

Return to a 'new normal'? Analysing discourses of resilience to disasters in Australian newspapers

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Panel: The policy translation and communication of resilience

The different uses of 'resilience' across academic disciplines and society at large raise the need to understand alternative perspectives of this concept. This paper looks at how resilience is constructed in the public discourse in the news media during disturbance events. News media has considerable power in society through its ability to inform and shape public opinion and plays an important role in revealing perspectives across various scales and political and cultural contexts. We use content analysis of Australian news media articles from 2005-2010 to examine resilience concepts associated with natural disasters. Articles analyzed included those that mentioned resilience in conjunction with disasters such as bushfires, floods or drought, and discuss dealing with, recovering from, or preparing for such events. Preliminary analysis suggests that the public construction of the resilience concept is diverse but narrow with fewer dimensions than the theoretical basis of the concept used by the Resilience Alliance though some similarities are evident. Common themes associated with resilience in the news media include the ability to return to a 'new normal', community cohesion, community preparedness, experience and learning. This analysis highlights that resilience is a confounded concept and provides insight into how this may affect its usefulness in developing policy to build resilience in social-ecological systems.