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# Paradigmatic or Critical? Resilience as a New Turn in EU governance for the Neighbourhood

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## Abstract

'Resilience' is gradually pervading the EU external governance thinking. It rose from the margins of the EU aid documents to become a *centrepiece* of the EU Global Security Strategy in 2016, especially in relation to the neighbourhood. It already begins to make an imprint: at least in rhetoric the EU is now committed to become more pragmatic and responsive to the challenges of growing complexity; and crucially, more de-centred in sharing governance and responsibility with its partners. While these positive changes may certainly vindicate some policy shortcomings of the past, and even signify another paradigmatic shift in the EU *modus operandi* in the neighbourhood, the question writ large here is whether this shift is *critical* enough to render *EU governance a new turn* to make it truly sustainable? This article argues that in order for resilience-framed governance to gain more traction especially in the neighbourhood, the EU needs not just recognise, learn about and engage with 'the local' and 'the peoplehood' on the outside. More crucially, it needs to accept '*the other*' for *what it is*, and instead of devolving the burden of responsibility, give the latter an opportunity to grow its own critical infrastructure capacities to become effectively self-governable. This would not just signify a complete departure from a liberal thinking in EU governance, currently predicated on conditionality and road-mapping. It would make the leap intuitively post-neo-liberal. Is the EU ready for this – not just rhetorically or even methodologically when creating new instruments and subjectivities? The real question is whether the EU, the practitioners and the scholars, are prepared to embrace 'resilience' for what it is, in practical terms, to *critically turn the corner of (neo-)liberal governance*?

**Key words:** European Union, resilience-thinking, governance, governmentality, *othering*, eastern neighbourhood

## From governance through conditionality to governance through resilience?

In June 2016 Federica Mogherini, the Higher Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and the Vice-President of the European Commission, announced a new vision for the EU's Global Security Strategy (EUGSS). It was launched in the aftermath of the UK Brexit referendum, and in the midst of rising extreme-right populism across Europe, a continuing influx of refugees, and the unfolding humanitarian disasters across the neighbourhood. Against this gloomy backdrop, comes a new vision for the EU global action, reciting resilience no less than 41 times especially in application to the neighbourhood (Juncos 2016: 3). As a concept, it rose from the obscurity of the EU and global donors' aid and development documents to potentially become a new organising principle of the EU foreign and security policy. For the first time, 'resilience', defined in the EU official discourse as 'the ability of state and societies to reform, thus withstanding and recovering from internal and external crises' (EUGSS 2016:23), was made a *centrepiece* of the EU global strategic thinking. This placed it directly at the heart of EU external governance, as a way to rethink and re-structure its (security) relations with the outside. What does it entail for the EU *modus operandi* in practical terms?

The strategy envisages that the EU foreign policy, especially in the neighbourhood, would become more interest-driven (referred to as 'principled pragmatism'), more responsive, and by this virtue more *adaptable* to enable partners to counter the challenges of growing complexity and 'predictable unpredictability' (EUGSS 2016: 46). The new approach also promises more 'local ownership', insisting that

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‘positive change can only be home-grown’ (EUGSS 2016:27), and more ‘bottom-up’ engagement, ‘encompassing all individuals and the whole of society’ (Ibid:24), thus rendering the policy a more de-centred and inclusive outlook, long-sought before. In this manner the new modality certainly resonates with two previous important shifts in the EU external governance thinking (Korosteleva 2017), which at the time of their issuance were seen as profoundly *paradigmatic* for articulating the new EU thinking towards the neighbourhood (2003/4) and for subsequently allowing its further differentiation via regionalisation and tailored agreements responding to partners’ needs (2009/11). And yet, while innovative in their outlook and methodologies, those shifts were not *critical* enough to salvage a failing, as admitted by the Commission (2015) neighbourhood policy, being recently charged also with hubris and myopia by the very protagonists of the external governance concept (Lavenex 2016).

The focus on *resilience* in 2016 however gives the EU governance thinking potentially a new momentum precisely because of the very nature of ‘resilience’ to learn from failure (Chandler and Coaffee 2017) to respond better and perhaps differently to the challenges of the neighbourhood. Its application though would have to be radically re-thought by not only assuming *less* EU governance per se (Miller and Rose 2008), but also, as Chandler contends (2014), by undertaking a critical shift to learn to govern *through* rather than *over* its partners. This thinking intuitively suggests more space for *self-governance* and the rise of ‘the local’, which even in rhetoric, would make the shift in EU governance distinctly *paradigmatic*. However, would it be *critical* enough to change the EU governance paradigm to make it more sustainable?

Although ‘resilience’ as a concept is not new; in practical terms, it still constitutes a relatively uncharted terrain for the EU, especially when it comes to ‘self-governance’. It will doubtless involve some methodological pioneering on the part of the EU, which at the same time, will be complicated by its own delimitations of the term: while innovative in script, they often fall short of allowing EU governance to devolve. Furthermore, it becomes doubly problematic when situated in the context of a largely confused resilience scholarship, which paradoxically, problematizes more the process of ‘governance’ rather than that of ‘the local’, or how to nurture its critical resilience. The overarching problem is that very few studies to date, when involving ‘resilience’, in an actual fact, have a full comprehension of what state or societal resilience is all about, and how we can and should work with it, including this author. If resilience is truly about empowering ‘the local’, and growing their existing and yet *critical* capacities (Lundborg and Vaughan-Williams 2011), to enable change rather than strengthen a perceived undesirability, then it would require a far more radical de-centring conceptually, from those who govern to those who are subjectivised by it, and not by way of creating compliant subjects (Joseph 2016), but rather by way of empowering ‘peoplehoods’ (Sadiki 2016). Furthermore, ontological learning about resilience (Chandler 2015) suggests that it is not at all about devising new methodologies of careful and more sophisticated monitoring and evaluation. Neither is it entirely about responsabilising and devolving the reigns of governance to new subjectivities, within and outside the EU, who are still anchored to the EU scripts of management arrangements and assessment (Kurki 2011). It may not even be about ‘*governing through*’ instead of ‘*governing over*’ the predisposed and enabled new circuits of power, as Chandler argues (2014), for it would still be heavily reliant on the initial though now distant centres of power to shape and direction the outside. This is where the true puzzle of resilience comes in stuck contrast to our own external governance thinking, which even at a distance, in the form of governmentality, still involves EU norms-sharing and transference.

Taking resilience seriously, as this paper contends, implicates a number of rational possibilities. *Conceptually*, in line with Chandler’s argument (2015), it requires a radical ontological rather than epistemological rethink, especially of the meanings of ‘the everyday’, and ‘the local’. It should involve reconceptualization of ‘self-governance’ – perhaps not as a ‘conduct of conducts’ (Foucault 2007), but rather, going beyond governmentality, to conceive of a gently guided self-organisation predicated on a deep sense of ‘the peoplehood’ (Sadiki 2017), and ‘agachiro’ – the meaning of good life (Rutazibwa 2014), which are distinctly different in their thinking, and critical capabilities.

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*Methodologically*, it does not simply imply a shift of ‘responsibility on to individuals and communities’ (Joseph 2016:389), as newly created subjectivities. Rather, it should be about accepting ‘the other’ for what they are – often perceived as rogue, authoritarian, defiant, and maverick – and work with them, seeking to turn their existing capacities into critical infrastructures to necessitate change, from within, and make it sustainable. This however is different from identifying solutions from a list of prescriptive measures, or only investing in ‘like-minded countries’ and ‘cooperative regional orders’ as the EUGSS suggests (2016: 8;10). The true resilience-thinking would go beyond a liberal internationalist approach of the ready-made solutions, and even beyond a new-liberal working with responsabilised subjects, from a distance (Joseph 2013; 2016). As Schmidt (2015) contends, it really needs a leap to imagine a post-neoliberal world, of coordinated self-governance, premised on ‘the home-grown local’ and ‘the everyday’. Is the EU ready to undertake this leap into the unknown and less governable tomorrow, even if its intuitive discourse points in that direction?

This paper sets to explore these and many other questions, aiming to establish whether resilience is likely to render a *new critical turn* in EU governance thinking, both conceptually and methodologically. First, it will examine the meanings of resilience in the EU discourse, and what new it seeks to contribute to the EU *strategic* governance, especially in the context of the previous paradigmatic shifts, and now, a highly unsettled and volatile neighbourhood. In the second section, it will be explored how resilience has been theorised in IR to date and what is there still ‘unsaid’ about the term, to make one’s governance more effective and sustainable. Finally, the paper will seek to explore the role and the place for ‘the local’ and ‘the peoplehood’ in the context of positive *othering* as part of a new resilience-thinking, to see if the EU governance could critically rather than just paradigmatically turn the corner, towards more sustainable and responsive *modus operandi*.

## Resilience in EU governance: from aid to strategic security

For a relatively new concept, ‘resilience’ has already made quite a career in EU governance thinking. For the purpose of this discussion it is important to make a distinction, as Joseph contends (2016:381) ‘between resilience as a set of practices and techniques, and resilience as a means of framing issues of governance in particular ways’. It is the latter that we want to examine in order to understand how and why it became prominent in managing social and state interactions, and what role and potency it might have for improving EU governance in the neighbourhood.

Resilience firmly entered the EU agenda as late as 2012, being part of the EU re-thinking its humanitarian and development policies (Commission 2012). It was borrowed from ecological/environmental studies to help understand ‘how systems can cope with, and develop from, disturbances’ (Bourbeau 2013:7). At the time resilience began to be seen not just simply as a response to coping with disasters (especially of humanitarian nature), but also as a long-term systemic solution ‘to tackle the root causes’ of these crises, as part of a new development agenda. In governance terms, it allowed the EU to intervene and coordinate external humanitarian/development agendas, to offer solutions which then could be simply ‘embedded in national policies and planning’ (Ibid:2). This thinking gradually fermented into the EU development ‘*resilience paradigm*’ resting on the EU’s expanding portfolio of ‘know-how’ technologies, good practice initiatives (e.g. SHARE; AGIR in Commission 2012) and methodologies of monitoring and evaluation. Resilience as a term was defined as ‘the ability of an [entity] to withstand, to adapt, and to quickly recover from stresses and shocks’ (Ibid: 5). Most crucially, it relied on two specific dimensions: one was the ‘inherent strength of an entity ... to better resist stress and shock’, and two was the ‘capacity of this entity to bounce back rapidly from the impact’ (Ibid:5). The Commission argued that increasing resilience could be achieved ‘either by enhancing the entity’s strength, or by reducing the intensity of the impact, or both’ (Ibid). The EU firmly believed in its own ability to control, manage and where necessary prevent disasters from happening – a type of governance regime, that Chandler (2014:50) would describe as ‘modernist’ or ‘liberal’, which would operate through the ‘*known knowns*’ drawing on a ‘linear and universal assumption

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of the progressive accumulation of knowledge of laws and regularities' (2014:50) which then could be transferred and embedded into partners' development programmes.

Importantly, the EU resilience paradigm was predicated on *three core operational principles*, which still shape the EU governance thinking today. First, in light of its expanding knowledge and techniques, even with the increasing uncontrollability of external emergencies, the EU believed it was better positioned to advise states and individuals on best-fitting 'governance structures', and a 'stakeholders' capacity needs' to enhance their preparedness and adaptability, which would need to be embedded and strengthened at the local and national levels (Commission 2012: 9). A second principle emphasised 'local ownership' of these external technologies-turned-capabilities, to ensure partners' commitment and openness to a long process of resilience-building: 'resilience can only be built bottom-up', and 'the starting point for the EU approach is ...a firm recognition of the leading role of partner countries' (Ibid: 11). Finally, a third important principle insists on 'sound methodologies' of monitoring and evaluation to improve EU response and governance in the future. Notably, 'to ensure effectiveness, the EU will put in place a framework for measuring the impact and results of its support for resilience', to include EU-funded programmes, a common operational assessment prepared by experienced humanitarian and development actors; and 'Implementation Plans', 'so as to ensure maximum complementarity' and 'flexibility in the programme design'. Furthermore, the Commission shall 'review regularly the progress made on the resilience agenda, looking in particular at programming, methodologies and results' (Ibid:12), and this way locking the partners into the EU circle of governance. In sum, resilience was conducive to increasing EU control and coordination of partners' humanitarian/development agendas, by way of offering packaged intervention premised on modular governance structures, monitoring/evaluation methodologies and 'local ownership'. The latter however, was allotted a particular function – to serve as a 'host' with responsibility for implementation and delivery, rather than input and self-control.

The next few years saw some further programming of the EU resilience principles into the wider areas of development/humanitarian policies, along with a parallel expansion of the 'security-development nexus' (Commission 2012:5), which subsequently offered propitious grounds extending resilience into the strategic security and foreign policy domains. In particular, in 2013 the Commission introduced an 'Action Plan for Resilience in Crisis Prone Countries', which, while underscoring the 'country-owned and -led' nature of resilience, and a 'people-centred approach', contributed to further testing and expansion of provisions for the EU resilience paradigm:

- 'EU support to the development and implementation of national resilience approaches [should be] integrated in National Development Plans'. The intention is to develop 'shared assessments, strategies and implementation plans to build resilience' and 'the necessary body of evidence for further action' (2013: 4). 'The Action Plan recognises that the EU is already incorporating resilience into many national programmes', and 'EU interventions ... already have resilience as a core policy priority' (Ibid) for the recipient countries
- 'A common understanding of resilience objectives is required by government and international partners... The EU Roadmaps of engagement represent an opportunity to do so at a country level' (Ibid:5)
- 'Methodologies and tools to support resilience [should include] EU procedures and mechanisms, involving the Commission, the EEAS, the EU Delegations, as well as all relevant stakeholders to monitor, build the evidence base and learn from best practice' (Ibid).
- 'Guidance on the implementation of the EU's approach to resilience will be prepared and trainings organised for all partners' (Ibid:6).

These provisions subsequently culminated in a formulation of a *logframe* of management arrangements which allowed the EU to master its resilience-building approach, and make it transferrable. They included a template of implementation measures, comprising a set of actions, accompanying activities, time-

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frame, and anticipated outputs. In 2014 this resilience development strategy was further consolidated into a 'Compendium' (Commission 2014a) – a comprehensive 116 page-long good practice guide with case studies and planning tools to assist partners in developing a coherent agenda for their resilience objectives; and a 'Resilience Marker' (Commission 2014b), offering a manual to partner countries as to how to build their resilience, with the EU support.

With gradual expansion of the 'security-development nexus', by 2015 resilience moved to the EU foreign policy domain, specifically focusing on the neighbourhood. As Juncos affirms, 'the revised ENP strategy adopted at the end of 2015 was one of the first documents to introduce resilience-building as a foreign policy goal' (2016:3). As before, the document effectively rehearsed the EU's resilience paradigm, setting out measures for the neighbourhood, 'to offer ways to strengthen the resilience of the EU's partners in the face of external pressures and their ability to make their own sovereign choices' (Commission 2015b:2).

By 2016, resilience has made it into the EU's Global Security Strategy, which set to define the EU *modus operandi* across the globe. This time however the resilience narrative has received a rather different framing: it became less assertive about the EU's ability to regulate and control the outside, and instead strongly emphasised the world's growing complexity and the need to become and make partners, better prepared for no longer controllable eventualities. In place of the familiar liberal mantra of 'knowing the knowns' in how to better placate emergencies, the new resilience thinking chose to paint the picture of global 'existential crises' (EUGSS 2016:7) and 'predictable unpredictability' (Ibid: 46), shifting the focus on to learning about 'the *unknowns*', to correct, where possible, the gaps in knowledge, in a rather neo-liberal tradition (Chandler 2014). It went further to highlight a growing contestation of the liberal order, to a degree that 'the purpose, even existence, of our Union is being questioned' (Ibid:3), as well as the need, in light of the increased connectivity whereby 'my neighbour's ... weaknesses are my own' (Ibid:4) to 'zoom' on to the individual level, to build external capacities bottom-up, implicating more 'self-reliance', and even 'self-governance'. The shift in resilience discourse has been profound manifesting the urgency to remain in control, and seeking better ways to adapt EU governance to the emergent complexity. So, what are the implications for the EU governance *modus operandi*? Can resilience in the world of growing complexity be the much-needed clue to keeping EU external relations in order?

As Joseph argues, 'the real contribution of resilience at present is its way of framing questions of governance, and this sense it does offer something different from business as usual' (2016:381). Indeed, embedding resilience into security governance might have a number of advantages. First, by painting the picture of the uncertain *global*, a focus on correcting and managing the 'local' helps to compensate for the uncontrollability of the latter. Second, the focus on micro-level also allows greater fine-tuning and drilling into existing obstacles, thus potentially making governance more effective than it currently is. Third, and more importantly, the focus on self-reliance when zooming on to 'the everyday' (Chandler 2015), of the individual and societal, disperses the burden of responsibility, thus helping to mitigate potential risks of policy failure and other disturbances. In other words, introducing resilience to the security/foreign policy governance agenda, might render the EU a new moment to reinvent and re-establish itself vis-à-vis the outside, and especially the neighbourhood. The move towards a more pragmatic bottom-up approach, or at least a 'blend [of] top-down and bottom-up effects' (EUGSS 2016: 27), with a greater emphasis on local ownership, might just, help the EU to recalibrate its governance, and extend its outreach to the micro-levels of the individual.

The timeliness of introducing 'resilience' into the EU security discourse, cannot be underestimated: being recently excused of hubris and myopia (Lavenex 2016), EU external governance requires an urgent re-think, especially in the highly volatile and contested neighbourhood. It has already undergone at least two paradigmatic attempts at recalibrating its approach, but each time it seems to have been missing the point about the greater 'unknowns', and how to develop traction with the region. These attempts did not feature resilience *per se*, but, at a closer look, did operate through some of the principles of the resilience



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paradigm, prioritising EU knowledge and ready-made solutions, which ensued in a ‘less stable neighbourhood than it was ten years ago’, in the Commission’s own admittance (2015a:2).

In particular, the first paradigmatic shift in EU external governance was linked to the launch of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) in 2003/4, signifying a move away from the EU enlargement *modus operandi* to a partnership-building regime (Korosteleva 2012). While novel in rhetoric, in practice it continued to rely on a lighter version of the enlargement modality (Kelley 2006), involving direct transference of the EU ‘know-how’ (*acquis communautaire*) and conditionality. This approach was often aptly referred to as EU ‘inside-out’ external governance (Lavenex 2004) to underscore the prevalent at the time episteme of the governing process – the EU rationality of ‘knowing the knowns’ (Chandler 2014) – that is, having sufficient instrumental knowledge, progressively accumulated through the enlargement process in Europe, to effectively drive change in the neighbourhood. The prevalent operational features of this type of (liberal) governance regime, included:

- a hierarchical mode of coordination favouring executive bias and bilateral communication with national governments
- a binary way of inculcating EU normative practices: ‘take-it’ or ‘leave-it’ approach without accounting for regional socio-cultural differences, and
- a prescriptive instrumental approach to reforms involving conditionality and, in case of non-compliance, disciplinary actions (sanctions, naming-and-shaming and other means of economic/political statecraft).

This type of regime, embodying EU *disciplinary governance*, had a limited effect on the neighbourhood, especially in terms of generating partners’ commitment and ‘local ownership’ of the proposed reforms. Conversely, it caused a discomforting sense of inferiority among the neighbours, their disenfranchisement with power asymmetry vis-à-vis the EU (Kelley 2006; Raik 2006; Wolczuk 2009).

The second paradigmatic shift in EU governance took place in 2008/9 by introducing the policy’s regionalisation, resulting in the launch of two complementary umbrella initiatives – the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and the Eastern Partnership Initiatives (EaP) respectively. The EU innovated on a range of methodologies, endeavouring to recalibrate the meaning of ‘local ownership’, and to give its approach more inclusivity and traction. A *dual-track* approach was introduced to diversify EU channels of engagement and to target *other* than government actors (subjectivities) to snowball reforms in the recipient countries. This tool paved the way to the rise of civil society as an influential agency for promoting change in the region. In 2011 this approach witnessed further innovations spanning from new forms of contractual agreements – Association Agreements (AAs), Mobility partnerships and Deep Comprehensive Free Trade agreements (DCFTAs) – to new means of monitoring and control – from roadmaps, association agendas and logframes for key deliverables. The refined governance strategy also yielded new policy actors (subjectivities) engaging all levels of society from grass-root NGOs and local authorities to regional and national level government agents and businesses. This approach did not only consolidate the ‘know-how’ of the EU governance framework *to date*, building on its progress and policy failure, it also brought together an incredible machinery of EU tools and instruments – in a ‘more for more’ formula – aiming to target ‘the local’, ‘from a distance’ (as governmentality in a Foucauldian sense), in a less disciplinary, and a more bottom-up manner (Korosteleva 2014 *et al*). In sum, the main features of the new EU governance regime included:

- control from a distance, and only of the pertinent, allowing for more local ownership, agenda-input and tailored solutions;
- a complex matrix of “enablement” premised on voluntary engagement and rational freedom of choice aiming to lock ENP countries in the perpetual mode of ‘more for more cooperation’;
- engagement of all levels of society: from civil society, business and education actors, to local/regional authorities, national governments, parliaments, and media representatives, thus

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generating an all-inclusive grounds for mutual learning and socialisation into European norms and standards;

- 'optimal (rather than binary) space' between 'the permitted' and 'the prohibited', allowing neighbours to approximate rather than fully replicate European norms and values, thus accounting for and preserving their 'cultural space' as well;
- development of a dual track of engagement: making the *bilateral track* more technocratic (e.g. roadmaps) and the *multilateral track* more "political" to generate a sense of community and this way, re-engineer public behaviour in the neighbourhood.

This regime of EU governance-thinking closely resonates with what both Chandler (2014) and Joseph (2016) called a 'neo-liberal' turn in governance as the one that reflectively tries to identify gaps in knowledge and reasons for resistance, and methodologically tackle those gaps by devising new instruments (budgets, subjectivities, new power circuits, formats of contractual relations, benchmarks, roadmaps etc.), to improve performance on deliverables. And yet, this revised governance strategy came to a grinding halt by 2014, ensuing a drawn-out civil war in Ukraine, diplomatic impasse with Russia, and a highly unsettled environment for pursuing EU governance across the region.

The above paradigmatic shifts in governance, while underlying the EU's responsive mode of engagement, also vividly demonstrate the EU struggle to find more traction for extending and legitimising its governance over the neighbourhood: neither the macro-level disciplinary governance nor a more tailored governmentality approach made it in any way more sustainable, let alone effective. Could a new focus on *resilience* in 2016 help remedy the continued failings of EU governance - especially in terms of EU better understanding of how to engage with a contested region, torn by civil war, claims for secession, corruption, government privatisation and envious autocratic stability. After all, if the utility of resilience, as Joseph argues (2016) is to help frame a suitable mode of governance learning from its own failures, then the question writ large here, if 'resilience' would be a critical enough narrative to make a difference, for a more effective and sustainable EU approach towards the neighbourhood.

On the one hand, even the mere articulation of a more pragmatic policy approach, seems to have ensued a fledgling dialogue and negotiations with more recalcitrant partners, like Belarus and Azerbaijan, who hitherto had been subject to the EU sanctions, and 'naming and shaming' tactics, with no fixed governance arrangements. The EU is now also in discussions with Armenia, which, while being committed to the Economic Eurasian Union, is keen to continue pursuing a more tailored agreement with the EU, with the latter showing strong interest in making it happen (Kostanyan XX).

On the other hand, much depends on a new format that a resilience-premised governance is likely to take. If it does choose to de-centre to invest more in a critical capacity-building at the individual/societal level, then it needs to fundamentally re-think its learning about the outside, predicated more on a better understanding of self-governance, and the process of positive *othering*. At the same time, does the EU, and/or the wider scholarship know enough about 'resilience', 'self-governance', and 'othering' to finally make the right call this time, to ensure a better EU response to the external challenges, especially in the neighbourhood? So far, judging by the EU proposed practical measures to build resilience in the neighbourhood, as articulated in the Commission's 'Key deliverables' (2016), there is a strong feeling, that the EU resilience paradigm will be rehearsed again to lock partners in to the EU hubristic mode of governance, as before, associated with embedding 'governance infrastructures', and logframes for monitoring and evaluation, treading on 'self-governance' but not coming close enough to allow autonomy and self-organisation.

Let us explore what the scholarship tells us about resilience governance, especially in terms of what is still hidden or unsaid about it in international practice. Could it really help reset the EU approach to develop, as Chandler argues (2014), better governance – not *over* but *through* the individuals – to give them the opportunity to build their own existing capacities, and would it be enough to critically turn the corner to empower their sustainable self-organisation? So far, the EU's use of resilience tells us more an EU story

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of what resilience building should be all about, and how it could be assessed and evaluated to improve performance. We need to understand resilience for what it is, and how it is connected to 'the local' and the 'peoplehood', before conceiving of how it could make EU external governance more sustainable for the outside.

### Problematising the *unsaid* about resilience in the wider scholarship

It is paradoxical that for a concept that has been in use by different strands of natural, environmental, social and political sciences, there is still little known about how it really works, and how and whether we ought to extend its utility from an individual to the level of states and societies, as part of the governance framing. As Bourbeau argues (2013:3), 'there is very little coherence and consensus as to the nature and substance of resilience. The term is employed but rarely unpacked, let alone theoretically analysed'. Resilience, as a concept, cuts across many disciplines – from ecology, psychology, computer sciences, to organisational and management studies, and now political studies and international relations – and noticeably, has relevance for many, conveying a strong narrative of the Self – individual or collective – in their struggle for survival, self-esteem and self-reliance. As Bourbeau contends, 'resilience has been identified as one of the most important and challenging concepts' (Ibid:4). And yet, it has a dark side, with still much *unsaid* about it, making it a potentially contentious concept for societal use, let alone for application in security governance. In this vein, Bourbeau has aptly observed: 'As work on resilience have increased in recent years, so too have criticisms that it is imprecise or useless' (Ibid:4). Let us try and uncover some of the '*unsaid*' qualities about resilience, to see if its utility could indeed be extended to security and foreign policy domains, to enable a more sustainable and effective management of the outside.

Resilience as it happens, is not at all uncontroversial or perceived as uniformly conducive to the healthy conduct of states and societies.

A large strand of scholarship highlights human '*adaptability*' – the ability to bounce back and to 'adapt positively in the face of profound adversity' (Ibid) – as a defining feature of human resilience. This goes back to the Latin origin of the word itself '*resilire*', 'meaning 'to adjust easily to misfortune, adversity, unease, conflict, failure or change' (Ibid). In social terms, this however also implicates human ability to adapt to various regimes of governance (including of authoritarian nature), in a struggle to survive and achieve stability. Under these headings many regimes in the neighbourhood, could be argued, exemplify an envious degree of resilience – Syria or Iraq are perhaps the most extreme cases here – in which individuals display a remarkable ability to adapt to the direst circumstances of watching their lives destroyed and yet staying put to survive. Less obvious and yet rather striking examples of adaptability include many post-communist regimes in the eastern region, where public appreciation of stability associated with political predictability, controlled environment and basic satisfaction of human needs, runs counter to the western claims for democracy, contestation and freedom. In these countries (e.g. Belarus is a case in point), the most oft-cited reference is 'as long as there is no war', people who had endured hardship and atrocities during the previous wars and pass this legacy to future generations, become almost resistant to change, and negatively resilient in the face of any power deformation or rupture, naturally valuing autocratic stability and strong rule over the uncertainty of democratic governance. This social adaptability keeps many authoritarian regimes alive and functioning, simply because people have adapted their ways to survive the punitive nature of these regimes, and given their predictability, even to use regimes' inner workings to their advantage (hence corruption is so ingrained in the region as a paradoxical manifestation of societal resilience).

Ability to adapt and survive under whatever circumstances also breeds *undesirability* of change, and *conformity*. As Bourbeau aptly puts it: 'Resilience is not always a desirable feature of social, political or economic life. Being resilient might in fact mean being an obstacle to positive change in some cases.' (Ibid:8). Conformity, on the other hand, reinforces the existing order of things, effectively censoring dissent and bringing the abnormal in line with the normal, which in Foucault's terms (2007), leads to



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*normation* – observance of the prevalent norms, making existing regimes endure. For Zebrowski, *conformity* with social norms is the only norm that stands during disasters: in the face of adversary, they are ‘far from breaking down’, and will ‘continue to govern behaviour’ when all other ‘dispositifs’ of governance fail. Conformity, or adherence to the established norms, requires careful political engineering. This infers that ‘the appearance of ‘resilient populations’ is [actually] an effect, rather the cause, of a broader restructuring of rationalities and practices comprising liberal governance’ (2013:160); reifying resilience as an object of governance, rather a given. Zebrowski contends that for conformity to occur and for ‘resilient populations’ to emerge, ‘a particular enframing of life, forged and sustained through the repeated exercise of governmental practices’ is needed (Ibid:161). Instilling conformity in populations reduces the need for direct governance, thus leading to a form of neoliberal governmentality of managing the conduct of conduct, from a distance (Foucault 2007). He exemplified its utility on the notion of ‘panic’ during disasters, demonstrating that ‘resilient populations’ – those who display conformity with prevalent social norms – tend to recover quicker in the face of adversary, for they draw more strongly on self-reliance when given sufficient information for their own action.

Building resilience therefore is not simply about ‘going back to the problem’ (Chandler 2016) to work on the self, by way of removing institutional obstacles to ensure quick and lasting recovery. It is also about understanding the intricacies and implications of unleashing negative adaptability, conformity and undesirability of change. Resilience governance, when applied to social interactions on the level of states, opens up the whole Pandora box of difficult issues pertaining to power and self-governance. Biermann *et al.* for example, observe that resilience is often criticised for being apolitical and privileging ‘social structures serving to reproduce the status quo’. Operating in the domain of power relations, resilience also provokes ‘questions about resilience of *what* and for *whom*’, especially when naturally assuming that ‘a resilient system is a desirable one’. These ‘assumptions’ however ‘can lead to failure to recognise issues of power, justice, and equality in discussions of resilience’ (2015:3). Furthermore, being indiscriminate in its application, resilience governance ‘may even allow hegemonic values and discourses to be actively perpetuated’ (Ibid) thus admittedly embedding and maintaining the asymmetry of power in the subject-object relations with a recipient. This certainly raises some fundamental questions, as to ‘*what* needs to be kept resilient, to *what* and for *whom*’ (emphasis original); as well as ‘how to advance discussion about political subjectivities, radical change or alternative democratic modes’ (Ibid:13) which are currently amiss or not critically spoken of in the wider resilience literature. Instead the latter currently relies on a ‘highly scientised and prescriptive’ manner of executing liberal governance of ‘known knowns’ (Biermann *et al* 2013:13) over the outside, which if anything reinforces the thinking (and its failing practices) of the EU resilience paradigm.

In similar vein, under resilience governance, as Mavelli argues (2016), power hierarchies are particularly pronounced often reinforcing injustice, and stigmatising ‘inferior species’ if they are perceived to be a threat to the system’s survival. They could even be punitive, through specific governance measures, to punish those who, through descent, come to challenge the status quo. Mavelli pungently demonstrated this ‘dark side’ of resilience governance on the EU behaviour towards the Greek crisis. He contended that if anything, EU disciplinary governance caused a flip-over effect by making ‘the Greeks more resilient’ when going through the bailout process; and the Europeans – ‘*less resilient*’ as being ‘biopolitically sheltered from the potential failures of their own banks’ (2016:20). Crucial to his analysis, however, was the exposure of the centrality of neoliberal power and its hegemony (by the most powerful European states and Germany in particular), which instead of protecting all parties from the economic shock of the Greek crisis, chose to punish the weakest by ‘transferring the crisis onto less wealthy’ and protecting ‘powerful countries through biopolitical racism in order to advance the dynamics of neoliberal exploitation’ (Ibid:20).

This brings us to the most striking ‘hidden’ element of resilience governance – *compliance* as a counterintuitive effect of building resilience and individual self-reliance. Notably, Joseph argues (2013:45) that while putting an emphasis on the individual by way of micro-zooming on ‘the everyday’ and ‘the

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local', resilience governance contentiously does not seek to empower autonomy, and comes at odds with the notion of 'self-governance', an admitted goal of societal resilience. Notably, Joseph contends that 'autonomy appears as a problem which requires management... The autonomy of the individual is a problem for development'. For a liberal governance, autonomy 'is now merely an ideal that has to striven towards by removing institutional blocks' (Ibid:46); a type of a utopian ideal, that while encouraged, ought to never be achieved. For Joseph, in post-structuralist tradition, 'individual freedom is something socially constructed within complex adaptive systems' (Ibid). Hence, resilience building, in the neo-liberal tradition, is not and has never been, about empowering an individual, or a societal ability to bounce back in the face of complexity, but rather about constructing power dependencies to render 'conduct of the conduct' perpetual, and locked into a cycle of power production in the form of coordinated 'self-governance'. From this perspective, Joseph concludes, resilience governance 'might be actually more effective in securing compliance to international norms, forcing states and local populations to adapt their behaviour in the face of problems that the international community either cannot, or does not, want to deal with itself' (2016:373). Engendering 'self-governance' through building resilience is therefore an illusion, or an ideal, which realisation be as undesirable as an investment into one's capability to challenge an existing order.

This is best illustrated on the case of the EU resilience paradigm, which operates on two distinct principles - a *prescriptive* element of rendering 'governance structures' to its recipients help them define their needs and navigate through EU roadmaps; and a *disciplinary* element of monitoring, and management, to lock recipients into a relationship of a continuing power production. Local ownership, as a third element, is necessary for mobilising commitment and offering propitious grounds for externalising governance and effectively creating dependent subjectivities, as discussed earlier. While some scholars insist (Chandler 2014) that 'the resilient subject (at both individual and collective levels) is never conceived as passive or as lacking agency, but is conceived only as an active agent capable of achieving self-transformation'; others would argue otherwise, especially from a neo-liberal (admittedly less intrusive) tradition of governance. Joseph in particular insists that 'the idea of active agency depends on the granting of the *illusion of autonomy*' (2016:373) through the process of social construction of the subject. Furthermore, 'this conception of active agency does not always translate' to resilience-building strategies applied to manage the outside by the 'advanced liberal settings... of various Anglo-Saxon countries' (Ibid). In sum, not only are self-governance and autonomy treated as an illusion needed to lock subjectivities into a continuing mode of social power production; they come in stuck contradiction with, and even denial of the very notion of active agency and 'self-governance' as desirable for the sustainability of the neo-liberal world order.

In light of the above discussion, would resilience governance be suitable for salvaging EU credibility in the neighbourhood, which is increasingly situated in the notions of growing 'multi-order' (Flockhart 2016; Korosteleva 2016) governance, contestation and ensuing power complexity. More so, if resilience were to offer some semblance of stabilisation, would it be critical enough to enable the EU and other global players, to turn the corner for more dialogical relations with the outside – that is, cooperating not with just like-minded entities, but inclusive of all?

### **Situating resilience in 'the local' for a new critical turn in governance**

For a more cooperative and sustainable governance to occur, predicated on resilience-thinking, it would require, as Chandler contends (2014), embracing complexity in full, and with it, a recognition of the uncontrollability of the outside. This however is different to a (neo)liberal thinking about complexity: Resilience thinking instead requires a shift beyond instrumental governance operating in a 'world amenable to cause-and-effect understandings of policy-making' (Ibid:58), and relatedly, a rejection of the two core tenets of the EU Transition Paradigm – the management and assessment of resilience-building inside-out fomenting dependable subjectivities. This means moving beyond the certainties of (neo)liberal order, with its 'known knowns' rationalities of regulatory policies and interventionist practices. It also

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infers contesting a neo-liberal mode of governance which opens up to accepting complexity but still operates from a position of certainty about the 'known unknowns', to be ready to 'intervene instrumentally in the sphere of complex social interactions' (Ibid: 54), on self-reflection, and to remove 'institutional blockages... as unintended outcomes of policy-making' (Ibid:56). Resilience, for Chandler, is definitely a leap beyond neoliberalism, whereby zooming onto 'the everyday', as it naturally does, is 'not about governing from the top-down or the bottom-up but about ... the existing embedded and relational capacities of ordinary people. It is these capacities that are perceived to be bypassed or muted by instrumentalised neoliberal interventions in social sphere' (Chandler 2014:60). This type of governance infers working through, or more pertinently, with society: 'through recognising the capacities and capabilities that already exist and could be encouraged (Ibid:61). It is simply about an ontological understanding of our natural abilities to cooperate with each other and construct communities of shared interest. In this this sense, governance based on resilience, needs to be reframed 'in order to recognise the creative and self-ordering power of life itself' (Ibid:62).

This however constitutes a radical departure from an *illusory sense of autonomy* of neo-liberal world for which resilience, as Joseph posits (2016), is to socially construct reliable subjectivities, to conduct people's lives in their strife to survive and adapt in the face of adversary. This suggests that neoliberalism may have exhausted itself: 'turned into a governance programme, [it] seems inherently self-consuming' (Schmidt 2015:414), and requires a pragmatic solution – from decision-making to self-cultivation – to allow resilience achieve its true potential, which is no longer delimited by its 'dark side' demanding compliance, conformity and undesirability of change. A pragmatic solution would seek to move beyond instrumental rationalities of neoliberalism, to imagine a self-organised collectivity, whose resilience is instead predicated on a growing sense of the self, its creative capabilities and critical infrastructures, to engender longevity and cooperative sustainability in a complex and uncontrollable environment.

At the same time, how to make this leap, and with it, to render resilience a better use for more effective governance framing, is still an open question. Some might argue that new and more creative methodologies are needed to ensure people's strife for self-reliant and sustainable societies gently coordinated by a supportive inside-outside relationship. Others (Chandler 2016; Korosteleva et al 2017) would say that resilience potential for more effective governance lies with the people, and 'the everyday', which we are yet to discover through the process of *othering*, where the self and the other are understood not in opposition and not even in juxtaposition to one another, but rather as a nexus of learning and self-development. This understanding is not necessarily to be attained via new knowledge and the expansion of our epistemological horizons, but rather ontologically – through accepting *other-ness* as a way to relate the self to the outside in order to understand *their* life, needs and desires, and treating them as what they are, and want to be, rather than *should be*, in accordance to the self' thinking.

This new de-centred thinking can be captured by the Arabic term 'al-harak', referring, as Sadiki argues (2016:338) to the 'peoplehood' encapsulating *their* vision for better life, essentially as 'people-driven ferment'. Rutazibwa (2014) takes it to a level further, by introducing and exploring the notion of 'agaciro', which implies people's 'understanding that [they] are the agents of [their] own change' (2014:5). In particular Rutazibwa argues that agaciro is a philosophy of life that draws on self-reliance and the inner knowledge of the people of what they are, and what they want to be, and could serve as a premise for resilience governance thinking. She contends further that agaciro stands for...

People know what is good for them. We must endeavour to show it. We must be seen to be doing things that prove that. So Agaciro is simply central to everything we are doing for our development, that pride, that belief in ourselves, that being who we are and who we should be, and trying to be the best we can be (Ibid:6)

Agaciro, as the everyday and the local, relies on three essential elements: it is *outward* underscoring autonomy and sovereignty; it is *inward* legitimising expectations of a new social contract, and it is *individual* encapsulating a newly found self-worth identity linked to pride in the future that is being built

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today (Ibid:7). In many ways, it encapsulates the best side of resilience allowing people to define what they are and where they want to be, and travel to that destination, if necessary with the support of others. This kind of resilience does not generate conformity and compliance with the norms and rules of the external authority in the pursuit of their ideals; rather it encourages diversity and self-cultivation through cooperation. It does it through a particular type of *othering* that locks in the self and the other, in a reciprocal partnership-based learning that cannot be achieved through external strategy papers, progress reports and logframes to manage and evaluate partners' performance against external identified benchmarks, as neoliberal thinking would naturally assume. This kind of *othering* comes with a particular ontological type of learning that draws on a *relational value* of the self and the other in their connected development, whereby 'the value of the self is determined through its external environment' (Edkins 1999: 24), thus reversing the logic of governance onto itself. From this perspective, as Chandler argues (2014:57) 'the policy failure is, in fact "not a failure of policy", but a learning opportunity... it is governance failure, which is the failure to reflexively learn from complex life the need to overcome reductionist understandings'.

While this type of resilience thinking is profoundly relevant to the increasing complexity of the outside, it still requires more pondering about its practicalities – of how to achieve resilience potential in practice. Can we rely on the everyday, the local and the peoplehood, to know exactly what their challenges are, and more importantly, how to overcome them, in becoming what they want to be – in their *agaciro*?

This is still an open-ended question. Intuitively, as Chandler points out (2015:38), resilience governance presumes a process of 'construction or recognition of "negotiated moral communities" capable of self organising in relation to the shared world'. At the same time, how are we to build these 'negotiated moral communities', and how different are they from the real-life communities which might endure daily hardship, and regime's naked brutality, as the thwarted March for Freedom in Belarus on 25 March 2017 attested to, and continue living through, for the sake of survival. How do we achieve the kind of resilience that would unlock critical infrastructures to nurture good governance from within? What kind of governance would it require to avoid the entrappings of compliance and dependency?

Kauffmann suggests to place more emphasis on the study of self-organisation, as part of the wider network system of governance. She argues that self-organised communities, while relying on external support, have an inner sense of direction, a notion of 'self-referentiality' (2013:60) that foment system's reorganisation without recourse to the resources of the outside. This kind of governance might be best described as 'guided self-organisation', which relies on a networked system of shared interests and rules, where the whole renders support to the local, and the local changes the whole through creative self-organisational performance (Ibid:68). In this context, resilience of the peoplehood, as Chandler argues, 'removes the external intervener from external intervention and with this makes local capacities, practices, and understandings the means and the ends of intervention' (204:48) – in self-reliance and as part of the whole.

## Conclusion

This article has critically explored the notion of resilience as part of EU external governance framing. While still relatively new to the domain of state and societal relations, resilience as a concept has already made quite a career, recently claiming its place in the EU security strategy, in defining EU relations with the outside, and the EU neighbourhood in particular.

Prior to entering the foreign policy domain, resilience has made contribution to framing the EU humanitarian and development agendas, resulting in the emergence of the EU Resilience Paradigm, which operated through the assemblage of three core principles including (i) the EU knowledge of best-fitting 'governance structures'; (ii) EU management and assessment procedures for implementation and control; and (iii) local ownership, to ensure commitment endurance. Without direct reference to resilience as a term, the EU seems to have implicitly applied the same principles in the neighbourhood over the past ten

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years, ensuing policy failing, power contestation and a highly volatile external environment. The question there was whether resilience-thinking would be critical enough to reinvigorate EU governance in the neighbourhood, to make it more cooperative and sustainable for the future.

The article has argued that we still have limited knowledge, both in scholarly and policy terms, as to how resilience does and should work in practice. It appears to be rather controversial when scrutinised through the lens of governance framing, frequently rendering adaptability, undesirability of change, conformity and compliance as its possible consequences. Moreover, if understood through neoliberal governance, it is the effect of compliance and the illusion of autonomy that makes it seemingly a desirable element of ‘conducting the conduct’ of the external milieu.

The article has challenged this understanding of resilience, and in line with Chandler, proposed a leap to post-neoliberal thinking, stressing decentring as opposed to hubris, and the peoplehood, the local as the constitutive element of self-organisation. Only understanding and engaging with the latter, through a positive process of *othering*, resilience might be able to make a constructive contribution to EU governance, especially in the neighbourhood, thus critically turning the corner towards more sustainable and cooperative relations with its external environment.

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