Beyond liberal governance? Resilience as a field of transition

Peter Finkenbusch[1]

Abstract

According to governmentality studies, resilience, like any other neoliberal policy framework, reproduces a paternalising dichotomy between capable Northern policy elites and incapable Southern actors. In contrast to this popular governmentality reading, this article argues that resilience thinking is actually geared towards critiquing international policy expertise and the privileged knowledge position of international interveners. Rather than imposing particular policy options from the top down, resilience thinking actively seeks out vernacular, non-liberal forms of governing. However, the drive to critique domineering neoliberal policy initiatives does not usher in a post-liberal paradigm. Instead, this article demonstrates how resilience works as a field of transition on which the retreat from liberal forms of governing is mediated discursively without giving up entirely on the notion of normative, law-based security. These insights are drawn out with reference to crime-related US security interventions in the Americas.

Keywords Governmentality · Latin America · Neo-liberalism · Resilience · Security governance

Introduction

This article argues that contemporary resilience thinking is best understood as a field of transition in which liberal forms of governing are problematised, but not entirely overcome. The main argument is that as a policy paradigm in practice resilience fails to fully overcome liberal legacies of governing. It seems as if the reason why this transition is incomplete is that Northern policy actors remain external to the processes of causation in the Global South and, hence, in a clearly visible governing position. The analysis starts off by working out how governmentality studies – i.e. those analyses that focus on normalising disciplinary rule and population-centred

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✉ Peter Finkenbusch
   ad0262@coventry.ac.uk

[1]   Lecturer in International Relations, Coventry University, Priory Street, Coventry CV1 5FB, UK

types of knowledge – have critiqued neoliberal governance approaches for their implicit hierarchy, instrumentality and normativity. Drawing on the work of Tania Murray Li on the 'will to improve' in Indonesia, the first section describes how neoliberal ownership discourse assigns transformative agency to the intervened while also seeing local actors as in need of outside enabling care (Li 2007). Neoliberal policy approaches posit that technical, one-size-fits-all solutions are inappropriate for solving local governance problems and that, instead, local actors need to be in the 'driver's seat'. At the same time, however, they depict local actors and their cultural practices as inherently deficient and out-of-tune with liberal norms, such as human rights, good governance and the rule of law. That is, while foregrounding local creativity and agency, neoliberal policy approaches intend to ensure a set of liberal governance standards. Their engagement with the local is purely instrumental. What is at stake in neoliberal governance is the inculcation of market discipline and responsible citizenship. Local social practices are merely a medium or resource through which liberal social forms are meant to be imposed.

Importantly, governmentality authors argue that the recently emerging resilience discourse is reproducing this hierarchy, instrumentality and normativity. A good example, here, is the work of Jonathan Joseph on resilience as 'embedded neo-liberalism' (Joseph 2013). According to Joseph, resilience policy is ultimately about instilling market discipline and responsibilising the individual through a focus on local adaptability. This is a valuable and empirically grounded critique. For instance, it captures well how mainstream policy discourse on US security interventions in the Americas allocates responsibility for effective and legitimate governance to the governed themselves (see Olson et al. 2014).

However, as the third section demonstrates, current resilience thinking seems to be geared towards overcoming this liberal legacy of governing. In a much-discussed policy report on 'Resilience in Situations of Chronic Violence', leading Latin Americanist and Harvard professor Diane Davis describes resilience as the real-world practices which local communities have already adopted in reaction to growing insecurity (Davis 2012). For Davis, resilience is about the way in which local communities are always already coping in difficult situations. Here, resilience refers to an emergent and diverse set of real-world adaptive practices, rather than to an academic concept. In this view, idiosyncratic local practices are considered more productive than hierarchically imposed artificial policy concepts. This appreciation of actually existing social practices seems to echo David Chandler's post-liberal reading of resilience (Chandler 2014b). Real-world creativity seems to constantly outsmart the artificial constructions of top-down policy approaches. Life seems to trump liberal modernist artifice. From this vantage point, pursuing instrumental policy goals is dangerous and ineffective. Policy priorities may only ever emerge from the context itself. Importantly, although resilience thinking in the context of US security interventions in the Americas is increasingly reflecting this empiricist governance ethos, it does not supersede normative governance completely. As Davis emphasises, there can also be 'negative resilience', i.e. problematic local practices and dynamics (Davis 2012: 105). In this way, resilience retains a rudimentary hierarchy, instrumentality and normativity. There is still a normative judgment on the outcomes of real-life practices. And there is also still a set of normative aspirations.

Thus, resilience is best described as a field of transition on which liberal notions of how to govern are rendered problematic, but not completely overcome.

By taking an empirically informed view focusing on a concrete resilience discourse, this study goes beyond blanket claims of resilience being *either* neoliberal *or* post-liberal. While Jeremy Walker and Melinda Cooper (2011) have famously worked out the ideological fit between resilience and neoliberal policy episteme, this article avoids the knee-jerk reaction of critiquing resilience as yet-another manifestation of neoliberal governance (Anderson 2015; Grove 2018). Instead, this study understands resilience as a discursive field in which (neo)liberal policy aspirations and modes of governing are negotiated and problematised. The view of resilience as a field of transition in which (neo)liberal governance is problematised, but not fully overcome, allows for a more nuanced understanding of resilience-in-practice as a hybrid policy discourse encompassing both neoliberal *and* post-liberal elements.

This finding complements more recent research by Jonathan Joseph and Ana Juncos on the place of the European Union (EU) in the resilience turn (Joseph and Juncos 2019; see Edmunds and Juncos 2019). As Joseph and Juncos point out, the EU's shift to a neo-liberal resilience paradigm remains incomplete due to divergent institutional interests within the EU's bureaucratic apparatus and between different member states as well as a strong liberal legacy in the EU's legitimising discourse. In the case of US security interventions in the Americas, we can see a similar liberal heritage. While the resilience discourse is clearly more open to idiosyncratic local practices than traditional neoliberal empowerment schemes[1] (see, for example, Walker and Salt 2006, 2012), US security initiatives in the War on Drugs, at least in Mexico, remain firmly rooted in normative liberal notions of the rule of law, good governance and human rights. The high political stakes involved in the War on Drugs in the Americas seem to militate against the adoption of a radical post-liberal approach by US policymakers and their organic intellectuals. As an immediate geographical neighbour of the United States and an OECD country, there are limits to the extent that local experimentation and self-organisation in Mexico may deviate from established (neo)liberal policy aspirations and modes of governing. This study contributes to the existing academic literature on resilience by pointing towards the politically contested and, hence, fragmented nature of the shift towards post-liberalism. While the resilience discourse clearly celebrates local agency and the fallacy of all abstract policy thinking, the case of US security interventions in Mexico demonstrates that the rise of post-liberal resilience is politically contested and might merely be a heuristic device.

Neoliberal ownership: hierarchical, instrumental and normative

Governmentality studies have greatly contributed to our understanding of international policy interventions (Duffield 2007; Abrahamsen 2000; Zanotti 2005). In particular, they have demonstrated convincingly how neoliberal ownership discourses

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[1] I would like to thank Reviewer 2 for this comment.

are actually meant to embed competitive market logics and Weberian notions of statehood. A good example is the work of Tania Murray Li on the 'will to improve' in Indonesia. Murray Li argues that at the heart of neoliberal participation there lies a paradox: while neoliberal participation schemes purport to merely resuscitate or enable the already existing practices and discourses, local communities are seen as in need of outside betterment. According to Murray Li, the starting point of neoliberal ownership initiatives is the view that 'authentic, capable communities still exist, or can be restored' (Murray Li 2007: 246). Only if local capacity already exists can international policy experts 'position themselves as midwives, assisting the birth-to-presence of natural communities, rather than as ethnocentric outsiders imposing their views' (ibid.). Neoliberal ownership policies promise an engagement with authentic ways of living, while seeing them as in need of outside enabling care. International experts suggest a social transformation which is 'simultaneously the return to authentic, Indonesian ways and the realisation of expert design. Natural communities […] require […] expert attention to make them complete' (ibid.: 267). In this way, neoliberal empowerment is actually a rather hierarchical enterprise in which international policy experts 'occupy the position of trustees, a position defined by the claim to know how others should live, to know what is best for them, to know what they need' (ibid.: 4). The key issue here is the domineering position of international interveners – 'a set of authorities who claim […] to know how best to arrange landscapes and livelihoods' (ibid.: 123). Neoliberal ownership schemes harness local practices and discourses instrumentally for a predefined purpose. As Murray Li argues, neoliberal forms of governing refer 'frequently to participation, but how villagers would participate and to what ends was predefined' (ibid.: 132). The outcome of the process is 'determined in advance' (ibid.: 209). Even when international interveners claim to learn from local actors, they usually 'position […] themselves as experts who [know] the optimal forms that empowerment should take' (ibid.: 267). What takes the place of genuinely autochthonous policy initiatives is a disciplinary and normalising governance apparatus. Local ownership becomes a technique of governing, a 'tool […] to educate the desires of villagers and reform their practices' (ibid.: 196). Rather than being an expression of local interests and ways of living, neoliberal civil society is a 'thing to be designed and promoted' (ibid.: 236). It is rendered technical:

> Its components were listed and prioritized according to both moral criteria (what was to be supported or rejected) and instrumental ones – which components of civil society had the capacity to be effective in pursuit of specified ends. Experts devised techniques for improvement and set them out in detail, manual-style, complete with diagrams, lists, classificatory schemes, alternate strategies, and instructions. (Ibid.: 236)

At the heart of neoliberal policy interventions lies a notion of cultural, social and political deficits which need to be rectified with outside assistance. Throughout, there is a clear hierarchy which 'separates trustees from the people whose capacities need to be enhanced, or behaviours corrected' (ibid.: 278). For the purpose of this article, I shall refer to this hierarchical, instrumental and normative aspect of governance as liberal. Neoliberal forms of governing are liberal to the extent that they

revolve around a clear governing position of an outsider. Neoliberalism hinges on a contradictory or ambivalent relation between governors and the governed. While it is understood that legitimate and effective policy responses may only ever emerge from within society, it is equally clear that the core set normative preferences and modes of social interaction need to be imposed from the outside. As David Chandler puts it, although there is a discourse of local knowledge and ownership, 'the agenda is very much one in which enlightened Western interveners, equipped with the external subject position of liberal universalist understandings, attempt to transform the barrier of local cultural-social frameworks' (Chandler 2014b: 103).

US security interventions in the Americas clearly reflect this hierarchy, instrumentality and normativity. A good example is the 'Culture of Lawfulness' approach implemented by USAID and local partner NGOs. It starts by problematising local social practices as deviant from the rule of law. According to former US Under Secretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs, Paula Dobriansky (2004), lawlessness is often rooted in 'social norms and historic practices'. In these social conditions, narrowly conceived technical assistance is not enough. What is needed is a 'culture' or 'ethos sympathetic to the rule of law' (Godson 2000: 3, 2003: 271). External policy intervention needs to work on the 'widespread public perception that corruption is "normal"' (Godson 2003: 266). Rather than working superficially on the technical capabilities of law enforcement authorities, international intervention should focus on transforming 'historic social habits' (México Unido Contra la Delincuencia 2013: 3). Successful social transformation depends on developing 'psychosocial capacities' (ibid.). Thus, while the US Department of State is set on enhancing 'mechanisms to communicate and follow up on ideas and concerns from civil society' (US Department of State 2010: 14), this also involves 'educat[ing] the general populace on their […] responsibilities' as good citizens (US Department of State 2008). In short, neoliberal policy discourse engages with local civil society as the driver of legitimate and effective policy solutions while also problematising its 'way of life' (Velazquez 2011: 3). There is an ambivalent engagement with local actors in that international policy elites are intent on increasing citizen participation while at the same time recognising that citizens are not 'equipped' with the 'values and attitudes necessary to support a culture of legality' (México Unido Contra la Delincuencia 2013: 3). The 'culture of lawfulness' approach recognises that effective and legitimate policy solutions have to emerge from the bottom up while at the same time predefining the very parameters within which political discussion may take place. It puts interveners and the intervened into an overly hierarchical relation and relates to local agency in a purely instrumental way. As the next section shows, governmentality studies argue that resilience thinking reproduces this hierarchical, instrumental and normative thrust.

Resilience in governmentality studies

Governmentality studies see resilience as articulating a hierarchical, instrumental and normative governance ethos, similar to the classic neoliberal empowerment schemes detailed in the previous section. By way of example, we may briefly dwell

on the work of Jonathan Joseph on resilience as 'embedded neoliberalism' (Joseph 2013). Joseph claims that resilience 'is best understood as a neoliberal form of governmentality' (ibid.: 38). Like the neoliberal ownership policies of the 1990s and 2000s, resilience emphasises that 'people have to show their own initiative as active […] agents' (ibid.: 39). Importantly, while putting the focus on individual responsibility and local initiative, resilience actually reproduces 'hierarchical power relations' (ibid.: 41). That is because governmentality studies conceive of resilience as a set of disciplinary techniques of the self. Resilience is ultimately about making individuals 'govern themselves in appropriate ways' (ibid.). According to Joseph, the goal of resilience is to instil a sense of 'responsible decision making' (ibid.: 40; see Welsh 2014). The underlying desire of resilience approaches is to 'impos[e] "market discipline"' (Joseph 2013: 42). Resilience policies ultimately aim at 'disciplin[ing]' states, governments and elites (ibid.: 51). Like the ownership discourses described by Murray Li, resilience evidences a deeply 'paternalistic' governance ethos (ibid.: 42). Despite 'encourag[ing] the idea of active citizenship', resilience articulates a narrowly circumscribed range of choices (ibid.: 43). In the governmentality reading of resilience, there is clearly a hierarchical governance project. Rather than 'giving power back to civil society', resilience policy 'construct[s] a sphere of governance which it oversees from a distance' (ibid.: 44). What is at stake in resilience as a neoliberal form of governing is the active production of freedom (ibid.: 46; see also Dean 2007).[2] Similar to other neoliberal governance approaches, resilience thinking hinges upon a set of social, cultural and political deficits. As Joseph puts it, '[t]he whole issue concerning intervention is that deficiencies provide the justification for action' (Joseph 2013: 46). A similar governmentality argument on resilience emerges in the work of Mark Duffield on NGOs. According to Duffield (2007), NGOs and their focus on resilience are part of a totalising strategy of governing marginalised communities.[3] In sum, governmentality authors suggest a reading of resilience as deeply hierarchical, instrumental and normative.[4]

This hierarchical, instrumental and normative thrust is clearly evidenced in mainstream US security interventions in Mexico. Similar to traditional neoliberal policy approaches, like the 'Culture of Lawfulness' approach detailed above, the starting point of neoliberal resilience is that the community needs to be actively 'involved' in the 'reformation process' (Acevedo 2014: 244). The engagement with local communities, however, is purely instrumental. Local communities need to be 'enlist[ed]' or 'incorporat[ed]' into what appears to be a public-private partnership for security

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[2] Michel Foucault argued that the governed have to actively participate in the process of disciplinary rule (Foucault 1995).

[3] Importantly, Laura Zanotti has demonstrated that international governmentality has been regularly contested from below and that linear, causal conceptions of intervention do not adequately reflect the dynamics of international development and security practice (Zanotti 2019, 2011).

[4] In a recent co-authored article on the European Union, Joseph presents an analysis of resilience that goes beyond the governmentality critique (Joseph and Juncos 2019; see also Joseph 2018). The article demonstrates that the EU's approach to resilience is influenced by a strong identity as a universal, liberal actor. This would seem to be further empirical evidence for my argument that resilience is unable to transcend fully liberal forms of governance.

(ibid.: 255, 265). According to leading policy analysts Eric Olson, David Shirk and Duncan Wood, local communities have a 'vital role to play in holding government accountable and demanding that government function effectively' (Olson, Shirk and Wood 2014: 21). What needs to be harnessed is the local community's capacity to 'rebound and recover' from 'hazards, stresses and shocks' in a way that sustains the rule of law and good governance (ibid.: 10, 11). Resilience is really about 'unleashing the potential for collaboration' between citizens and state institutions (ibid.: 22; see also Ingram 2014). Resilience in the context of US security interventions in Mexico is about bridging the gap between state and civil responses to organised crime. As Olson, Shirk and Wood put it:

> Despite the deep gulf between policymakers and the community in designing and carrying out the state's public security strategy, important signs exist of citizen efforts to engage their authorities and demand greater effectiveness and accountability. (Ibid.: 15)

While talking up the capacity of local actors to recover and even strive in situations of chronic violence, mainstream resilience thinking in US-led security interventions in the Americas actually suggests a form of traditional neoliberal governance. The desire to 'strengthen and fully engage civil society' quickly turns into a call for society-enabled good governance and the rule of law (ibid.: 21). What is at stake is the 'coproduction' of security in which ordinary citizens play a 'more direct role [...] in monitoring and overseeing law enforcement agencies' (Sabet 2014: 245). What stands out from these empirical findings is that mainstream resilience thinking exhibits all the characteristics of hierarchical, instrumental and normative governance critiqued by governmentality studies. Behind the celebration of local adaptability lies a set of responsibilising disciplines (see Welsh 2014). However, as the next section elaborates, more innovative policy thinking on resilience tries to transcend this hierarchical, instrumental and normative tendency.

Beyond neo-liberal governmentality

When looking at more cutting-edge policy thinking on US security interventions in the Americas, the governmentality interpretation of resilience as hierarchical, instrumental and normative does not hold up. In fact, it would seem as if the central concern of resilience thinking is to overcome liberal legacies of governing. Rather than policing the imposition of good governance items, resilience is interested in the real-world practices of local communities. The work of leading Latin Americanist and Harvard professor Diane Davis exemplifies how resilience discourse critiques hierarchy, instrumentality and normativity. Instead of cultivating societal support for the rule of law or the correct form of civil society participation, resilience is interested in 'the ways ordinary people [...] cope with chronic urban violence' (Davis 2012: 9). Rather than being yet another abstract 'concept', resilience is actually about a 'dynamic reality which can be observed day by day' (US Agency of International Development and Secretaría de Gobernación 2015a: 14). In this more affirmative framing, resilience reflects 'the ways that actors and institutions at the level of the

community *actually* cope with or adapt to chronic urban violence' (Davis and Tirman 2012: 6, emphasis added). Here, resilience is no longer about conformity with liberal benchmarks, but about taking a 'more pragmatic approach' (Davis 2012: 29). It resembles a 'magician's sleight of hand' which 'redirects policy attention away from crime and violence per se, and towards the ways that […] the city itself [has] already responded to them' (ibid.: 30). In this framework, resilience has less of a problem-solving agenda. In fact, it becomes a new opportunity to 'learn from the trenches' (ibid.: 102). Innovative resilience thinking no longer attempts to reform ordinary citizens into law-abiding supporters of state-run security governance. Its starting point are the everyday practices and discourses of grassroots actors in situations of stress.

At the heart of this shift towards non-liberal governance – non-hierarchical, non-instrumental and non-normative – lies a transformed understanding of knowledge and the knowable. It revolves around 'an alternative way of generating knowledge about violence' (ibid.: 29). Instead of formalising abstract knowledge about the root causes of violence and insecurity, resilience knowledge is 'situate[d]' in the 'everyday-life world of urban residents and other local actors' (ibid.: 30). This 'grounded knowledge' is meant to be the 'basis of policy action' (ibid.: 29–30). In contrast to the hierarchical imposition of good governance and the rule of law, it would seem that the 'direction of causality' is inversed in avant-garde policy thinking on resilience (ibid.: 97). The reflection begins with the everyday practices and discourses of locally embedded actors, rather than the liberal aspirations of elite policymakers and urban planners. Policy priorities are no longer defined from the top down, but actually defined by the communities themselves. They emanate from the 'networks of those who live in situations of violence' (ibid.: 100). Local actors 'set the agenda' themselves (ibid.). In this way, resilience seems to be set on overcoming the normativity involved in traditional neo-liberal policy approaches. As USAID and the Mexican Home Office write, local actors should 'operate without the necessity of the presence of a facilitator or external organization' (US Agency of International Development and Secretaría de Gobernación 2015a: 57). The role of international policymakers should merely be to 'encourage and reinforce existent forces and conditions' (Davis 2012: 37). Here, international intervention is reduced to 'creating spaces for sharing knowledge and information' (ibid.: 100). The focus of attention lies clearly on the 'community's own autonomous actions' (ibid.: 97). Unlike the normative neoliberal approaches outlined in the previous section, resilience in this case is about withdrawing from 'any larger security mandate set by the government' (ibid.: 104). This tendency of resilience thinking to work from the bottom up is in line with the broader trend of contemporary international interventions to build on what already exists, rather than directing processes toward particular outcomes.[5]

The 'challenge' for international interveners lies in identifying the most promising local adaptations without distorting them (ibid.: 115). The biggest danger for international policy elites is to 'revert to modernist techniques of social and spatial

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[5] For example, critical community scholars have highlighted the need for international policy efforts to work from the bottom up (Shevellar et al. 2015).

control that may have fuelled violence and conflict in the first place' (ibid.: 103). In contrast to the overbearing neoliberal ownership approaches of the 1990s and 2000s and the governmentalising resilience initiatives which they inspired, the 'biggest challenge' for critical resilience policy is to 'play the role of partner in confronting violence without distorting or dominating a community's own security agenda' (ibid.: 103–104). As USAID and the Mexican Home Office put it succinctly, '[t] here is no prevention from the outside or imposed on the communities' (US Agency of International Development and Secretaría de Gobernación 2015b: 34). In current policy discourse, resilience is a critique of everything that used to be hierarchical, instrumental and normative about neoliberal governance. In this way, it would seem to be a case of post-liberal governance (Chandler 2014a, b). That is geared towards concrete, context-specific, rather than abstract formalising knowledge. Here, idiosyncratic local adaptations are celebrated rather than receiving opprobrium. Rather than local practices needing reform, it is artificial liberal policy thinking that needs undoing.

Resilience as post-liberal governance?

Current policy thinking on US security interventions in the Americas seems to resonate strongly with David Chandler's post-liberal reading of resilience – his critique of liberal artifice and top-down forms of governing. Davis' account of resilience refrains from imposing any external policy goals and, instead, proposes that policymaking should be a 'process of learning' from localised practices and discourses (Chandler 2014b: 11). In this framework, international interveners are banned from imposing liberal modernist goals on complex processes of causation. What is at stake in resilience thinking, according to Chandler, is that complex real life is a resource for governance rather than a barrier to it (Chandler 2014b). In this view, any attempt to guide, control or transform the actually existing practices is doomed to fail: 'In a non-linear world of interactive or emergent causality any top-down attempts to direct or control the social world fly in the face of the "real" processes of social causation, leading to counterproductive or unintended outcomes' (ibid.: 12). Davis' proposal to 'learn from the trenches' and not revert to modernist techniques of rule (ibid.: 102) echoes the argument that 'resilience-thinking is [...] constantly drawing lessons from the real and complex appearances of the world to learn that liberal artifice [...] is a barrier to be overcome [...]' (ibid.: 12). Real-world practices inevitably escape liberal modernist attempts to control, govern and comprehend: '[L]ife [...] always trumps human attempts to constrain and to order it' (ibid.: 32). Davis' presentation of resilience clearly reflects a growing 'appreciation of the real source of power – life itself' (ibid.: 32–33). Rather than bending local norms and practices into conformity with a neoliberal script of good governance, human rights and the rule of law, resilience tries to 'enable complex life to govern through its own mechanisms of creative problem-solving' (ibid.: 35). Here, policy goals are not artificially imposed from the outside, as governmentality studies suggest. They are meant to emerge from within local adaptive processes. Resilience does away with imposing goals and direction and 'instead seeks to find its goals in the processes,

practices and communicative interactions of the world itself' (ibid.: 37). In contrast to the empowerment and ownership approaches of the 1990s and 2000s, resilience gives power back to the individuals and communities 'who really have the power to self-organize in relation to the problem' (ibid.: 39). In this framing of resilience, there is no place for the neoliberal experts and planners described by Murray Li. At the heart of this redistribution of authority towards the local lies a critique of representational knowledge.

> For resilience thinking, the type of knowledge that is possible is necessarily concrete rather than abstract; therefore [...] resilience thinking [does not] lend[...] itself to [...] expert knowledge generated by liberal and neoliberal policy approaches. [...] In resilience framings, parochial or local knowledges are not a limit but a policy goal, once it is understood that all knowledge can only be local, contextual and time and place specific. (Ibid.: 41–42)

Advanced resilience thinking on US security policy in the Americas is much more appreciative of real-life processes than traditional neoliberal approaches which try to reform local dynamics in accordance with good governance, rule of law and human rights benchmarks. Rather than ruling over complex processes of endogenous causation, 'resilience thinking insists that life has to rule or govern policy-making' (ibid.: 52). The key normative shift lies in appreciating local practices and discourses as productive rather than problematic. This transformation is possible 'once it is understood that there can be no universal top-down solution to problems but only ever plural and differentiated, context dependent, bottom-up solutions' (ibid.: 53). In this way, cutting-edge resilience thinking seems to be set on overcoming the liberal legacies of traditional neoliberal policy approaches and their ambivalent relation with local agency. Modernist policy goals of progress and development are questioned in favour of the view that life itself has to inspire policymaking. In stark contrast to the instrumental, hierarchical and normative neoliberal ownership initiatives critiqued by Murray Li, resilience approaches do not 'start from the position of an external subject equipped with superior interventionist knowledge or instrumental goals' (ibid.: 98). As Davis points out, the purpose of intervention is merely to facilitate and prop up promising local initiatives, 'rather than seek[ing] to remake or constrain them' (ibid.: 107).

Nevertheless, as a policy paradigm in practice, the ambition of resilience to overcome liberal legacies of governing remains incomplete. In the policy programmes of USAID and other important international actors, autochthonous practices and processes of resilience still need to satisfy a core set of liberal benchmarks. This residual normativity comes out nicely in Davis account, as well. According to her, there can also be 'negative resilience' which is when adaption goes against state law (Davis 2012: 105). Completely autonomous recovery runs the risk of arbitrary and repressive results:

> [W]ithout some state involvement or police cooperation to keep such [local] efforts within the bounds of the law, these same autonomous community capacities could readily sustain vigilantism, lynching, or other extra-judicial actions that constitute forms of negative resilience. (Davis 2012: 105)

In this way, Davis emphasises that not every form of adaptation in situations of chronic violence is positive. She contends that we still need to assess the 'outcomes associated with certain patterns of coping' (ibid.: 34). For instance, the takeover of security and justice by criminal actors could potentially reduce violence, but it 'would eat into the capacity of the state to guarantee security and establish social or political order' (ibid.). Thus, there is still a strong liberal-modernist bias involved in Davis's account. Resilience still needs to comply with state law and, thus, continues to be something that needs to be 'incentivized' (ibid.: 115). The ultimate goal is still to 'improve' the lives of ordinary citizens (ibid.: 34). It would seem as if real-world practices continue to be judged by the extent to which they achieve liberal aspirations. The key difference is that the normative expectations previously associated with liberal forms of governing and liberal artifice are now projected onto life itself. The hope is that life itself will provide the solutions to a very liberal set of problems, such as law-compliant security, in which case post-liberal approaches appear to be a problem rather than a solution.

The art of governing becomes an exercise in propping up the actually existing practices and discourses which were previously hidden by the liberal modernist gaze. At this point, local creativity really becomes the starting point of policy thinking, rather than the artificial liberal concepts of peace, progress and development. The governmentality critique of resilience as patronising and domineering (Joseph 2013) fails to take account of the way in which liberal benchmarks and modes of governing form the object of critique for some current approaches to resilience thinking. However, the post-liberal project of destabilising liberal artifice and normative policy goals remains incomplete. As long as resilience can be 'negative' (Davis 2012: 105), normative governance discourse is not over. In sum, it would appear as if resilience is a field of transition in which liberal forms of governing – involving hierarchy, instrumentality and normativity – are critiqued, but never fully overcome. That is because policymakers in the Global North still assume an external position to the complex processes of causation in the Global South they would like to work on. In this way, they remain outside of the problem of violence and insecurity in the Americas; and thus in a position of normative hierarchy to it. In fact, as long as policymakers remain outside of the governance problematic, they are stuck in a clearly visible governing position. From this outsider perspective, the urge to become less hierarchical, instrumental and normative cannot be completely satisfied.

What the resilience discourse of Diane Davis (2012) and USAID (2015a) demonstrates is the value-added of an understanding of resilience as a discursive hybrid between neo- and post-liberal approaches. Neoliberalism and post-liberalism are broad-brush conceptual frameworks which never manifest in a pure, ideal-typical form. Rather, resilience-in-practice reflects a diverse, often contradictory set of governmental rationalities and discursive logics. Davis' work on 'urban resilience in situations of chronic violence' clearly manifests the hybrid nature of resilience as a policy paradigm in action. Her empiricist celebration of local self-organisation clearly echoes Chandler's post-liberal critique of artificial policy episteme. Here, complexity is clearly celebrated rather than problematised. Emergent, non-linear causality is seen as a source of positive governance change rather than as an obstacle to progress, development and peace. However, Davis' engagement with 'the local'

remains guided by key normative expectations. Resilience still has to be incentivised in specific liberal ways. What this article adds to the existing literature is an emphasis on the conflicted nature of resilience as a policy paradigm in action. While the case of US-led security interventions in the Americas demonstrates a partial paradigm shift towards post-liberalism (see also Finkenbusch 2019), a rudimentary liberal normativity remains. What emerges is a hybrid policy discourse, combing both neo- and post-liberal elements.

Conclusion

This article has proposed an understanding of resilience as a field of transition in which liberal forms of governing – centred on hierarchy, instrumentality and normativity – are critiqued, but not entirely overcome. The first section drew out how neoliberal ownership approaches saw local agency as both the catalyst of social transformation and its biggest barrier. Locally rooted actors were meant to be 'in the driver's seat' while also requiring outside enabling care (Li 2007). Although the notion of local ownership was prominent, there was a clearly visible governing position for interventionist outsiders. Building on local understandings and practices, international interveners were charged with inculcating a set of liberal norms and modes of governing. Local practices and discourses were engaged with in an openly instrumental way. The objective was to harness local agency for achieving externally defined goals and benchmarks. According to governmentality authors, this kind of empowering engagement with local actors was meant to instil market discipline and responsibilise the individual.

As the second section demonstrated, contemporary resilience thinking was subjected to the same kind of governmentality critique. According to Jonathan Joseph (2013), resilience policy responsibilises the individual and establishes market discipline. It is a neoliberal form of governing from a distance. While the official policy rhetoric is one of enhancing local agency, the real ambition is to impose market-based modes of social interaction from the top down. In Joseph's view, there is nothing inherently different about resilience as a neoliberal form of governing. It falls into the broad category of 'embedded neoliberalism' (Joseph 2013). And indeed, there is some empirical evidence to support this reading of resilience. In the context of US security interventions in the Americas, mainstream resilience thinking has been used to repackage traditional forms of neoliberal governance to make them appear more inclusive (Olson et al. 2014). In the case of Mexico, resilient communities are defined as those social groups which support the state in its law enforcement function. The goal is a public-private partnership for security.

However, the third section worked out how avant-garde policy thinking on resilience seems to move beyond the hierarchy, instrumentality and normativity involved in neoliberal governance (Davis and Tirman 2012; Davis 2012). Rather than referring to yet another policy concept, resilience is understood as the actually existing practices of real communities. It refers to real-life as it presents itself beyond the liberal modernist gaze. Rather than focusing on public security and drug-related organised crime, resilience puts the focus on the locally embedded practices of real-world

communities. Their locally grounded innovations should become the starting point for policymaking, rather than the other way around. This radically empiricist discourse seems to echo David Chandler's post-liberal reading of resilience (Chandler 2014b). According to this framework, resilience thinking celebrates local adaptive practices, rather than problematising them. It does not take its cue from modernist conceptions of progress, democracy and development, but from the myriad ways in which local actors are always already living, and even prospering, in situations of chronic violence. In this reading of resilience, real-life is constantly outsmarting artificial policy conceptions. Liberal modernist policy ambitions of law, democracy and development are proven to be counterproductive and dangerous. Critical resilience thinking in the context of US security interventions in the Americas reflects this empiricist, post-liberal governance ethos. However, it remains trapped in liberal heritage. It does not entirely reject normative policy goals. Non-violence is still preferable to violence. And local solutions need to conform to basic legal standards.

To conclude, resilience thinking constitutes a field of transition in which liberal tenets of governing – involving hierarchy, instrumentality and normativity – are questioned, but not entirely overcome. When it comes to concrete policy advice, parts of Davis' account clearly indicate that resilience discourse continues to hinge on a set of rudimentary liberal norms and expectations. Resilience, therefore, still adopts the subject position of the knowing liberal subject who studies, monitors, evaluates and directs what locals are doing. It seems that this is because Northern policy elites and socio-economic factors remain external to the processes of complex causation in the Global South, neglecting trans-regional entanglements of crime and drug-trafficking. For example, the drug demand of white, middle-class Americans is not part of the governance problematic. One of the practical implications is that international interveners can easily claim to be merely following endogenous, self-directed processes, while at the same time subjecting their outcomes to normative judgment.

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Peter Finkenbusch is a Lecturer in International Relations at Coventry University (UK). He holds a PhD from the Free University Berlin. His research focuses on resilience, international intervention and security governance with a regional focus on the Americas.