The dark side of resilience

## Exploring the meaning of resilience in the context of institutions and power

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"Resilience is to the 2000s and 2010s what sustainability was to the 1980s and 1990s" (Foster 2010)
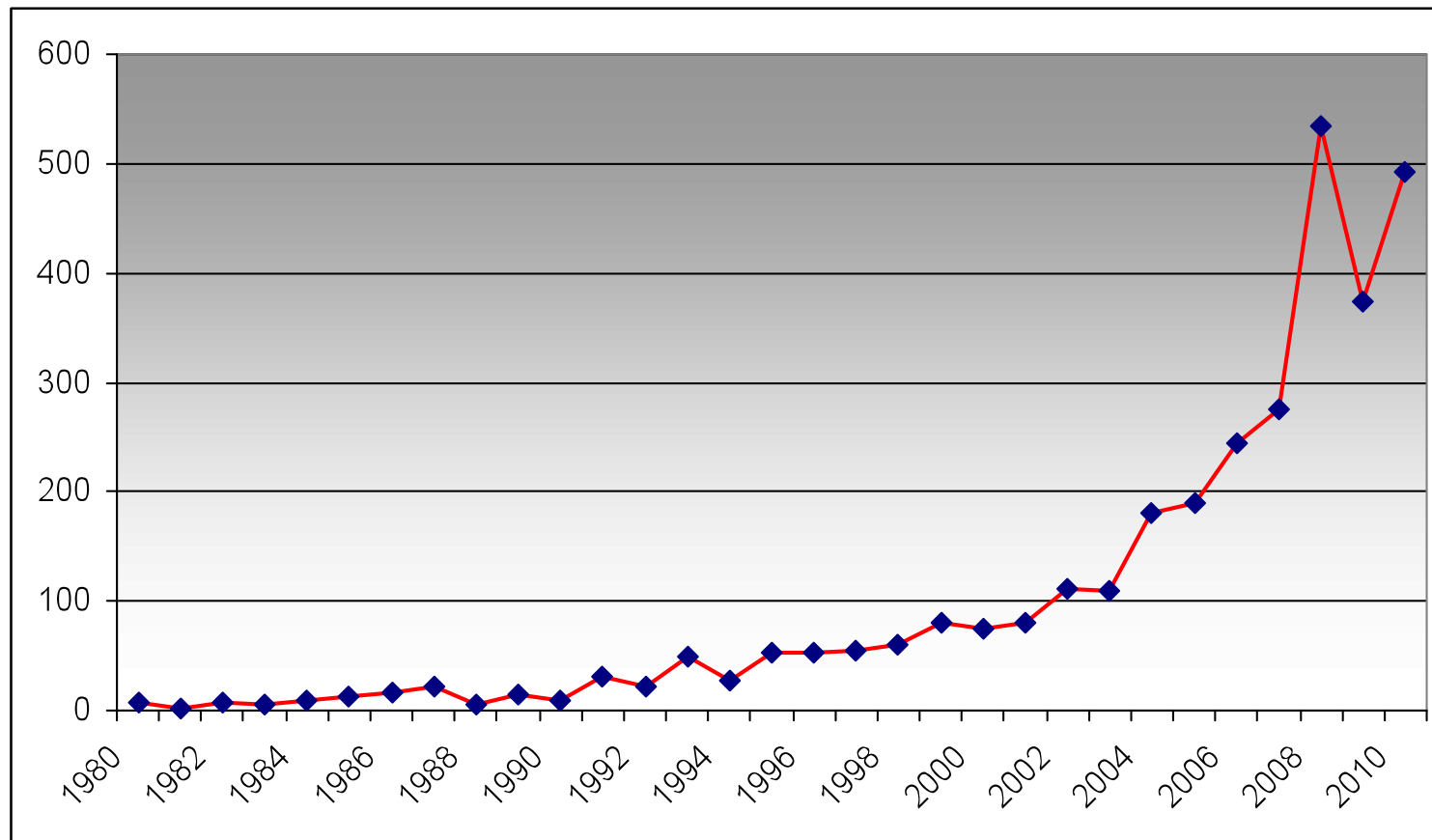
The bright side of resilience

"Resilience is to the 2000s and 2010s what sustainability was to the 1980s and 1990s"

(Foster 2010)

- Flood risk management (Steinführer et al. 2009),

- Climate change adaptation (Garschagen 2011)

- Organizational management (Weik & Sutcliff 2007)

- Urban development (Mueller 2011),

- Terrorism (Coaffee et al. 2009),

- Mega-projects like Olympic Games (Jennings & Lodge 2010)

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Why now?

"A response to a generalized contemporary sense of uncertainty and insecurity and a search for formulas for adaptation and survival."

(Christopherson et al. 2010)

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Some commonalities …

1. Resilience is considered as something *positive*: withstand hardship and disturbance, recover from disaster, to be prepared for the unfeorseen, cope with radical surprises

2. Resilience is considered as a *capacity,* an *ability* or a *strategy to* deal with *change, uncertainties* and *surprises*

3. Often a strong *normative* or even *prescriptive* orientation; how things *should* be (and not how they are)!

   Example: "Understanding uncertainty and reducing vulnerability: lessons from resilience thinking" (Berkes 2007)

   => learning to live with change and uncertainties

   => nurturing diversity and combining different knowledge

   => creating opportunity for self-organization

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"Nothing is a risk in itself; there is no risk in reality. But on the other hand anything can be a risk; it all depends on how one analyses the danger, considers the event"
(Ewald 1991)

"Risk is not a first order thing existing in the world" outside of the processes of recognition and sense-making
(Garland 2003)

⇒ Focusing not on functional aspects but on how resilience is constructed in discourses and embedded in practices
⇒ Descriptive and not presriptive

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A (neo)-institutional perspective

- How is resilience defined and shaped in an institutional context?
- Through which discursive and practical operation is resilience attached to an event?
- ⇒ Analysis focuses on managerial and administrative *practices* centering around ideas of resilience

Governing through resilience

- ⇒ How are individuals, organizations or societies *governed* by the idea of resilience?
- ⇒ What are the implications if "resilience" becomes an organizing concept in contemporary societies?

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Three examples of an institutional perspective on resilience

- The myth of resilience: the case of the 2002 flood (Germany)
    - Kuhlicke (2011) *Natural Hazards, online first*
    - *Hutter et al. (2011) Natural Hazards, online first*

- Talk and action: urban climate change adaption in Vietnam
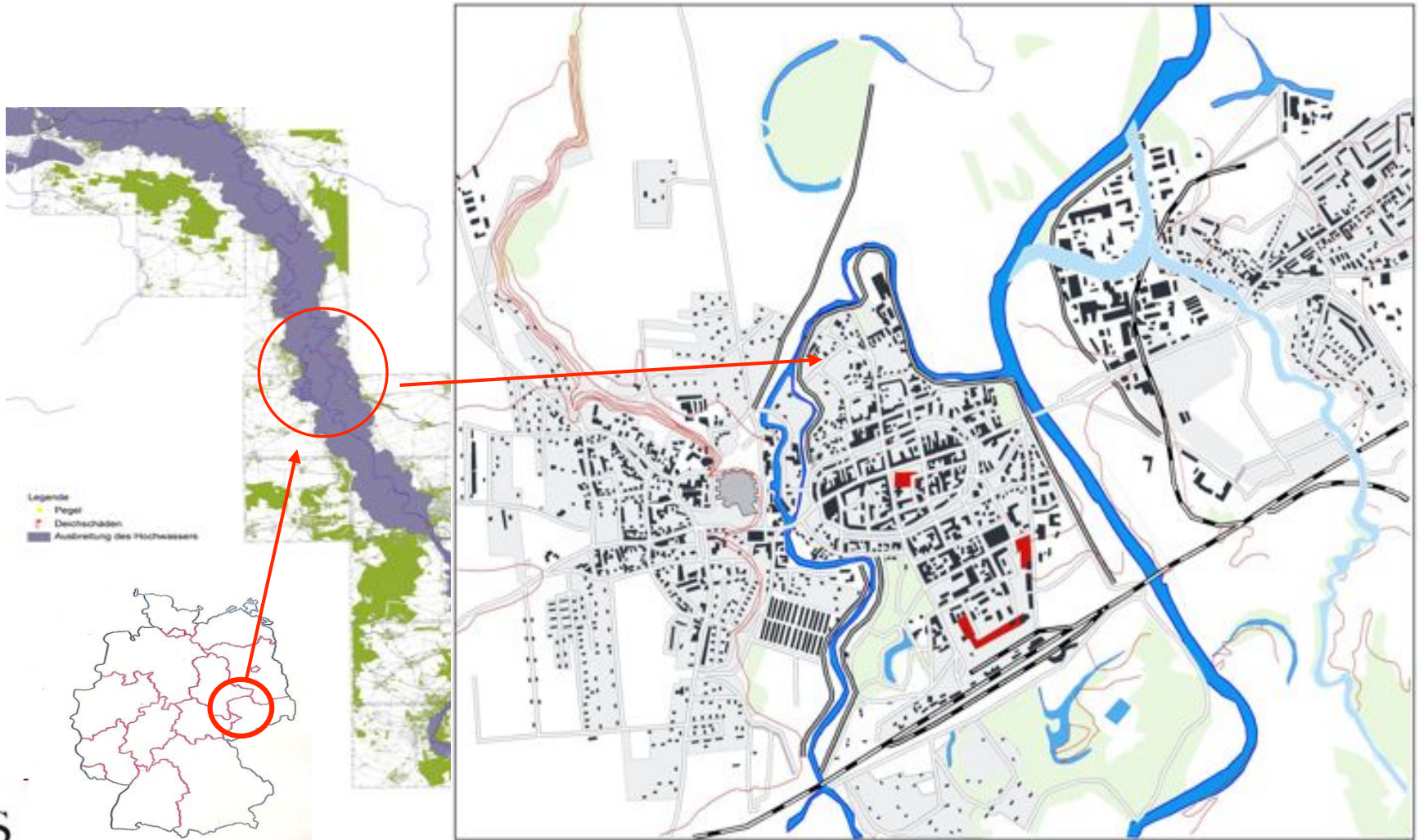   - Garschagen (2011) *Natural Hazards, online first*

- Responsibilization and resilience:
  governing natural hazards in the UK
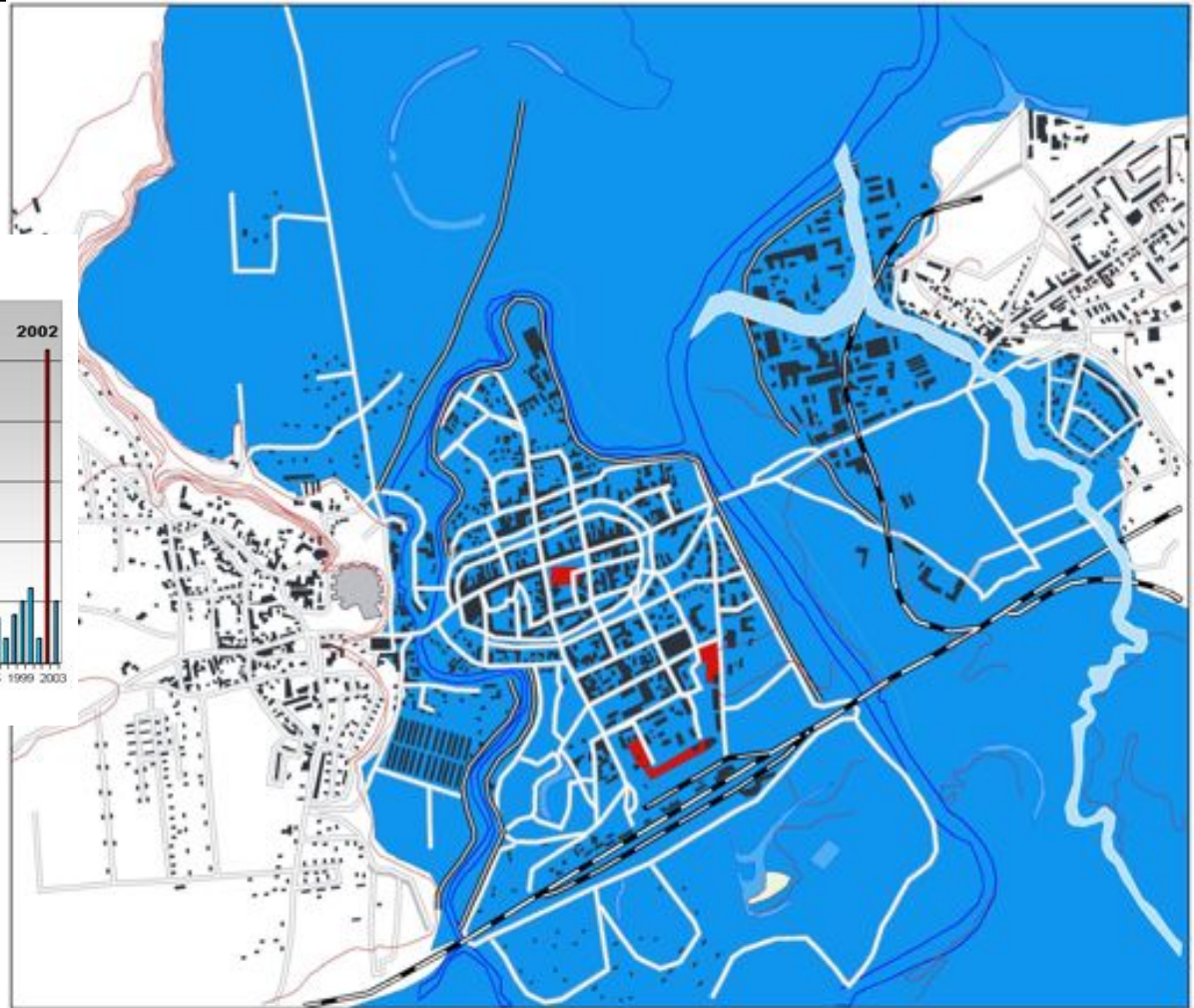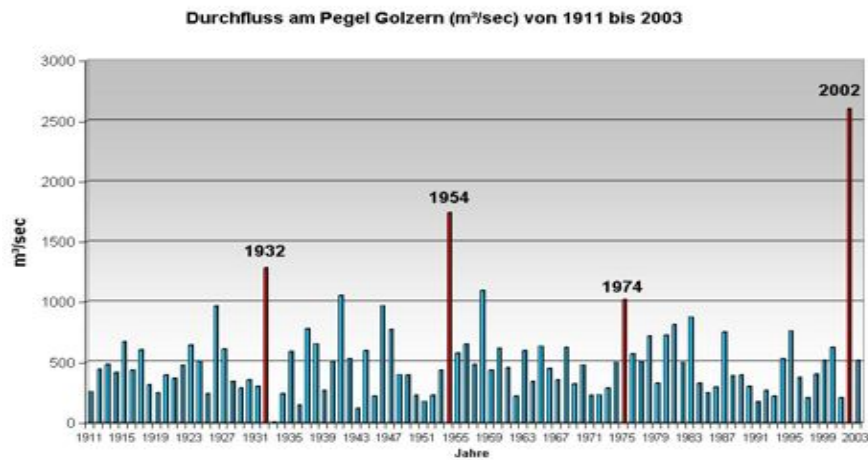   - Walker et al. (2010) *www.caphaz-net.org*
    - Kuhlicke et al. (2011) *Environmental Science and Policy, in print*

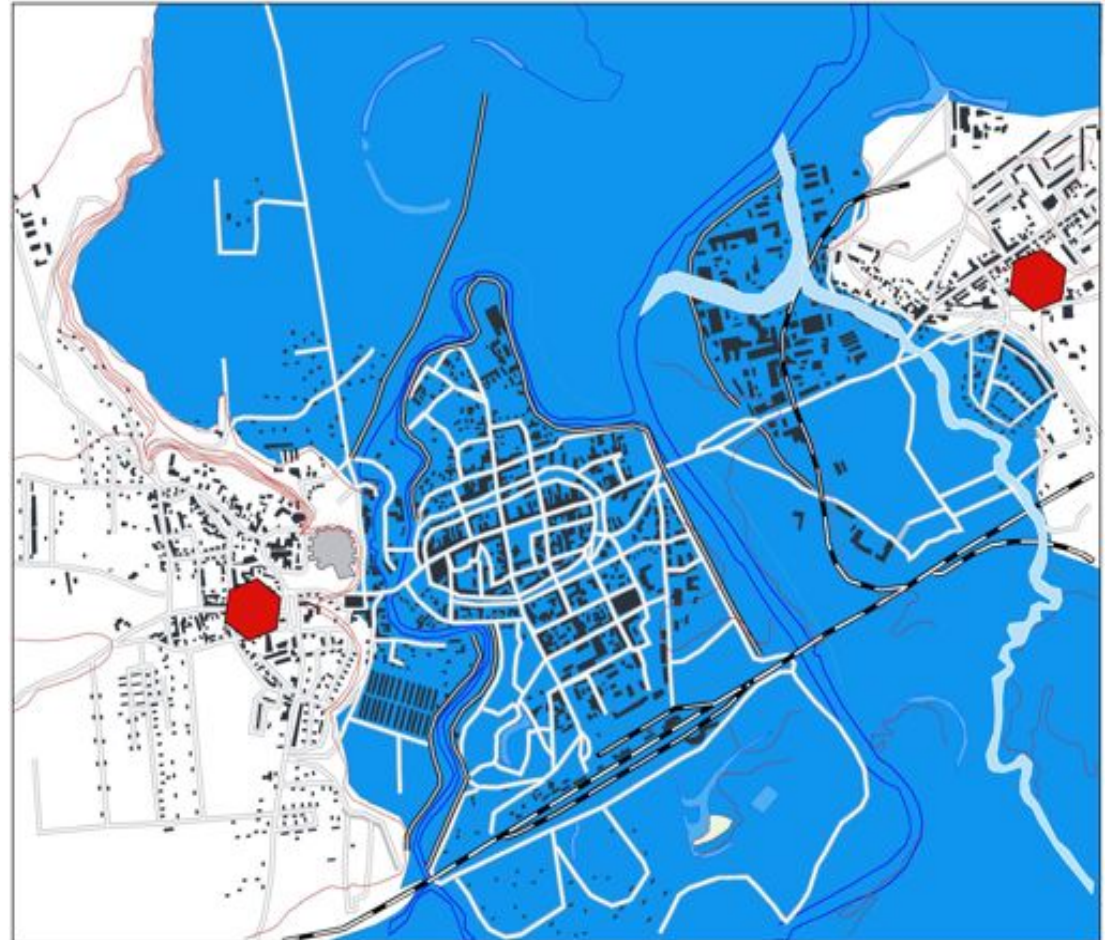# The myth of resilience: The case of the 2002 flood (Germany)

Legende
- Pegel
- Deichschäden
- Ausbreitung des Hochwassers

The myth of resilience: The case of the 2002 flood (Germany)

Durchfluss am Pegel Golzern (m³/sec) von 1911 bis 2003

The myth of resilience: The case of the 2002 flood (Germany)

- City was evacuated;

- Employees of municipality separated; two camps, two interpretations

- Western camp: central emergency camp, organizing supply, deal with "flood of voluntary helpers", no previous knowledge on disaster management

- Eastern camp local disaster management experts; but not relevant during crisis

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The myth of resilience: The 2002 flood (Germany) as a 'radical surprise'

- 10 qualitative interviews with employees of the municipality affected by the 2002 flood;
- Highly institutionalized setting with clear responsibilities and roles;
- Probably never heard the term "resilience";
- Develop quite spontaneously a capacity that might be described with what Holling defines as the "myth of resilience";
- Myth of resilience describes a perspective on reality that takes *rapid changes* into account and "explicitly recognizes the *unknown* and the ability to survive and benefit from 'failures'"; it is a "property that allows a system to *absorb and utilize (or even benefit from) change*" (Holling 1978)

The myth of resilience: The 2002 flood (Germany) as a 'radical surprise'

Narrators made retrospectively sense of the radically surprising discovery of the entirely unknown situation by referring to

- Their capacity to deal with rapid and radical changes

  ⇒ Need for improvisation and reacting flexibly;

  ⇒ Adapt to a rapidly changing institutional environment;

  ⇒ Trustful face-to-face interaction;

- As well as their capacity to survive and even benefit from this change

  ⇒ Establish and consolidate a new order within the municipality;

  ⇒ Made career within the municipality and replaced their seniors (50 % of command personal was replaced).

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The myth of resilience: The 2002 flood (Germany) as a 'radical surprise'

The myth of resilience

- Was established as the only appropriate way of how the municipality dealt with the consequences of the flood;

- Appeared as the 'natural' way of dealing with a crisis;

- Enabled actors to connect their actions and interpretations with an overarching and unquestionable given set of principles (e.g. flexibility, adaptability);

- Actors representing this view enforced themselves as the `legitimate' actors, while those representing an alternative view were discriminated, defined as deviant and eventually downgraded

⇒ Construction of identity and "appropriate" behaviour

Talk and action: Urban climate change adaption in Vietnam

- Highly exposed to natural hazards and consequences of climate change; rapidly developing urban areas
- How to adapt to the consequences of climate change?
- Resilience terminology is spreading particularly in field of climate change adaptation; traditional command and control approach
- Why did resilience become so widely spread and what are the implications?

Garschagen (2011) *Natural Hazards, online first*

Talk and action: Urban climate change adaption in Vietnam

Organizations have to respond to demands and expectations of their environment to maintain legitimacy and ensure survival (Meyer and Rowan 1977)

- Resilience terminology particularly dominant where there is a salient link to international research and development projects;

⇒ gaining legitimacy (and funding) from international donors and scientific actors;

- less dominant in internal documents and policies

⇒ Targeting legitimacy from adhere to conventional political rhetoric and reinforce established command and control approach

⇒ Decoupling (Meyer and Rowan 1977): actual structures and procedures are not changed, while resilience terminology is taken up and propagated

Responsibilization and resilience: governing natural hazards in the UK

- From defense hazard management to a more inclusive risk management approaches;
- Emphasis on non-structural measures and the involvement of various public and private actors;
- Increasing responsibilization of private actors; attempts to define these actors as agents that need to take decisions and choices with regard to the prevention and mitigation of hazards.
- Which role plays the concept of "resilience" in this context?

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Responsibilization and resilience: governing natural hazards in the UK

The example of UK

- The term "resilience" can be found in various documents;

⇒ "Planning and Policy Statement 25 (PPS 25): Development and Flood Risk"

    ⇒ "*Flood-resilient* buildings are designed to reduce the consequences of flooding and facilitate recovery from the effects of flooding sooner than conventional buildings" (p45)

    ⇒ Local *Resilience* Forum

⇒ "Appraisal of flood risk and coastal erosion risk management" (DEFRA 2009)

    ⇒ Flood Risk Management: How can risks be best managed? Would it be better to reduce the probability, the impacts, or both? Through engineered solutions, through land management, better forecasting and warnings, through improved *resilience* etc?

Responsibilization and resilience: governing natural hazards in the UK

Responsibilization and resilience

- Governments continue to set flood policy but at the same time seeks to shift responsibility for costs and actions to other segments of society (Watson et al. 2009);

- Resilience a quite "convincing" world view (Berkes 2007)

  ⇒ *learning* to live with change and uncertainties
  ⇒ creating opportunity for *self-organization*

Why now?

- A response to contemporary sense of uncertainty and insecurity? (Christopherson et al. 2010)

⇒ Also: An ideology that puts an emphasis on individual actors and *their* capacities; demands for learning, adapting and get themselves organized

The dark side of resilience: Some concluding remarks

Governing through resilience

⇒ Analysis focuses on managerial and administrative practices centering around ideas of resilience;

⇒ How are individuals, organizations or societies *governed* by the idea of resilience?

⇒ What are the implications if "resilience" becomes an organizing concept in contemporary societies?

• Within organizations
• For organizations and their institutional environment
• For entire societies

The dark side of resilience: Some concluding remarks

Governing through resilience

- Within organizations
⇒ Not only capacity; may also become a powerful
legitimation defining not only appropriate and deviant
behavior but also allowing the construction of a strong
group identity

- For organizations and their institutional environment
⇒ Decoupling of talk and action; using resilience terminology
to gain legitimacy while still operating traditionally

- For entire societies
⇒ Demanding for changing status quo; but may reinforce
the status quo by offering an legitimation
for the responsibilization of private actors with its
emphasis on learning and self-organization

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