Enframing the future: Resilience as a way to produce time, duration and scales in the politics of environmental hazards

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Abstract

This paper argues that while resilience is now becoming a well-established concept in the realms of climate science and policy, assumptions about the meaning of time and scale this concept embodies have been overlooked. Drawing on case studies from extreme weather events in Europe (flooding, heatwaves and wind storms), the paper shows how the concept of resilience has acted as a normalising process of different rhythms and durations inherent to social life, which in turn has helped to frame the future as the getaway from the now. Borrowing on Veena Das’ (2007) work on time and subjectivity, we show that the artificial fragmentation of time as past, present and future underlying the concept of resilience and its application into the spheres of science and policy tends to ignore the multiplicity of phenomenological times and multiple durations defining the future. Finally, the paper argues that resilience should be more critically assessed for the temporal and scaling fixes it carries in defining particular types of futures which are themselves indicative of specific power relations and inequalities at the core of vulnerability and environmental risk management.

Keywords: Epistemology, inequality, duration, temporalities, extreme weather events

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