

Interactive comment on “Resilience and disaster risk reduction: an etymological journey” by D. E. Alexander

D. E. Alexander

david.alexander@ucl.ac.uk

Received and published: 23 August 2013

I thank both referees for kindly reading my paper and for comments that have enlarged its horizon and given a richer perspective on a complex but fascinating topic: the origins and development of the concept of resilience.

My aim in writing the paper was to show that, rather than being a child of 1970s systems ecology, as many scholars and scientists believe, resilience has a millennial history in a wide variety of subjects. It has been passed from one to the other and has migrated across continents and diffused through languages in astonishing ways.

One by-product of this study has been to show that many other terms used by those who work in hazards and disaster risk reduction have long and interesting histories.

C963

My point is that if we improve our knowledge of those histories, by understanding how a term has come about, and what overtones it has acquired during that process, we can employ it with greater precision and knowledge of what it is capable of describing or inferring.

If there is anything wrong with the concept of resilience, it is mainly, I think, that too much has been asked of it. Different usage in different fields has led to contrasts of meaning that are difficult to reconcile. Greater understanding of the etymological development of the word may at least help us appreciate those differences and thus respect them.

I am grateful to the referees for correcting some of my misassumptions (they do remain, even after considerable study, such is the complexity of the phenomenon under discussion) and drawing my attention to important work that I had neglected.

Interactive comment on Nat. Hazards Earth Syst. Sci. Discuss., 1, 1257, 2013.