Article

The Social Constructedness of Resilience

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Abstract: This essay aims to clarify what it means to de-essentialize the concept of "resilience". Pre-determined assumptions regarding its normativity or positive character are to be disproven in order to conceptualize it as an open (social) process; thus to adopt a social constructivist perspective on the phenomenon to which this term refers, while avoiding the typical pitfalls of relativism.

Keywords: resilience; social construction; relevance; perspectivity; relativism; temporality; normality; power

1. Introduction

The multidisciplinary discourse of and about "resilience" has achieved considerable prominence [1–3]. We find the term being used in a variety of ways and with a diverse array of meanings in numerous scientific, professional and even everyday contexts. Professional actors "observe" phenomena through a conceptual apparatus centered on resilience; academic disciplines, meanwhile, use this concept to "observe" both the everyday, professional (practicing therapists, pedagogues, psychologists) and political uses of the concept ("the jargon of resilience"), as well as scrutinizing academic perspectives that deploy the term. When looking at how the term "resilience" is typically used, it is striking that it (1) has a markedly positive charge (the resilience of "x" is good, desirable, *etc.*); that it (2) implies both a supposedly clear knowledge about what is to count as a threat, *etc.*, as well as what should be regarded as an appropriate approach and objective (within the framework of the management of resilience) and that (3) alongside a starting point taken as unambiguously fixed, the term also implies an equally obvious endpoint of a process. The argument of the present essay is that, for sociological

purposes, we need to revise this normative, conceptual and temporal character [4]. This is mostly identifiable in the current uses of the concept of resilience, particularly, though not exclusively in the therapeutic, pedagogical and (developmental) psychological literature [5–7]. Hence, this essay seeks to highlight and discuss a number of conceptual problems and questions associated with a social constructivist reorientation of research on resilience to sociological ends. In the following considerations, I consistently refer to resilience as an (interpretive) perspective. The paper starts with some remarks introducing the social construction perspective (2), which consequently leads to the sociology of the knowledge approach analyzing the current prominence of the resilience concept (3). I will then introduce a heuristic, which can help to develop a sociologically-viable concept of resilience (4), and add some concluding remarks on the three-part research task for which a sociology of resilience should strive (5).

2. Preliminary Remarks: Social Construction Perspective

In what direction do the following reflections point us when they underline the social constructivist character of "resilience"? What does this emphasis mean beyond the simple fact of perspectivity, beyond the various aspects of the concept of resilience that are accentuated in different social situations and its differing manifestations within them? What are we asking about when referring to the historicity and constructedness of "x"? Specifically and with respect to the case that is to be discussed here: what are we asking about, or which conceptual aspects are we emphasizing, when we foreground the social constructivist character of the concept of "resilience" with respect to every instance of its usage?

Generally speaking, a social constructivist approach to examining social reality, in other words to understanding and explaining it, is geared towards this reality's constitutive relationship to, and constitutive interrelationship with, certain interpretations, ideas and conceptions [1]. This perspective functions on the assumption that when constructivist authors talk about social reality, they always investigate it partly as a result of the beliefs and insights of individuals and "collective" interpretive models, just as social reality in this sense is also a topic and object of everyday conversations. This means that what social "units" (individuals, groups, associations, societies, *etc.*) comprehend and in some cases communicate as "their view of things" (or what can be reconstructed as such on the basis of their actions and words) depends on their specific situation and their specific interpretation of this situation and the expressive options (objectively) available to them. Varying criteria of social rationality are mobilized in this context [11], whose plausibility and potential for legitimation can be gleaned reconstructively from the interpretive schemes characteristic of a particular group or sociocultural epoch.

In research, a social constructivist approach is necessarily beholden to a comparative perspective. This methodological perspective compares "something" with a view toward "something" else; in other words, its observation of difference is only possible against the background of a reference to something allegedly "identical" or against the background of a reference to another "something" in light of which or in comparison with which the "something" or the other "somethings" can appear as specifically socially-constructed and, thus, as different. This recourse to an antecedent comparative reference point, which can inevitably prove its value only through subsequent empirical analysis, constitutes an imperishable epistemological circularity, one that distinguishes an analytical social constructivist

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[1]   Classical sociological reference: [8]. As for our current topic, see, for example: [9,10].

perspective as a continuous process, while at the same time underscoring this perspective's relationship to the object that helps constitute it [2].

Beyond a specifically sociological analysis of social reality, it can by now surely be considered both quotidian and scientific common sense that the various interpretations that arise, in other words the processes of coding and recoding resilience (or social phenomena from a resilience point of view), are dependent on attention structures and expectational horizons among the actors who adopt these perspectives in any given case, that is on their social situation. A sociological analysis that examines the concept of resilience from a social constructivist perspective, according to my view, should therefore scrutinize (1) the socio-historical genesis of this concept; (2) the typical groups of agents who use it; (3) the temporal-spatial parameters of its use; (4) the ideas or key concepts alluded to (or not) to explain resilience perspectives; and (5) the conceptual apparatus used (or not) on the basis of these ideas or key notions. The following remarks challenge a number of what I think reckon to be crucial conceptual issues for the kind of empirical studies that will be central here.

As an observational category, the social constructedness of resilience is itself a multilayered phenomenon. If we want to be systematic, it is important to analyze this phenomenon with respect to the relationship between knowledge (as an interpretive resource) and spatial structures [13], social structures [14] and temporal structures. However, it seems particularly important here to reflect upon time. This relates to the time prior to disruptive events (*ex ante*), and thus, the question of what societies (social units) identify as potential vulnerabilities and threats and as associated options for coping, adaptation and transformation [15–17], how or why they regard this resilience as relevant and what is regarded as the resilient unit, the "core" that must be preserved, in other words the reference point of measures intended to achieve resilience [18]. Examination of time also, and from the same angle, relates to processes and situations in the wake of disruptive events. In particular, it concerns the period following disruptive events (*ex post*), during which there is a reflexive focus on the perspectives on "resilience" (and the measures introduced in an attempt to achieve it) that have *de facto* proven historically impactful and effective. Furthermore, significant here are the consequences, side-effects and, in some cases, paradoxical effects of processes formerly interpreted as relating to the "production" of resilience, effects that come into focus as a function of the temporal horizons of observation.

To call for sociological research in order to take a fundamentally social constructivist approach is by no means to endorse a relativistic sociology of knowledge; this is an important point given recent discussions within the sociology of science and recurrent critiques emanating from objective hermeneutics [12,19]. The interpretive models introduced or harnessed to identify resilience come up against their limits first through internal-situational standards of appropriateness or criteria of plausibility and second, spanning situations, through categories' constitutive rule-like characters. Oevermann refers here to "universal rules not amenable to material criticism" that generate sense or meaning [12]. Current discussions on the monetary policies of the European Central Bank provide a graphic illustration of this difference. Various commentators have discussed whether the flooding of European markets with Euros serves to stabilize the Eurozone or whether it is in fact failing to do so. Evidently, this is in the first instance a question of the temporal horizon in which one aims to answer this question (in

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[2] The same argument appears in Oevermann's systematic reflections on the methodological classification of a social constructivist perspective [12].

analogy to the question of the soundness or success and side-effects of the Federal Reserve's monetary policy at the beginning of the financial crisis). However, beyond this, it is a question of the criteria used to assess the quality of this monetary policy. Inevitably, this assessment entails intuitive judgements about what "essentially holds together" societies that are or will be affected by this policy; about how these societies and their internal structures either ensure or do not ensure a decent existence for those affected. Such assessments or the grounds for such assessments (which are not explicitly discussed) incorporate dimensions of implicit knowledge or practical consciousness, or even intuitive elegance, that are nothing less than constitutive rules a là John Searle [20]. Therefore, from a sociological point of view, a social constructionist perspective is needed in resilience research in order to overcome its common normative, teleological and objective research perspective.

3. The Prominence of Resilience: A Sociology of Knowledge Perspective

Among other things, concepts and their uses document dominant aspects of societies' self-perception. The general observational climate is one in which terms such as insecurity, risk (which can be predicted or calculated only to a limited extent and is largely uncontrollable), danger, threat, hazard, uncertainty, crisis and disaster play a key role (or have played it for a good twenty-five years and will likely continue to do so). It is thus evidently no longer sustainability and/or progress or development that function as things to avoid or strive for, but rather phenomena that inform widely-propagated strategies for dealing with dangers, hazards or disasters; it is increasingly the concept of resilience. Those authors who have brought new spheres of society into the concept's remit aim, for example, to foster resilient organizations and resilient types of democracy, while books on how to achieve and foster individual resilience as a means of resisting the imponderables and abysses of life sell like hot cakes. The question thus arises as to what is understood by resilience, by whom, in which contexts and to what extent this empirically-demonstrable shift in key communicative currencies expresses more profound changes, for example, in typical societal interpretations of social relations and of the social awareness of the consciousness of time.

Why are various agents using the tool of "resilience" to describe, interpret and decide what to do? What does the evidently increased appeal of the concept of "resilience" consist of? Are there aspects "in the nature of the beast" that reveal the concept's current resonance as more than a fashionable phenomenon and render it comprehensible? What are the contours of the interpretive model of "resilience", that is which structures of self- and world observation or interpretation can be reconstructively identified as aspects of this concept or model?

On the one hand, within society as a whole, key prerequisites for the (no longer quite so contemporary) career of the concept of resilience within the widest variety of scientific, professional, political and other discourses probably lie in the growing tendency, towards the end of the twentieth century, to reflect on the internal history of violence and destruction characteristic of the Western type of modernity. On the other hand, they lie in the parallel need to pay attention to the primarily scientifically- and technologically-generated scenarios outlining the extent of threats and damage (interpreted in terms of complexity theory), scenarios also generated within modernity [21–26]. This dual reflexive movement sets in motion a progressive process of sociocultural unsettling.

In line with this, the background to the career enabled by the concept of "resilience" for a number of years, including in the social scientific context, is a specific hallmark of (Western) modernity and the place of the human beings within the framework of this constellation: acting and interpreting are to be found constitutively in the "mode of fundamental uncertainty" [27]. Various authors have identified a disenchantment of all cultural certainties and associated losses and pluralizations of criteria (loss of orientational, as well as ontological security). Others have diagnosed the dissolution of linearities of practical action, the associated multiplication of the simultaneous and of the perceived pressure of acceleration (loss of time for action). These are the interpretive cornerstones of a practice of living that is increasingly conceptualized as onerous. There are also communicative uncertainties: metanarratives' diminishing relevance not only imposes significant obstacles in the way of all practices of legitimation, but intrinsically bound up with this are central factors in the dynamization of sociocultural interpretive resources, due among other things to countervailing processes and claims of rationalization. In this sense, the prominence of the concept of resilience may articulate a "new culture of uncertainty" that has bid farewell to the notion that it is in principle possible to achieve total security or controllability ([28], p. 65; [29], pp. 19, 29).

However, what is the relationship and what are the interactions between the concept of resilience and other concepts and terms found in recent societal self-descriptions? Here, we must surely ask in what respects and to what degree of importance certain concepts share such things as semantic aspects or key ideas with the concept of resilience or are incorporated into it. On the one hand, this involves concepts, such as those of endangerment or threatenedness, risk, crisis, disaster, but also prevention and sustainability, which are essentially a reaction to social and societal dimensions of the challenges specific to modernity. On the other hand, it also applies to concepts such as that of vulnerability, activation, empowerment, flexibility, creativity or (life-long) learning, which predominantly respond to the individual, subjective side of the modernity-specific hallmarks of the contemporary era [17,30].

Overall, however, the conceptualizations of resilience that are being deployed primarily have yet to address specific problems, namely how the various challenges (described as disruptive and identified as threats to survival) are being dealt with in particular cases (that is, which strategies are being deployed and which practices are proving conducive to resilience) and which resources of a wide array of different kinds are (or can be) deployed, such that the survival of a given social unit (or its "function", "structure", "feedbacks" and/or "identity") is or might be preserved [15,31].

If we attempt a typological approximation, we can distinguish descriptive-analytical uses of the concept and pronounced normative-interventionist understandings. Descriptive empirical perspectives limit themselves to the descriptive recording of what they view as *ex post* "empirical expressions" of resilience; in other words, their impact. Interventionist perspectives, in contrast, seek to conceptualize an ideal form of a given resilient unit *ex ante* in order to then formulate guides to achieving a state of resilience. In both cases, then, we find that "resilience" is currently being debated as an objective of unquestioned validity given the challenges faced by both subjects and forms of sociality. By way of contrast, the present contribution advocates comprehending resilience as an analytical perspective on social units or phenomena that examines when, by whom and to what extent (in other words, through recourse to which key ideas and criteria of rationality) something is regarded, or is, or was communicated as threatened, or vulnerable, or at risk with respect to specific social units or phenomena. We would then have to examine how a particular interpretation becomes or became established in this way or

how a relevant interpretation of the situation that has taken hold sets or set in motion particular processes of social action [3]. In the following, I will try to present an analytical framework for such a research agenda.

4. Normative Neutrality, Temporality, Perspectivity and Power

For the reasons set out above, if we want to develop a sociologically-viable concept of resilience, in contrast to the common use of the concept in pedagogy, individual and personality psychology and therapeutic contexts [5–7], as well as in social ecology [1,15,29,33–35], but also in contradistinction to the ways in which political science [36,37] has taken up the concept, our goal must be to (1) adopt a normatively neutral perspective; (2) pay attention to the structural logic of reflection that ensues from the use of a concept of resilience; (3) conceive of changes examined empirically in any given case as processually open; and (4) take account of the agonal dimension, that is to include issues of power or interpretive sovereignty, since the concept of resilience is interpreted in a variety of ways that operate with differing references (postulates of relevance) and differing hierarchies of relevance.

4.1. Normative Neutrality

In the first instance, it is hardly surprising if a resilience perspective entails a normative reference point. If we work on the assumption of objectively existing vulnerabilities and dangers and of target states that are also objectively identifiable or (social) conditions that are regarded as desirable, as manifested for example in objectives such as security, health or, more generally, social "well-being", then we are confronted with resilience as a condition, or resistance, and they go hand-in-hand with a perspective that envisages saving all that which is identified as under threat. When it comes to the analytical interests of sociological enquiry, however, we must fundamentally question this perspective. A sociology-of-knowledge and social constructivist approach to resilience must inevitably relativize normative certainties with respect to their historicity or their dependence on specific temporal, spatial and social contexts and the parameters of their genesis, in other words contextualize them (without, as hinted earlier, endorsing relativistic arguments).

The problem of the normativity of resilience approaches is evident in more concrete form when we look at the prominent notions of the resistance and survival of existing entities, which draw, among other things, on (normatively charged) ideas of normality and functionality and are therefore attacked for being structurally conservative [4]. Though such a critique must be qualified since contemporary concepts of resilience, in contrast to a simplistic concept of "engineering resilience", begin their analyses with not one, but multiple stable states [15,31], these concepts still tend to view the preservation of the (normatively) assumed identity of a threatened social entity as a positive goal, which means they (must) consider comprehensive, and especially disruptive, social changes as something that ought in principle to be avoided. This immanence of normativity in the approaches to resilience that have dominated so far underlines the general need to revise these contributions with a view toward including a resilience perspective in the sociological debate and theory building.

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[3] One of these interpretations then proceeds to identify a process of neoliberalization: see [32].

[4] Joseph: "The conservative ontology behind this" ([32], p. 43).

From a sociological angle, every concept of resilience and every perspective on resilience must be considered structurally ambivalent in normative terms. Sociologists can neither distinguish a particular form of resilience and, thus, specific target states as normatively positive regardless of historical era, nor can they privilege specific measures that lead to or preserve this particular form as timelessly valid. Additionally, this is applied in both respects simply because of the substantial historicity of that which is marked out as normatively valid at a given point in social history.

4.2. Temporality

When we turn to the analysis of time, we can then discern a peculiar feature of the logical structure of reflections on the concept of resilience: this structure is paradoxical in the sense that for social units, the definition of resilience can only ever be identified and formulated on an *ex post* basis, in other words their capacity to withstand certain situations that have proven threatening can only be established retrospectively, yet in considering the resilience of social units, certain resources must always inevitably be identifiable or identified *ex ante* as conducive to resilience. At the same time, within a particular era, something is always discerned or identified as a danger, as a threat or challenge to the survival of a social unit, with respect to which, in the past, this social unit pursued measures (actions, strategies) regarded as tried-and-tested or valued in order to secure a desired (hoped-for, routinely expected) future and repulse these threats.

In brief: In retrospect (*ex post*), something may have proven resilient of which actors previously (*ex ante*) had no awareness. Indeed, that they may have had no awareness of an "object" of possible resilience or could have had no awareness of such due to the observational perspectives that were objectively available to them in the past.

As a consequence, every sociological analysis of resilience that entails a constitutive historical perspective must attempt to identify an identitarian "center of gravity" that is continually developing in view of current challenges arising from processes of change; and must therefore itself be understood as a process. This is a center of gravity that we must in a sense conceptualize as a self-processing (temporal) core of identity, in order to clarify our analytical point of reference within the research process itself [5].

4.3. Perspectivity

It is also crucial to pursue and fortify this processual perspective, which views resilience as not absolutely present and as a historically "open question", in other words as ongoing, in the context of a sociological analysis of social resilience that continues to reflexively ensure the historicity of its "object" and the historicity of its own observations. This processually open perspective, which is geared towards the perspective-dependency and level or layer relativity of social resilience, has already been addressed in a basic way in the models of the "adaptive (renewal) cycle" and of panarchy within socio-ecological research [34,35,38,39]. This, however, has not reached an adequate level for the purposes of sociological analysis.

The specific problems that ensue from this perspective (a vital tool for sociologists if they wish to be historically aware and sensitive to context) are clearly apparent in the difficulties involved in

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[5]   For a first attempt to discuss this issue in dialogue with classic sociological contributions, see [18].

determining the so-called "resilient unit" that forms the focus of analysis in a given case. This is because the identificatory core of a social unit, which is central to a given analysis depending on its observational stance and is comprehended as worth preserving or protecting, constitutes this unit in the first place. The question of the perspective that is associated (*ex ante*) with a resilience concept for a particular social unit, and with the resilience strategies that are mobilized to protect it, is beholden to the identificatory core that has been singled out in order to define it. Therefore, regardless of problems that arise from the concurrence of resilience perspectives that enjoy formal analytical equality with respect to a social unit, what we must keep in mind is that when the identificatory core, with respect to which a social unit is discussed, shifts in the course of the historical process, the resilience perspective also necessarily shifts; and once again, on an *ex post* basis.

At this point, we again see the significance of highlighting the structural ambivalence of resilience. What this means here is that, first, an increase in the adaptability of a social unit at point in time t_1 may result in a reduction in its resilience at a point in time t_2 (as a result, among other things, of potential side-effect dynamics), and that resilience cannot be reduced to prevention and precaution [17]. Second, highlighting this structural ambivalence means that very different resilience perspectives (may) arise depending on the "core" that is regarded as worth preserving and protecting against threats. In other words, resilience is a perspectival phenomenon; and in general terms, both aspects imply the problematization, if not renunciation, of teleological analyses that assume clear-cut causalities. Therefore, from a sociological standpoint, we must pay attention to processes of resilient existence-preservation, as well as the negative consequences of (objectively) failed strategies of resilience. In concrete terms, this means that (empirical) analyses must take account of side-effects in the sense of unforeseen, unforeseeable and even ignored effects of actions; discern paradoxes in as much as the direct pursuit of specific goals can make the achievement of these goals less likely; and pay attention to contradictions and processes that (objectively) contradict one another, in other words track processes whose objectives clash [40,41].

As cautious as we must be when delving into historical research fields, we may perhaps illuminate this analytical trope of structural ambivalence (particularly when making recourse to various temporal layers of historical processes) in connection with innovations undertaken by Charlemagne in order to secure his power. Over the course of centuries, the perpetuation of these innovations generated a pronounced destabilizing dynamic for structures of power. As the successor to Clovis I, Charlemagne tried to secure the Francia that emerged under the former around 500 BC, 300 years later, by creating a new form of political rule, vassalage, which involved granting his followers estates along with the peasants living on the associated territories on a loaned basis ("fee"; Latin: *feudum*). This innovation, which can be understood as a strategy of resilience, initially ensured stability for the empire through the profound loyalty and binding force that it generated. As this system was perpetuated over time, however, it not only generated primogeniture, but also a dynamic of hierarchization that led to a complex system of subvassals, with serfs at the bottom end of the status pyramid (lacking the status of person). This development in turn had substantial destabilizing effects.

4.4. Power

What this shows is that any sociological research program on the resilience of a sociology-of-knowledge and social constructivist tenor must be rounded off by exploring which (social, communicative) constructions, perceptions, interpretations and knowledge stocks gained currency within a particular (social, field-specific) discourse, in other words which achieved interpretive force within society and how this occurred. What we need to investigate are the social fields, professional contexts and institutions in which concepts of resilience are enforced and various programs of action are propagated and implemented using these concepts. In addition, we must scrutinize those groups of agents who make it their business to (re-)code resilience and to flag up their interests under the banner of resilience.

These programs may include those within the fields of ecology, health and self-help, as well as the fields of security, social or urban policy. To flesh out what this means for studies mindful of the insights above, we can point, for example, to debates that understand and criticize resilience, chiefly through the prism of theories of governmentality, as a new form of neoliberal government [6]. At issue here is the (seemingly paradoxical) shift and attribution of responsibility to subjects (responsibilization) in a context marked by (generally unforeseeable) side-effect dynamics. The corresponding techniques of power are frequently flanked by (ultimately cynical) attempts to label such allocations of responsibility as forms of "empowerment".

To sum up, sociological research on resilience, which is aware of the normative neutrality, the temporality, the constitutive perspectivity, as well as of the unavoidable power-relatedness of the concept of resilience, will manage to conceptualize the phenomena in question as an open socio-historical processes. Thus, a constructionist concept of resilience can serve as a new analytical perspective to identify former, as well as current social processes, which societies and social constellations undergo in historical change.

5. Conclusions

What follows from the foregoing remarks on the social construction of "resilience"? Any sociological analysis of the use of the concept of "resilience" in contemporary societies and any attempt to sound out its analytical potential for sociological studies should take on an at least a three-part research task that can be differentiated analytically. It must (1) study the genealogy (the "career") of the concept from a sociology-of-knowledge and sociology-of-science perspective in everyday, professional, socio-political and scientific-disciplinary contexts—since when [42], where, by whom and how is the concept of resilience used here—and it must (2) examine the relevance ascribed to the concept of "resilience" in these contexts with a view toward analyzing it from a societal or social perspective: relevance that is articulated against the background of increasing communication (on the level of an expressive repertoire) about social insecurity, uncertainty, a sense of threat, among other things, because of the observed side-effects of scientific-technological civilization and cultural constellations understood as other. Additionally, it must examine (3) the resonance that follows from the identifiable genealogy and ascribed relevancies of the concept of "resilience" for this interpretive perspective, a

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[6] Especially Joseph [32].

resonance generated by the interpretive power or interpretive sovereignty of the actors enforcing this perspective in view of the associated potential for structuring and restructuring experiences and expectations. All three aspects are due to an evidently changed societal perception of problems, which endows conceptual "fashions", changed relevancies and, thus, other interpretations with societal efficacy (interpretive sovereignty).

What are the implications and consequences of the reflections above for the design of sociological studies on resilience from a pragmatic research perspective? What we must analyze are the ideas or key ideas and interpretive models on which actors draw to identify all of the phenomena that become relevant within the conceptual framework of resilience or with respect to it. This applies to described vulnerabilities and threats to survival, as well as to those professional actors (such as therapists and advisers) who place themselves on the agenda of resilience with respect to the potential for action to which they lay claim and those resources that, for example, are articulated for certain social spaces and/or social entities. We must investigate the impacts and the formative potential of (key) ideas, interpretive models and the criteria of rationality that are deployed within their framework in the wake of processes and strategies of resilience and with respect to resources of resilience.

For theoretical and empirical studies, the terms "ideas" and "key ideas" comprise the investigation of the social relevance of legal, literary, religious, societal or (socio-)political semantics and interpretations. In concrete terms, we may be dealing here with individual and collective (socio-spatially specific) self-descriptions and self-constructs (in the sense of models of affiliation and identification), actors' structures of expectation and meaning or specific political, legal, aesthetic, religious, scientific and professional legitimizations, for example of strategies and programs.

In this sense, a social constructivist investigative perspective on this phenomenon must also analyze the perspectival shift frequently associated with the current dominance of the concept of resilience as analytical foil. In the same vein, we must also question, for example, whether and, if so, to what extent we can identify the concept of sustainability shifting away towards that of resilience and whether such a shift may indicate a move away from an (activist) category geared towards future potential to shape the world (sustainability) towards a more (passivist) category geared towards tried-and-tested elements of the past and constellations worth protecting (resilience). However, beyond such a material definition, we must first recognize that the concept of resilience is deployed to observe phenomena that are regarded as under threat with respect to their plasticity, in other words with respect to the malleability that has facilitated their "survival" or has the potential to do so.

Every reference to the social construction of "x", however justifiable it may be from a methodological point of view, must nonetheless remain "empty" as long as it has yet to be verified through empirical studies that can demonstrate differing group-, context- and situation-specific codings of "resilience". For the empirical investigation of (key) ideas and interpretive models, our analyses are guided by a dual perspective in the sense that, on the one hand, ideas function reflexively as descriptive repertoire and interpretive resources facilitative of coping, adaptation and transformation and must be investigated; yet on the other hand, ideas just as reflexively facilitate the identification of resilience, vulnerabilities, resilience processes, resources and strategies in the first place, in other words constitute them.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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