

## **CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS**

**Revue internationale des études du développement N°235 2018-3**

### **« PRACTICES OF RESILIENCE »**

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#### **From enthusiasm to critical doubt**

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Resilience has been the subject of many passions in the humanitarian world for almost a decade now. It is defined as the capacity of communities to cope with shocks, but also to anticipate them, or even to prevent them and adapt to them in the long term. Resilience holds a strong ambition, even more so than the fight against poverty and vulnerability.

At the same time, resilience is presented as a paradigmatic breakthrough in the field of development (Chandler, 2011), seen as a means to help link the timescales of emergency and those of development; coordinate support; reflect local representations and practices (Olwig, 2012). Ultimately, it would therefore increase the cost/benefit ratio, the sustainability of the effects of an intervention, and the viability of the systems (Asprone and Manfredi, 2014).

With all these virtues, resilience emerged from the academic sphere, under the impetus of USAID and the DFID at first, then of the European Union, as resilience became a major element of its doctrine of intervention in 2012. All international organizations, and consequently many NGOs, as well as national governments, are now providing their approach to resilience.

However, since its first appearance, this notion has been the subject of many critical reviews, tending to reject it on a theoretical point of view. Resilience would be:

- A neo-liberal postulate, for which a person is always able to cope and to fulfil himself, whatever the difficulties encountered;
- Conservative in its materialization, in the sense that it would focus more on a return to balance and to the *statu quo ante*: Therefore, contradictory to its ambition of capacity building and the transformation of living conditions and lifestyles;
- An alibi for the disengagement of aid, because if people are able to mobilize their own resources to deal with risks and shocks, this may justify a form of withdrawal and distance taking, in all good conscience;
- A new paradoxical injunction, coming from the outside, because at the same time as we are trying to disengage, we request that the assisted populations show signs of resilience, in terms of social cohesion, self-organization and adaptability for instance, in order to deserve external support;
- And lastly, a new technocratic avatar of the aid "industry", because while many "experts" of resilience in international organizations and cooperation mechanisms have seized the notion, it is not much assimilated by local authorities, public services, farmers' federations, trade unions, etc.

## Day to day resilience: performance, ambivalence and excess

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Without ignoring the strength and relevance of these criticisms, the starting point of this call for contributions is different. The call is based on a simple observation: whether we are worried or happy about it, resilience is, during the years 2010, essential in both discourses and programs. Its activation, even if only rhetoric, is a necessary step to obtain funding from many of the national and multilateral donors. It is therefore, the use of it nowadays that needs to be questioned, and on two levels: how to measure it, concretely? And what change does it imply in the programs and policies that claim its use?

The first question comes from the idea that, while the populations of the South have certainly not waited for the trend of resilience to cope with risks and shocks, this notion can perhaps improve our understanding of these local practices. This is the issue at stake here.

- Is it possible, useful to measure resilience? If so, how? On which scale(s) is it possible? With which time frame? Faced with what types of risks and shocks? For whom? Are there threshold effects that allow, for instance, to distinguish survival from adaptation and resilience?
- Is any resilience "achievable" and "good"? How does it take into account the dimensions of sustainability and equity?
- And finally, how can we apply, in the field of social sciences and development studies, a notion that comes, for the most part, from that of life sciences (ecological systems' resilience)? Can it give new impetus to systemic approaches, often considered too complex by evaluators and sometimes even by developers?

Many questions emerge, therefore, as soon as one wishes to make this notion something other than a metaphorical poetic. The second issue lies in its influence in programs and policies; Three areas of research are then identified:

- The first can focus on how this notion, after others, has become dominant within many institutions, as a framework for aid programs, on the underlying political issues and power relations, the difficulties and biases of local re-appropriation, etc.
- The second may focus on contextualized analysis of programs, projects or policies, that are explicitly based on resilience: what are the modalities for implementation and monitoring? Are they viable, sustainable, different... or not? What truly innovative results do they bring?
- The third may encourage the use of resilience as a tool for assessing of public policies' practices and coherence. How can policies be seen as "pro-resilience" (whether or not they claim to be so)? Can they really find their fulfillment by a "benchmarking of the action" (Béné and *al.* 2015)?

One example may shed light on this third approach: It is useful to question the ambivalence of European policies in West Africa, when, on the one hand, there is financial support for the AGIR<sup>1</sup> initiative, designed to increase the resilience of Sahelians - specifically facing the growing climate instability- and, on the other hand, the authorities of the countries concerned are encouraged to sign a new Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), which threatens to weaken fragile or nascent food chains in these countries, or at the very least, to impoverish to impoverish many families of farmers and pastoralists.

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<sup>1</sup> The Global Alliance for the Resilience Initiative (AGIR) was launched during the 2012 food and nutrition crisis in the Sahel, with the goal of achieving the ' Zero Hunger' level in the West African Sahel region by 2032.

## Axes of proposals

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This dossier aims to better understand and discuss the analytical and normative aspects of the notion of resilience, within the scope of crisis-management actions such as development projects and related policies.

Two types of contributions are therefore expected:

- Analyses of local practices, rather spontaneous, in a situation of uncertainty, faced with risks and shocks, studied against the prism of resilience. The authors will be attached to present their framework for analyzing resilience, and avoid the purely metaphorical use of the concept. Attempts should be made to answer some of the methodological questions raised above.
- Analyses on how the world of assistance (international, national, local) has taken hold of the notion and tries to operationalize it in its programs and projects, but also in return, how this same notion can modify the assessment of these interventions. Are they really adequate to the proclaimed need for resilience as expectations and aspirations of local populations?

## Framework

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Authors of all social and human sciences are called upon to participate, including but not limited to: sociology, demographics, history, geography, political science, economics, anthropology...

The authors are invited to explore the notion of resilience from international, national and local points of view.

The articles may directly address some of the issues or themes mentioned, or may address them through specific case studies. The setting in context, the meeting between a solid theoretical approach and a ground, empirical studies, original corpus, are expected.

The proposed articles must be original documents. However, they may have been the subject of papers presented at a colloquium (with proceedings), provided that they are adapted to the format required by the *Revue internationale des études du développement* (see instructions for authors on the research notebook of IEDES publications: [iedespubli.hypotheses.org](http://iedespubli.hypotheses.org))

## Contribute

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Contribution proposals can be sent in French / English / Spanish. They are of 4000 signs, including spaces:

- Title: maximum 70 characters (with possibility to add a subtitle)
- Research question
- Theoretical framework
- Field studied
- Main results
- Bibliographical references (not included in the sign count)

## Calendar

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Proposals for articles should be submitted before **Friday, December 1, 2017** to the e-mail address of the journal's editorial team: [revdev@univ-paris1.fr](mailto:revdev@univ-paris1.fr) and that of Benoît Lallau: [benoit.lallau@univ-lille1.fr](mailto:benoit.lallau@univ-lille1.fr).

The authors pre-selected by the coordinators and the editorial board will be notified by the review team the week of **December 11, 2017**;

The first versions of the articles, in accordance with the instructions given to the authors of the journal, will be sent by the authors to the four e-mails mentioned above before **Monday January 29, 2018**.

The evaluation process will last a few months - each article - anonymous - will be subject to a double blind reading by reviewers outside the journal, experts on the subject matter: the final summary of the articles selected for this thematic issue will be published on **May 14, 2018**.

Publication: the bookstore release of this n°235 2018-3 is scheduled for **Wednesday, September 20, 2018**.

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