ‘scientific’ knowledge has provided a platform for governments and actors to intervene abroad in the name of prosperity and abundance for other populations. The resilience approach by the DFID will be treated as a specific example of how bio-power influences practice.

Summary:

For the present, however, it can be sufficient to conclude that modern practices of governing or administrating populations simultaneously incline the regulation and management of the milieu in which a population lives. It is from this context resilience discourse has emerged in development interventions abroad.

3.5 Contemporary and Critical Approaches to Resilience Discourse

On one hand, some scholars categorize resilience theories as normative for shaping sustainable change. Advocates for resilience as a normative theory for sustainable change argue that such notions produce active citizens. In a time of uncertainty and unpredictability, Welsh (2014: 16) speaks of 'a period of crisis' in which resilience discourse is constantly sustained and legitimized by subjecting individuals to conditions of unpredictability, novelty, vulnerability and transformation. In terms of agency, Joseph (2010: 31) similarly argues that the discourse is actively encouraging individual subjects to exercise their own free will in a responsible way. Moreover, the spaces and practices of resilience is said to intertwine with

such processes as some see the shaping of active citizenship as a devolution of power (Joseph 2010: 30). The process of devolution is thus reflective of how people is demanding to take responsibility of their own actions, leading power to be moved away from sovereign authority to local peripheries.

On the other hand, there has increasingly been a critical interrogation of resilience as a structuring discourse of government. Through the lenses of Foucault, resilience-thinking is argued to covertly represent governmental practices, which aim to produce and extend new subjectivities responsible for themselves in a world of uncertainty (Welsh 2014: 18). But what are these governmental practices? As Joseph (2013b: 287) points out, modern governance is identical to liberal governmentality because the continual assessment which is made to minimize the government role. Such roll-back of the state must be imposed in order to let the market function according to its 'natural' laws while increasing the responsibility of civil society and the private sphere. Under such conditions, transnational actors are thus left with more room to act as facilitators of change.

3.6 Drawing on Foucauldian Readings: Encouraging a Critical Stance

As a response to the interpretations of resilience being used in mainstream policy and practice, this thesis seeks to produce a counter-narrative of resilience. In doing so, it debunks the conservative perception of resilience as a vehicle for sustainable change, which impedes resilience to become truly 'transformative' or 'challenging' of the status quo (ODI 2012: 5). A counter-narrative of resilience policy by the DFID, therefore aims to reflect how this concept is used to enforce, rather than challenge norms that need to be addressed to genuinely reduce risk.

Summary of Chapter:

I have deliberately encouraged taking a critical stance to understanding resilience as my research question is intended to query the nature of this discourse. A growing number of critics are beginning to challenge the conventional narrative of resilience as a progressive and profound insight into environmental and disaster management. Through the lenses of Foucault, a counter-discourse has thus emerged in this sense that seeks to approach resilience as a field of power, invested with interests to restructure rationalities and practices to support neoliberal governance.

4 Research Methodology

4.1 Deductive Research Design

The case study approach has contributed to my research by providing significant insight into the complexity and particular nature of the case in question (Bryman 2012: 66-7). My case study approach can be characterized as intrinsic as it strives to gain a better understanding of an issue (Punch 2005: 144). Moreover, it is instrumental in a critical manner by positioning resilience-discourse in relation to the concept of governmentality

The reason I have chosen the British Department of International Development (DFID) as my empirical case, is due to the institutions influence on a global level. Much like other INGO's and transnational institutions that are employing resilience as a new discourse of progressive change, DFID is representative of a wider trend not just for national governments in Western and liberal societies. Another reason is based on their international leadership by developing widely used and recognized models for resilience-building. The theme of resilience, however, has not proved convenient. As it is a rather new field of research, few reports exist on resilience interventions by the DFID or other prominent actors. In this sense, my choice of examining the DFID's policy framework, instead of a country-specific resilience project, had to do with the limited amount of data concerning resilience. One can thus attribute my sampling, and the bias inherited within such, to both convenient and purposeful reasons.

I will strive to make use of a Foucauldian discourse analysis to better understand the discourse of resilience and how it is realized or actualized on the grounds. My reason for using this method is based on my research aim. The empirical material that will provide a platform for me to employ a Foucauldian discourse analysis will be the DFID and their resilience projects abroad.

4.2 Data Collection: A Qualitative Approach

Using a qualitative framework, the research proposal will carry with it important epistemological and ontological considerations (Bryman 2012: 27). In terms of epistemology,

this study is underpinned by an interpretivist conception of social research, which emphasizes the process of *understanding* rather than explaining human behaviour. Interpretivism will be used as a tool to deal with the social world under study (Holliday 2007: 124). On a similar note, the ontological position of this research paper will reflect tenets of constructivism (Bryman 2012: 33). What becomes essential to the study of resilience is the idea of ‘reality’ and ‘knowledge’ as a subjective social construct (Punch 2005: 139). In this regard, all individuals are perceived as having an active role in fashioning a social order that is in constant change. Influential to these stances are postmodernism and the political dimension it assigns to social research.

4.3 Other Epistemological and Ontological Considerations

Delimitations, however, exists in a number of ways. According to Joseph (2013b: 41) limits to Foucault’s approach become explicit when going beneath 'the big picture'. Foucault is known to denounce any specific ontological standpoint or ideology in his writings and has a result always been difficult to place or read within single conventional frames. As a result, a challenge to this paper has been to read around Foucault so to say in order to better contextualize his notion on government. It is similarly through this line of reasoning that Foucault's work has been described as an ”evolving and unfinished product” in which his approach is ”deliberately evasive and provocative” (Joseph 2013b: 41). In terms of methodology, it must also be made clear that Foucault's work on international governmentality extends the theme of resilience and covers a wide range of trends within political life and development. Thus, an attempt is made to overcome this challenge by consulting secondary sources on how to interpret and make a Foucauldian analysis on the theme of resilience. In doing so, I have aimed to produce a much more condensed outline of resilience as governmentality.

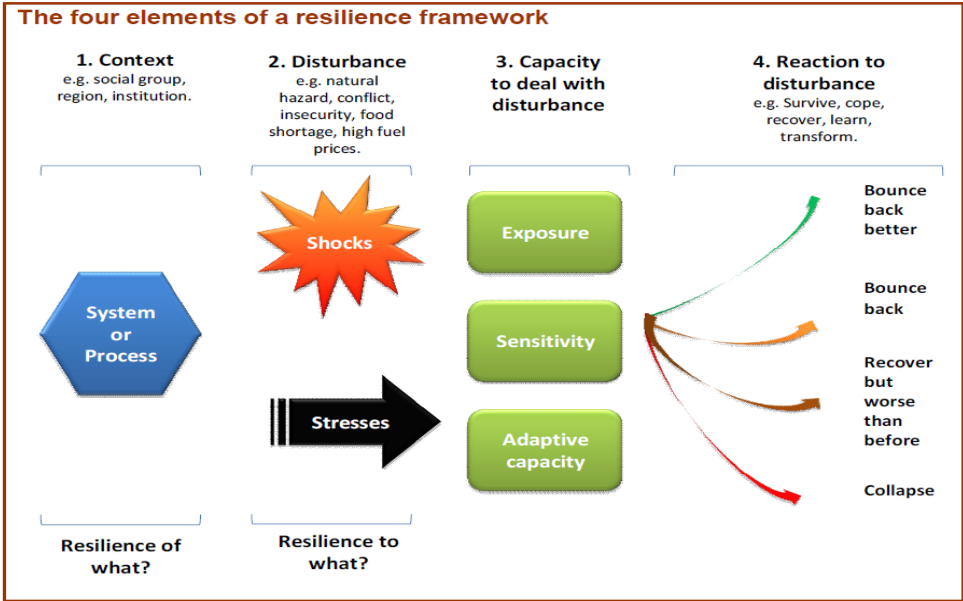
4.4 Empirical Data: The British Department for International Development (DFID) and Disaster Resilience Discourse

Since the late 1990s, the concept of resilience has emerged in the social sciences as an alternative perspective to development aid (Combaz 2014: 3). It was initiated with the DFID's 1999 *sustainable livelihoods approach* and introduced as being part of a more integrated approach to poverty alleviation (Combaz 2014: 3). The focus on resilience has since then produced a growing body of research. For the DFID, the following working definition has been adopted. It shows that the DFID's application of resilience is formulated as disaster resilience. Shaping the term in this manner is part of a wider process to mainstream resilience-building in all DFID country programmes by 2015 (Waites 2012: 4).

“Disaster Resilience is the ability of countries, communities and households to manage change, by maintaining or transforming living standards in the face of shocks or stresses – such as earthquakes, drought or violent conflict – without compromising their long-term prospects.” (DFID 2011: 6)

The DFID has played a key role in advancing resilience as a global approach to disaster. In practice this has been reflected through DFID's influential framework that depicts the core elements of disaster resilience (Combaz 2014: 2). Most definitions of resilience share these four common elements, which taken together examine levels of resilience within a country, community or household (DFID 2011: 7, Waites 2012: 6).

Figure 1: Components of a disaster resilience framework (DFID)



The disaster resilience framework above is a simplified model of resilience-building in practice. Nonetheless, it presents a clear idea of the properties and processes that underpin resilience-building (DFID 2011: 6-7). A closer examination of these properties will follow in the analysis section of my paper.

4.4.1 The Rationale behind the DFID's Resilience

In an attempt to address the question: “what does disaster resilience look like in our context?” resilience interventions supported by the DFID seek to grasp a variety of interests from different groups (DFID 2011: 10). A focus has thus emerged on the individual element of the resilience framework. For example, much disaster risk reduction (DRR) work seeks to minimize sensitivity and exposure to change whereas livelihoods work focus at individual adaptive capabilities such as assets and diversification of income (DFID 2011: 10).

At the same time, practices have been described as out-come oriented with a tendency to adopt top-down approaches, despite a discourse of local empowerment and sustainability. They favour the status quo of inequality under neoliberal governance, dedicating little attention to deeper structural inequalities that emerge as a result of insecurity and shocks (Combaz 2014: 3).

5 Analysis

This analysis cannot be called a critique in the sense that it reflects a position privileged with a universal morality from which to criticize resilience practices. It is important to note that *criticism* in this paper, instead, means a questioning and shaking of the ‘self-evidence’ of practices (Dean 2010: 86). In doing so, I am critical towards the discourse of resilience. One important way in which I criticize, is by looking at the disjunction of resilience discourse and its emancipator vision which supposedly point to visions of free, consensual social relations, i.e. relations that stand outside coercive, regulatory exercises of power.

- My *first point* will be to examine what techniques give meaning to the term resilience and enable the discourse to present a particular view of the world.
- My *second point* will be to examine what distinguishes the specific version of modern governmentality attached to resilience?
- Using my theoretical framework, my aim is to problematize what conventional resilience policy has taken for granted in terms of language, identity and knowledge of policymaking with the DFID. By asking about language, ideology and power/knowledge structures we are invoking the function of a Foucauldian discourse analysis.

5.1 Resilience-discourse as a Productive Power

A number of factors are associated with the drivers of and constraints on disaster resilience to hazards by the DFID. These stand outside merely measuring the magnitude of the hazard. Instead it depends on a range of socio-economic and environmental variables (DFID 2011: 7, Combaz 2014: 14). Taken together, these are related and shape the meaning given to resilience discourse. For the DFID, one essential driver of resilience is the ability of an individual or a social system to *adapt*. The adaptive capacity is in theory a quality that allows actors to ‘anticipate, plan, react to and learn from shocks or stresses’ (DFID 2011: 8). In practice, this asset of resilience is conducive in a number of ways. It can for instance be understood as a *process* whereby learning, education and knowledge can raise better risk awareness. In turn, adaptation is built through acceptance of uncertainty and change. This

allows for government to intervene with the purpose of adequate planning and preparation (Combaz 2014: 14).

What becomes significant when organizations such as the DFID strive to create adaptive capacities such as these is the notion of rationality and knowledge. To begin with the concept of rationality one must examine the notion of discourse related to the DFID on resilience intervention. Here, a rationale is reflected through a discourse centred on risk-awareness and management. The discourse on resilience gives meaning and legitimizes a number of social and physical events. It enables resilience-thinking to be practiced in a certain manner, for instance the disaster resilience framework by the DFID, leading to an exclusion of other potentials to speak, think or act about resilience and hence renders possible only few or single statements about reality (Winkel 2010: 82). The reality constituted as a result of this will be one tailored for a certain application for resilience, in this case the DFID's resilience policy.

The Foucauldian sense of discourse is compatible with resilience, because it holds a 'productive function'. It lies within the production of truths, distinguishing legitimate knowledge from supposedly illegitimate ones. Productive power is thus integral to resilience in that it actively works to create particular knowledge and 'truths' about the reality it seeks to govern.

Another important trait to note about the rationality of resilience is the 'problematization of life' it espouses (Grove 2014: 199) As mentioned in chapter 3, the DFID's disaster resilience and their concern for risk can be compared to the detached manner of administrating 'life' through bio-politics. The system of power that gives meaning to resilience has likewise origins in these versions of bio-power that aims to govern a productive, efficient and adaptive population. Here, 'truth' is the "ordered procedures" that sustains, reproduces and legitimizes particular forms of statements on what constitutes appropriate resilience (Rabinow 1991: 74). Each society, in this sense, has a 'regime of truth'; its general politics, in which certain procedures and practices are accepted and made function as true (Winkel 2010: 82). In order to produce, regulate, circulate and sustain this regime of truth, bio-power operates through so-called 'regimes of practices' (Dean 2010: 27). Governmentality is concerned with this exact notion insofar that this points to the normalized ways of doing and thinking about things. Reproducing this conduct is, then, implied in terms of both practices and institutions that support resilience-building.

5.2 Fields of Truth and Knowledge

I argue that the way in which the DFID seeks to govern and conduct is acquired through a ‘truth’ based on scientific discourse. This evidence- and fact-based understanding of the world points to the proliferation of empirical forms of knowledge such as biology. The emergence of such disciplines underlined a new regime of ‘truth’, because it presented the notion of evaluating what is acceptable against the background of ‘scientific’ knowledge. Likewise, the DFID justifies resilience interventions abroad by making use of knowledge-systems like biology or ecology. From these, resilience has been born as an approach to constitute a respective ‘system of knowledge’ (Foucault 1972 in Grove 2014: 199). The aim of knowledge systems is to produce truths about the uncertainty, and hence danger, of life and how to secure this life through specific measures.

Assessing ‘risk landscapes’ (Combaz 2014: 22) is, for instance, demonstrated in the DFID’s Multi-hazard Risk Assessment which function as a first step in preparing a disaster resilience country strategy (DFID 2012: 1). Given that the aim of these assessment schemes has been to help country offices, the DFID similarly speak of “tapping into” a country’s institutional level to build consensus about this form of knowledge and the risks faced (DFID 2012: 1). In some country offices resilience will even be mainstreamed through all sectors and projects of a community.

From this, it is important to stress that mainstreaming resilience means that ‘science’ and fact-based knowledge will be instituted on a wider level. More specifically, as a particular rationale is institutionalized, a ‘truth’ will follow on how to think about and manage the individual, social relations and social systems. Governmentality in the form of ‘conduct of conduct’ appears in this case to influence the work of the DFID. Consequently, ‘sciences’ and their claim to has rendered the policy and actions of the DFID meaningful and ‘scientifically’ acceptable. Hence impact assessments, emergency response models and education plans can, on this basis, be described as techniques of knowledge production.

As argued by Foucault, however, each society has its own regime of truth (Winkel 2010: 82). From this perspective, resilience discourse employed by the DFID can be understood as a vehicle for promoting liberal forms of governmentality. It can be read as an attempt to extend

one version of governmentality or rather a ‘truth’ which offers a new, more appropriate way of life.

5.3 Neo-liberalizing Resilience: Agency as Promoted by the DFID

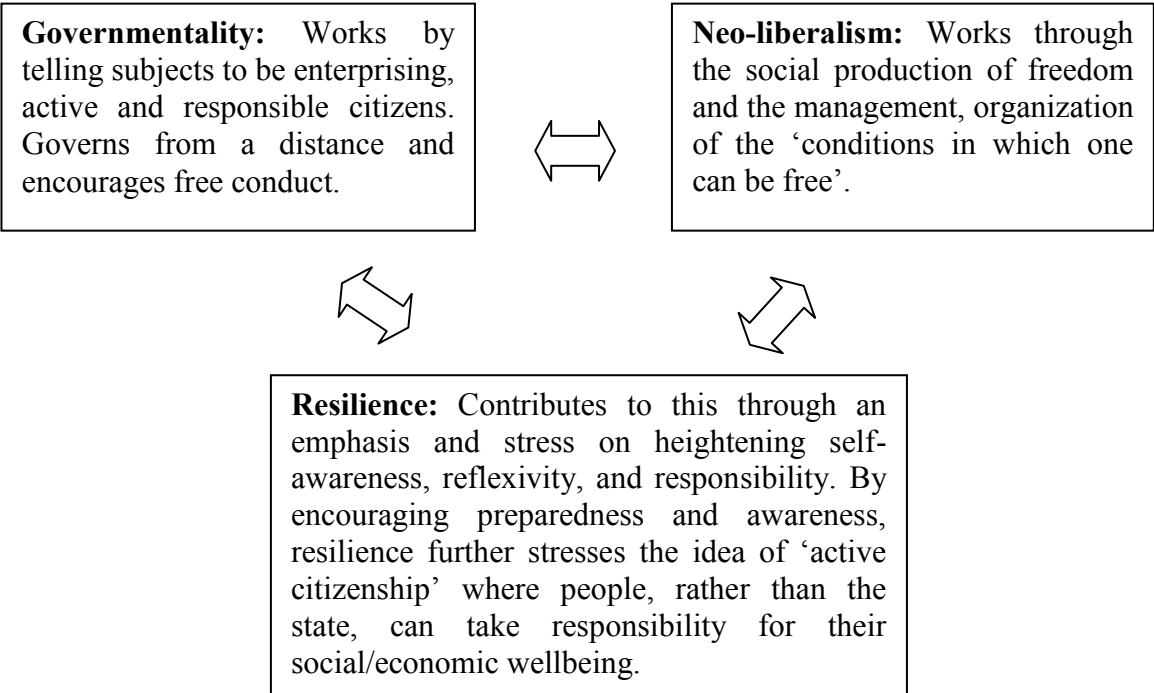
The approach to resilience by the DFID lends great support to individual agency. A key determinant for the DFID’s resilience-building activities has focused on utilizing all possible sets of individual resources possible in the face of a stress or a shock. From a bio-political perspective, this ‘assets pentagon’ (DFID 2011: 11) not only depict how resilience-thinking is designed to penetrate and administrate all spheres of life - from both a micro and macro level. It also goes to show how resilience-building activities by the DFID are envisaged to extend active citizenship from a variety of prescribed stances. As earlier described in the case study, ‘the resilient subject’ is expected to minimize vulnerability by being active in social, financial, environmental, political and technological types of resilience planning (DFID 2011: 11).

Concurring with other critics of resilience discourse, certain identities of the self are produced as a result of this. The idea of one’s life as an enterprise of oneself shows the influence of neo-liberal rationale in resilience, and in the DFID this is especially manifested through their representation of resilience as a quality for the preservation, reproduction and reconstruction of one’s own human capital in the face of change (Gordon 1991: 44). Furthermore, according to Joseph (2013a: 39), the incentive to ‘adapt to change’ may be perceived as placing responsibilities of risk-management and -sharing on a society's people rather than the government. A dependency is perpetuated on the ability of a people to adapt to alternative conditions through a governance of the self, where each individual is responsible for their own resilience “through learning, planning and reorganization” (Joseph 2013a: 39). Expanding individual autonomy and responsibility can thus be said to reflect how resilience as approached by the DFID supports neo-liberal governmentality. Furthermore, neo-liberalism is understood here not as the roll-back of the government, but rather as a form of regulation of populations ‘by reference to the market’ (Joseph 2014: 287). Accordingly, one can speak of a *governmentalisation of the state* (Dean 2010; 267) where responsibility to

govern has devolved power away from a central state in favour of “a network of private and quasi-private bodies that is based on the belief in the superiority of market forces”.

5.4 Social Constructs: A ‘Society of Security’

In the case of DFID’s disaster resilience, significant techniques of early liberal government are still at play through the concept of freedom. Bio-power for instance worked as a force that allowed government with sufficient regulation and knowledge of what is happening in the economy to permit economic subjects freedom of action (Gordon 1991: 15). The notion of freedom as a social construct is still applicable to resilience in the sense that individual liberty is taken to mean the conditions in which the subject can deepen autonomy and self-governance. For the DFID, providing a population or subject with ‘freedom’ means increased capabilities to adopt resilience to combat uncertain conditions. As explained in the following table, bio-power operates through certain fields of visibility and identity:



Based on this, it can be said that resilience has a futuristic element. When considering post-disaster phases, processes of adaptation are still put in place through multiple practices to mitigate future disasters (Manyena 2006: 439). Among these strategies, the DFID make use of education plans and partnership projects to secure ‘appropriate’ future conditions for a

population to prosper (DFID 2011: 15, Wilde 2012: 14). From a bio-political perspective, this issue invokes what Foucault termed the ‘holding out’ of a regime (Gordon 1991: 19), where a government’s strength was measured on its ability to secure social and political conditions for a productive population.

By way of problematizing life of the entire population, security has become the dominant component of modern governmental rationality since this (Gordon 1991: 20). It is based on this that Foucault argued that we live in a society of security today. On a similar note, the DFID clearly states in their disaster resilience policy approach that their work is premised by a priority to ‘build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels’ (Wilde 2012: 3)

5.5 Shaping Behaviour from a Distance

Finally, it is important to note that the aim of disaster prevention and preparedness is to encourage local responsibility so that *direct* foreign intervention is unnecessary. But indirectly, intervention can be argued to still appear through the idea of ownership and partnership. Two key goals can be summarized from the DFID principles for resilience activities (DFID 2011: 15): that of building coherence between actors at different level as well as coherence between development and humanitarian efforts.

Drawing on Foucault, this represents governmentality because international organizations such as the DFID work through appealing to consensus and agreement as opposed to imposing SAP’s. The techniques used to reach consent on a policy include installing devices for “monitoring and evaluation, peer review, benchmarking and the sharing of information and good practice” (Joseph 2014: 289). The DFID exemplify how these aspects have come to be applied. The latter part has especially been enhanced through partnership arrangements, which ease information flows and provision of technical expertise. Again, this underlines how resilience policy by the DFID presents itself in a language of persuasion rather than coercion; ‘enablement rather than constraint’ (Joseph 2014: 289).

As a result, we the resilience approach by the DFID can be said to operate as a ‘governance from a distance’ (Joseph 2014: 289). Governance from this perspective is sustained and able to regulate by building institutions within a neo-liberal framework. This governmentality towards state can, moreover, be described as “the international conduct of the conduct of

countries” where the agents involved are affected by thinking they are free to act as they wish, but at the same time ‘gently’ persuaded to ‘do the right thing’ (Joseph 2014: 289). From this emerges the social construction of freedom and responsible ownership in the DFID policy framework.

Summary of Chapter: Resilience as Governmentality

A discourse analysis that draws on Foucault has enabled a counter-history of the resilience approach put in place by the DFID. The following critical points have been made in opposition to the notion of resilience as sustainable change:

1. Resilience signifies power-relations in the sense that it serves as a platform to problematize certain fields of life.
2. Resilience discourse, as employed by the DFID, functions as systems of knowledge with bio-political effects.
3. As a strategy toward regulating populations, it signifies how governmentality works from a distance; in an indirect manner to influence the action and conduct of others. As a liberal form of rule, resilience functions as governmentality by governing through an appeal to the freedom and autonomy of the governed. This is made possible through ideas of responsibility, self-awareness and self-regulation.
4. The policy framework of disaster resilience previously shown recapitulate Foucault’s notion on bio-power and governmentality in terms of how language is constructed around terms like risk-management and -assessment, political commitment, sharing risks across society and risk landscape.

A counter-narrative as this thus combats ongoing de-politization of resilience discourse by realizing how extensively it reflects a liberal governmentality that seeks to compromise everyday life. Based on this, the discourse of resilience by the DFID can be presented as a form of liberal governmentality.

6 Conclusion

This paper has encouraged a critical stance towards the discourse of resilience. In doing so, it has suggested an alternative reading of resilience that go beyond the positivist and empirical explanation. By problematizing the nature of resilience, the guiding assumption of this paper was that resilience as a discourse should not be taken at face-value. Rather, I suggested to probe beneath its rhetoric of sustainable governance and change, in order to reveal how ideological contents are invested in the discourse. Using the DFID as a single-case study to exemplify the disjunction between resilience discourse and its empowering effects was effective in this regard. Through a Foucauldian discourse analysis, the paper has reached the overarching conclusion that resilience, in the case of the DFID's policy framework, does not stand outside coercive, regulatory exercises of power. Instead, this paper argues that 'truth' and knowledge systems in the DFID's resilience approach function to sustain, reproduce and legitimize what constitutes 'appropriate' resilience. In effect, governmentality in its most rudimentary form is reflected as a particular rationale is instituted. Through the DFID, this occurs on both the level of practice and institutions because a 'truth' is created on how to think about and manage the individual, social relations or social systems facing risk. One may thus speak of resilience as the 'conduct of conduct'.

In conclusion, the resilience-discourse functions as governmentality because it signifies power-relations in a variety of ways. As a *strategy*, resilience by the DFID represents governmentality through working from a distance to influence the behaviour of others. A technique that has enabled this is the bio-political problematization of an uncertain future. For the DFID, the attempt to understand and manage this emergent life has been through instruments such as impact assessments. In bio-political terms, impact assessments present the world view that life is inherently stable but threatened by the uncertainty that lies in, for instance, nature.

As a liberal form of *rule*, resilience functions as governmentality by governing through an appeal to the freedom and autonomy of the governed. This is made possible through ideas of responsibility, self-awareness and self-regulation. Similarly, resilience-discourse encourages responsible behaviour at both an institutional and individual level through measures of

ownership, partnership and peer review. As a result, the DFID's resilience approach increasingly shifts state-based responsibilities of risk and reaction on to individuals and institutions. In effect, institutions and individual practices are made amenable to external scrutiny, recommendations and transparency through a partnership-approach. Elaborating on this, the rationality behind this type of governmentality and its ability to regulate states offers a counter-narrative to resilience as sustainable change. Instead, this lends support to understanding resilience as merely an extension of previous developments in governance. More specifically, resilience becomes a regime of practice belonging to liberal competitiveness.

What remain essential to stress, is that this paper not only seeks to criticize the ideological contents invested with a DFID policy. Rather, it is to stress the possibilities to create 'a new regime of truth'. In doing so, it is important to clarify how knowledge-systems about risk can be social constructs; how a discourse is invested with power relations.

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