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The Routledge Handbook of International Resilience

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Resilience has become one of the most widely used concepts that have come to prominence in understanding and managing complex systems in the last decade. Rooted in ecologic studies conducted during the 1960s, resilience thinking rapidly came to influence many other research fields for different purposes. Economics, psychology, human geography, engineering sciences, organizational studies and development studies have all either tackled, measured, studied and/or criticized resilience. The polysemic overlap and transformative potentials of the resilience concept have not brought any conceptual clarity, but have instead contributed to the fuzzy character of the term. However, all the numerous deployments of resilience have two quests in common: a new form of engagement with new types of risk and risk management. If in the past risk management embodied the concept of control and measure, since the 1990s a new perspective of risk as unknowable or unpredictable has come to light. The push for resilience is, therefore, a response to the current increasing vulnerability and perception of insecurity.

In *The Routledge Handbook of International Resilience*, editors David Chandler and Jon Coaffee along with 40 leading academic authorities from a number of disciplines, highlight how resilience thinking is increasingly transforming policy making and government and institutional practices. The book explores the roots of the term and its diffusion, the major critiques and some of the contexts where the resilience-like policies are applied in a range of topics including: climate change, disaster-risk reduction, urban planning, territorial cohesion, international development and national security.

The Handbook is divided into eight sections with three to five chapters in each. The introduction prefaces the contested paradigms of resilience, contextualizing the discussion in the international academic and policy developments of the last decade or so. Above all, the ambiguity over resilience terminology and its use is what the book analyses posing critical questions.

The first section introduces the conception of resilience and the challenges it has created. The chapters problematize the etymology and genealogy of the term; the different trajectories of meaning used by different audiences within a specific theoretical frame and for a particular end; the implications of resilience thinking in both the natural and the social sciences. The resilience concept as an approach to uncertainty is explored in the following section. Within these four chapters, the authors show the complexity of the world we now live in and the consequently changing promises of security. One of the chapters also investigates the application of high-tech applications to emergency responses and the possibility to engage crowds to improve resilience.

The third section explores the relationship between resilience and neoliberal forms; this is central in the critiques on resilience, especially in societal terms. The three chapters of the section suggest, through different analyses, the potential close connection between the rise of resilience and the dominance of the neoliberal approach; such Foucauldian-inspired interpretation argues that the concepts of self-awareness, reflexivity and the learning of resilience theory encourage the idea of active citizenship in a liberal form of governance with a strong devolution of responsibility.

Section four provides an overview of the practical development of resilience thinking in environment policies, in particular in relation to climate change, section five, in turn, analyses the deployment of resilience in urban planning. Urban planning has become the major theme for international resilience policies and practices in relation to climate change, infrastructure vulnerability, poverty and welfare provisions. In particular, the chapters raise several issues: the implementation gap that exists between the theoretical conceptions of resilience and how it can be utilized in practice; the growing neoliberalization in addressing social problems that is characterizing both resilience policy and territorial cohesion; and the increase of the insurance (and private) sectors in resilience policy.

The book continues with a disaster response section showing the tension between policy and practice at different levels, top-down visions vs. local autonomy and the potential role of grassroots autonomous activism. Section seven explores both security and insecurity issues and the number of spatial and scalar tensions that terrorism has created, while the final section looks at the application of resilience approaches in the international development of enabling poverty reduction. The editors conclude the book by drawing out the key themes of the edited collection and suggest directions for future research.

The handbook, in general, covers a variety of concerns across the concept of resilience, provides a valuable framework for its understanding and encourages new strands of research in the field.

The major contribution of this book is its capacity to problematize; it enables the reader to engage with a range of conceptual positions from a number of disciplinary approaches.

In addition, the book clarifies the main criticisms of resilience – that it draws on an anticipatory and precautionary logic, that it is a depoliticizing and reactive tool of government, and that it puts the responsibility on the professions, individuals and communities – but it also recognizes the contribution of resilience theory in enhancing adaptability, flexibility and agility in forward-looking plans (e.g. global development agendas).

The international team of authors provides a thorough overview of crucial aspects of resilience, several theoretical insights and future challenges for research. The solid introduction makes the book suitable also for students, but it is an indispensable source of information especially for academics and experts interested in resilience, international relations and international security.

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