Examining relational social ontologies of disaster resilience : lived experiences from India, Indonesia, Nepal, Chile and Andean territories

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2022-06-02

Abstract

Purpose

The neoliberal resilience discourse and its critiques both contribute to its hegemony, obscuring alternative discourses in the context of risk and uncertainties. Drawing from the "ontology of potentiality", the authors suggest reclaiming "resilience" through situated accounts of the connected and relational every day from the global south. To explore alternate possibilities, the authors draw attention to the social ontology of disaster resilience that foregrounds relationality, intersectionality and situated knowledge.

Design/methodology/approach

Quilting together the field work experiences in India, Indonesia, Nepal, Chile and Andean territories, the authors interrogate the social ontologies and politics of resilience in disaster studies in these contexts through six vignettes. Quilting, as a research methodology, weaves together various individual fragments involving their specific materialities, situated knowledge, layered temporalities, affects and memories. The authors' six vignettes discuss the use, politicisation and resistance to resilience in the aftermath of disasters.

Findings

While the pieces do not try to bring out a single "truth", the authors argue that firstly, the vignettes provide non-Western conceptualisations of resilience, and attempts to provincialise externally imposed notions of resilience. Secondly, they draw attention to social ontology of resilience as the examples underscores the intersubjectivity of disaster experiences, the relational reaching out to communities and significant others.

Originality/value

Drawing from in-depth research conducted in six disaster contexts by seven scholars from South Asia, South America and Northern Europe, the authors embrace pluralist situated knowledge, and cross-cultural/language co-authoring. Thus, the co-authored piece contributes to diversifying disaster studies scholarship methodologically.

Examining Relational Social Ontologies of Disaster Resilience: Lived Experiences from India, Indonesia, Nepal, Chile, and Andean Territories

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Introduction: Resilience Revisited – Once More

"Resilience" has been mainstreamed into disaster policy contexts particularly in the "developing" countries since the Cold War as a part of the shifting modes of interventions (Bankoff, 2019). In the late 1970s the term (community) resilience was initially deployed in disaster policy and practice as the inverse of human vulnerability. Since then, resilience has become part of the disaster risk management (DRM) programmes that emerged through global forums such as Yokohama strategy, Millennium Declaration, Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA), and most recently the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (Hollis, 2014 p. 328 for fuller genealogy see e.g. Bohland et al., 2019). Some scholars argue further that resilience has replaced vulnerability as the main discourse in DRM, where "victims of disasters are cast as heroes of resiliency" (Bohland et al., 2019, 24). Yet, the proliferation of "resilience" is not limited to a disaster community. The experiences of increased uncertainty and crises – such as pandemics, terrorist attacks and climate change – have contributed to making resilience common sensical and accelerated burgeoning scholarship on the topic.

Despite deeper etymological roots, the concept gained traction in ecology (cf. Alexander, 2013) after Holling's (1973) theorizing on resilience to describe ecological systems that can absorb a disturbance and adapt to it, whilst maintaining their functioning.[1] In the 1980s, the ecological concept of resilience was applied in disciplines studying the interaction between people and the environment amidst complex changes. The framings and uses of resilience morphed also within the disaster community. Over the decades, resilience has come to be seen as a process arising from people's capacities, over its previous emphasis on disaster outcomes (Manyena, 2006), i.e. fixation on a singular disastrous event, and how people might cope with it.

Since the proliferation of "resilience", it's supposed naturalness has been criticized for disguising the capitalist logics and ontologies embedded into its use. Thus, resilience is heavily

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[1] See the detailed analysis in Nelson 2014 connecting the theorising into late capitalism and complex socio-ecological relations such as energy scarcity and environmental degradation.

critiqued, but scholars disagree on its scale of potentiality. Some totally reject the concept, as a form of neoliberalism (Bracke, 2016; MacKinnon and Derickson, 2012) or as a tautology that only provides a new term but no new action on the ground (Comfort *et al.,* 2001; Park, 2011 and Reghezza-Zitt *et al.,* 2012). Others argue for an alternative articulation of resilience that can, or does already exist (Grove, 2013). The critiques of neoliberal resilience are varied, ranging from the roll-back of the state to appropriation of socio-structural transformative change. In this paper we build upon the problematization of the neoliberal individualist social ontology, exploring the option of a social ontology centred in relationality and interdependence - as proposed by Sarah Bracke (2016).

While the roots and implications (Manyena, 2006) of resilience have been broadly explored, its prominence and evolution call for continuing interrogation. In particular, there is a need to study the manifestation and materialization of the concept and discourse in the social world (Cretney, 2019). The conceptual models of resilience have mainly been developed in the global North, yet promotion and use has primarily concerned global South territories and communities (Aliste and Marin, 2020). To understand the translation of resilience from a generic concept to situated materialization, our paper focuses on the everyday and experiences of disasters and explores the diverse visions of resilience among marginalized individuals and communities living with risk and uncertainty.

In the rest of the manuscript, we firstly discuss a social ontology of disaster resilience that foregrounds relationality, intersectionality, and situated knowledge. Secondly, we introduce our research methodology of co-creation through quilting. Thirdly, we interrogate the uses and politics of resilience through six situated analyses, asking how the understandings of resilience change, if we are attuned to the relational social ontology. In each of our research contexts, ideas and practices of resilience stem from neoliberal/individualist forces, and streams of collective, relational and interdependent coexistence. This suggests that understanding resilience through the relational social ontology not only uncovers the neoliberal individuality of neoliberalism, but also resists the neoliberal readings of disaster prone or affected communities. We agree with Gibson-Graham (2006) in suggesting that over-theorizing neoliberal capitalism could contribute to its hegemony and obscure

alternative discourses. Thus, instead of suggesting the abandonment of "resilience" as neoliberal or redundant, we suggest reclaiming it through situated accounts of which we provide tangible examples in this article.

Towards a Situated and Relational Social Ontology of Disaster Resilience

In this section, drawing from scholars of international relations, feminist disaster studies and political ecology, we propose a relational social ontology for resilience. By social ontology we mean ontology that is "centered in relationality and interdependence" (Bracke, 2016, 72, for more detailed account of social ontology, see Baumann and Rehbein 2020). Further, our focus on relationality and interdependence centres around intersectionality of power and hierarchies, situated and contextualised knowledge production, and an analytical focus on the everyday scale (Cretney, 2019; Jauhola, 2015) of disasters. By this we hope to gain a more nuanced understanding of the lived experiences of disaster resilience in different contexts and historical moments. Such situated knowledge acknowledges its own partiality, the ways in which circumstances of knowledge production shape the knowledge itself (Rose, 1997).

Scholars who build on the "ontology of potentiality" (Nelson, 2014 p. 6) recognize the potential of resilience as the foundation for more radical and subversive forms of politics to emerge, especially in post-disaster contexts (Greenberg, 2014). For such scholars, the notion of systemic and socio-structural transformation has been at the core of conceptualising resilience and a wide range of theoretical standpoints have emerged in this exercise of re-appropriation, ranging from the post-capitalist politics, Marxist political economy (O'Keefe *et al.* 1976), and a combination of post-colonial perspectives and assemblage theory (Grove, 2013), to name a few. These explorations for alternatives, centre on everyday forms of resistance and local scale in the place of the macro social and economic systems, institutions and policy frameworks hegemonized by the neoliberal discourses. Thus, by emphasizing on the place-specific historical trajectories of resilience, it opens space for not a single unified neoliberal conception of resilience, but for many options (Grove, 2013). Consequently, the opportunity to explore place-specific historical trajectories of resilience and the diverse visions of marginalized individuals and communities from different contexts emerges: to

further the exercise of exploring alternate opportunities for resilience in the context of risk and uncertainties.

Furthermore, a number of scholars whose work actively engages with the politics of disasters and discourses on materiality of resilience, draw from empirical post-disaster research and suggest that resilience scholarship ought to take a closer look at the politics of resilience at the level of interaction, materiality and experience of disasters and their recovery efforts (such as Enarson, 2012; Cretney, 2019). Specifically, we draw on such scholars who firstly have focused on conceptualising (gendered) politics of resilience that is both situated and intersects with that of class, race, caste and other power hierarchies and differences. Feminist political ecologists (see e.g., Di Chiro, 2017) and black feminists (Jacobs, 2019), for example, have argued for situated knowledge production and attention to intersectionality in the disaster context. For example, Enarson (2012), drawing heavily from US-based Women of Color grassroots organising, has suggested that feminist approaches to disasters should acknowledge and work on a structural approach to resilience that emphasizes human action finding expression through groups, organisations, coalitions and networks (Enarson, 2012p. 184). Even more critically, Lizarralde et al. (2020) in interrogating the strangeness of academic theoretical concepts to lived experiences, suggest that any analysis of the current challenges of climate change, or disasters should not be withdrawn from the struggles of social justice. Accordingly, Cretney (2019) has suggested a more dynamic and complex understanding of the politics of disasters, drawing attention to the empirical "everyday", when the de/re-politicization of disaster experience, and interpretations of better futures are constantly contested.

In our attempt to take a critical stand of dominant individual and independent ontology of scholarship and research in neoliberal universities, and of describing practices of resilience, we draw from the rich black feminist, and indigenous practice of quilts that is extended as a metaphor to qualitative research methods (see e.g. Lyytikäinen et al. 2020; Joseph et. al. 2021) and storytelling of black and brown histories that "counter the silent consuming whiteness of normative legitimated knowledge and theory" (Misra 2009 p. 2) as a form of research methodology, through which multiple, yet interconnected meaning-making

processes that connect individual life histories and structures of governance to wider cultural forces and phenomena, are analysed. In her book, bell hooks (1990 p.155) describes how for the methodology "I have relied on fragments, bits and pieces of information found here and there". In contrast to the dominant forms of research praxis, research inspired by quilt making focuses on materiality, situated knowledge, layered temporalities, affects and memories that are embedded in each individual quilt, woven by hand . Further, rather than trying to convince the reader of the "truth" discovered through such co-creation and labouring, we suggest that research endeavours to be regarded as collective forms of learning, reflecting and provoking discussion from such situated knowledges that get easily either side-lined, missed, or forgotten in the research that is framed by speed, impact and policy-relevance.

What follows is six pieces each offering a context in which resilience is both used, politicized and resisted. Each has a connection to the aftermath of disasters, and ways in which collective action and coming together speak of sociality. These vignettes draw from the authors' research between 2015 and 2020 in six contexts on disaster resilience through various angles.

Life Historical Account of Kachchh 2001 earthquake: Challenging Ontologies of Disasters and Resilience

Resilience translates into Gujarati as સ્થિતિ સ્થાપકતા or "sthiti thapakta". This refers to a situation in which skin is pinched, or rubber or fresh bamboo stick is bent, and after a temporary shift, the matter moves back to its original position. We suggest that borrowing such a metaphor into a lived experience of disasters is a violent one: when something changes, it is impossible for someone to return to the same life situation. Such a narrow understanding of resilience violently narrows the holistic understanding of lived realities into insufficient lists of life as one-off events and statistical calculations.

"When I think of those days, I feel like the earth will break apart and I will merge into it"

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This sentence, narrated one hour into a life historical interview by Kalila[2] in the wider context of understanding long-term recovery dynamics twenty years after the Kachchh earthquake, led us to consider: how life historical research challenges the assumed temporalities, and priorities, that disaster researchers should focus on. Kalila's life history reveals that the idiom used by her, "earth will break", does not refer to that of the 2001 Kachchh earthquake, but rather, how some ten years earlier she had left her violent husband and father-in-law in Uttar Pradesh (UP) with her small children and taken the first train on the station and arrived in Bhuj, district capital of Kachchh district in Gujarat.

Listening to Kalila's life history narrative carefully suggests that aftermaths of disasters, when situated in wider life historical narratives, varying experiential landscapes and their detail, may dislocate the eventful disaster, such as an earthquake, and recentre other more silent disasters and intersectional structural violence at play. Yet, paying attention to the longitudinal experiences of displacement, a fuller picture emerges: having broken the gendered violence of her in-law family, and rebuilding her life from scratch in Kachchh, she has entered twenty years of continued displacement and material dispossession that continues up until today. As a result, her and her family's relationship with formal disaster recovery is a complex and troubled one: through anger she paints her resistance to both the structural patriarchal values of her (in-law) family, gendered and classed discrimination questioning her motherhood experienced during the aid recovery period, and caste/religious discrimination experienced living as a single-headed minority woman in the urban Kachchh.

We suggest that life histories challenge the ontology of disasters as events, and resilience as an individual trait. Rather, they offer important ontological clue for understanding lives lived in an aftermath of a disaster, to be intimately connected to complex other life experiences that may or may not be directly connected to that of the disaster that has caused the initial post-earthquake 2001 displacement - challenging both simple beneficiary categories and fundamental understandings of what disasters consist of.

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[2] Pseudonyms are used throughout this manuscript to protect the anonymity of all research respondents.

Finally, throughout the transcription and translation process, we kept returning to the personal pronouns in Hindi used by Kalila. Most of the time, she would refer to the unfolding events by using "hum हम" or "we". At times, when she expressed her emotional responses, especially expressing anger, she would shift to using "mai मैं " or "I". Such strategic uses of pronouns like "I" and "we" forces us to consider the possibility that responding to such structures of violence and disasters is intersubjective and connected in solidarity from the start. However, at times requires a rupture, the dissident and affirmative "I" opposing such continuities. Those may offer insights into ways in which social and economic navigation and adjustment happens, forcing the researchers to readjust and revise their theorising on disasters and understanding of resilience (see e.g. Jauhola, 2015).

Grassroots Representation and Assertion as Community Resilience in Bihar, India

The case of Vistapit Mukti Vahini, a grassroot movement for the rehabilitation of marginalized communities displaced by riverbank erosion in West Champaran district of Bihar is used to reflect on the nature of grassroots assertion in the context of disasters and its implications for building resilience. In India, the Bihar state and its West Champaran district are known for being vulnerable to floods. The vulnerability is further aggravated by extreme structural inequalities resulting in high rates of landlessness especially among agrarian communities. Historically the landless bear a disproportionate burden of recurrent floods resulting in extreme forms of marginalization and deprivation. If not floods, the plight of the poor and the exploited peasants caught public attention much earlier than independence resulting in the launch of social movements such as Gandhi's 'Champaran Satyagraha' of 1917 and the Jaiprakash Narayan's Movement of 1974, from the West Champaran district. Though not much has changed since then, the Visthapit Mukti Vahini a grassroots micro movement of the landless dalits draws inspiration from these social movements and adopts the strategy of non-violence and Satyagraha in asserting their rights for access to land. The case illustrates how the efforts of a single individual in writing applications for homestead land to various officials in 2002 emerged into a full-fledged collective micro movement to address structural inequalities over the past two decades.

In 2002, after dropping out of postgraduate education due to economic hardship, 21-year-old Mr M returned to his Musahar community living by the roadside on encroached government land. Floods, erosion and displacement were part of the community's everyday lived reality since their first displacement in 1977. Thus, Mr M put his education to the best use in writing applications seeking rehabilitation, however they went unheard. Strongly grounded in his ideology "*Everyone needs land and a voice that can be heard", h*e reached out for support to mobilize his own community and similar communities in the region. Like minded micro movements - Lok Sangarsh Samiti and Parchadari Sangarsh Vahini joined hands to support each other's struggle for justice as put forth by one of the leaders: "*All three struggles are friends of each other. They participate in each other's struggle. They unite as and when required, which is how they derive their strength........Whenever there is a crowd that gathers for a strike, the Superintendent of Police, or other government officials present at the site, will talk to them nicely. This would not have been possible had they been alone or in smaller numbers".* The micro movement that began as an individual writing applications has now become a movement of 30 marginalized communities displaced by erosion. They have managed to settle 562 families and capture 130 acres of land for the purpose of rehabilitation of displaced communities. As the movement is based on grassroots representation, building critical consciousness among the marginalized illiterate community becomes the prerequisite and a challenge.

The case highlights the relational social ontology of historically contextualized subversive practices of resilience that emphasize critical consciousness, coalition building and collective action to address issues of structural inequality and justice in the context of disasters. The case elucidates how resilience intersects with materiality, power hierarchies and differences based on caste, class, and gender, and the long drawn autonomous process of building resilience to disasters. The case re-affirms the significance of flexibility and adaptation, but identifies it to be only a preliminary stage in the transition process from that of an a critical state of being to liberation, which is often interchangeably used with empowerment and resilience.

Socio-cultural Resilience in the aftermath of tsunami in Aceh, Indonesia

Focusing on interviews conducted in the aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami, this section suggests that the concept of resilience can be defined as being situated between the social and cultural construction of reality. By social construction of reality, we refer to the active role community members have in formulating their social reality, including formulations of disaster and crisis via social interaction (Falkheimer & Heide, 2009). The cultural construction of reality is related to the meaning-making of events (Panter-Brick, Eggerman & Ungar, 2012). Whether disaster is seen as an unusual or a usual event, and part of the continuum, is affected by social construction of time and temporality. These constructions influence the way people take actions to mitigate disasters.

Based on their worldview, the survivors of the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami, expressed disaster as part of an existence to live with, but also as part of relating to those you share values with, in which Islam plays a major role. Expressing oneself, and culture through Islamic religious beliefs and traditions, has deep roots in the soul of the Acehnese, often also expressed in "the need to reassert an Islamic identity" (Salim, 2004 p. 80). In fact, the Indonesian government granted Aceh autonomy by enacting a special law in 2001, as part of the attempts to resolve the thirty year-long armed conflict between the Government of Indonesia and the Aceh Free Movement (GAM) recognizing Acehnese sovereignty over managing religion, education, and customary matters.

Resilience in Indonesian translates into *ketahanan* and *theun* in Acehnese, meaning which relates to the need for physical and mental strength, resourcefulness, and adaptive capacity in unfortunate situations. Furthermore, of utmost importance is the concept of community, or *masyarakat*, expressing the idea of togetherness and mutual assistance, or *gotong royong* (Jellinek, 2000). Village life is embedded in the life of families, relatives and the community, led by the village leader. In disasters this pattern is not any different: family members look to the community members for information and mutual help (Romo-Murphy *et al.,* 2011).

Seven focus group interviews, consisting of different age groups, on lived experience of tsunami were conducted in the Greater Aceh area in 2009. These discussions revealed how respondents related their experiences to the socio-cultural aspects of resilience. As long as

participants knew their family was safe, they felt they had survived. Thus, disaster survival was basically related to considering other people's needs, and included being helped by the community, as in the case of the elderly and the children.

Religious rituals, such as Muslim prayers and chanting, facilitated disaster mitigation now and in the future, and it was suggested they might even help to avoid future disasters. Specifically, for the elderly, the religious worldview removed the fear of future disasters: *"Why to be afraid – disaster is from Allah."* Accordingly, the elderly people are believed to be protected by their religious convictions, but they also rely on the family and community for practical help. Further, seeing disasters as a continuum and part of life that can not be predicted, was manifested through expressions such as: *"Although the world and disasters were created by Allah, why do people feel they can predict disasters?"* (Non-elderly male FG participant 2)

In sum, religious conviction seems to have strengthened the capacity of the Acehnese to survive and make sense of what happened. Survival mechanisms were expressed in the communal and cultural realms. The focus group participants related resilience to the survival of others, being helped by the community, and to the will of a religious sovereign. Similar two realms of resilience were also discovered by Hestyanti (2006) in interviewing Acehnese children who survived the tsunami. Overall, the early revival of religious and cultural practices, rituals and associations have been vital in recovering from the tsunami (ACARP, 2007). Thus, it is the rich cultural repertoires, as well as the social networks, which created resilience and facilitated the survival of the Acehnese during the Indian Ocean disaster of 2004.

Resilience in Nepal: a buzz word stemming from the international aid community

Interviewer: What is the word for resilience in Nepali?

Interviewee: Uthanshilata (उत्थानशिलता)

Interviewer: Is there such a word? I have never heard of it.

Interviewee: I know! Not many preople know this.

(Interview with a government official in Nepal, December 2016)

There is no direct translation of resilience in Nepali. A new word was curated by the concerned stakeholders as it became a buzzword in disaster management. Although *Uthanshilata* उत्थानशिलता is an official translation, many people in Nepal do not know this word. Locally, resilience is understood as *lachakta (लचकता),* which could be translated as flexibility. It means being adaptive or having the ability to survive in any situation. It's about inner strength, realised through the support of the family and social networks. It does not refer to any external intervention designed to build people's resilience. In this sense, resilience is a combination of personal, social and cultural capital.

Nepal is a developing country which has been subject to many political upheavals in the past three decades. Soon after the establishment of democracy in 1990, Nepal went into a ten year long civil war (1996-2006). Although it has been 15 years since the peace agreement was signed, the country is still dealing with conflict-related grievances (Yadav, 2020). Moreover, Nepal is vulnerable to various forms of disasters. Every year, thousands of people are affected by floods, landslides, fire, drought and so forth. Nepal is also prone to earthquakes due to its seismic location. The 2015 earthquake alone killed nearly 9,000 people and millions of people lost their homes. Nepal is also known as a most climate vulnerable country, making it a perfect location for neoliberal resilience building projects.

Nepal could broadly be categorised as a collective society, where the social and the cultural capital weigh more than the economic capital. In the times of crisis, people rely on their families and communities more than the government. For instance, when the 2015 earthquake destroyed several villages, the support from their extended families and friends arrived faster than the government or the international communities. Therefore, to understand the ontological positioning of resilience in the local context, one has to understand the political, social, cultural and ecological factors that have shaped the way people view and address their problems in life.

Although resilience was not a new terminology for those working on disaster risk reduction in Nepal, it became a buzzword, and picked up momentum after the 2015 earthquakes. It has

attracted a lot of funding in recent years, which also means that its interpretation and scope have also expanded. Almost every organisation in Nepal uses this term. However, out of the 21 organisations interviewed as part of this research, none said that they had a working definition of resilience. Resilience was understood differently by different organisations. Some considered skills-oriented programmes to be resilience building and others claimed income generation to be their resilience building project. Although some of these organisations were happy to use the word resilience, others had reservations.

The meaning of resilience has evolved since its origin in physical science and the most recent definition of resilience emphasises on transformation, i.e., 'building back better'. However, in practice resilience is still understood as 'coping' or the ability to revert to 'normal'. In both of these understandings, disaster is considered inevitable or at least the threat of the disaster is perceived inevitable (Bracke, 2016), which means the existing unequal power relations and discriminatory social conditions remain unquestioned, even in interventions designed to build resilience of the local people/community. For example, in Nepal, women were provided with some skills training, such as masson training, swimming lessons and so on. Resilience in this context was understood as coping or creating alternative livelihood options. However, issues such as gender-based violence that increases in the times of disaster were not part of the resilience discourse.

The Valparaíso fire of 2014: The politics of constructing *community* resilience in Chile

In 2014, a fire spread in the low-income and informal settlements of Valparaíso in Chile, destroying some 3000 houses (PNUD, 2014). The initial research question in studying the fire could be distilled to "how does external aid contribute to community resilience?". This vignette scrutinizes the research question to illustrate how *community* resilience might fall short of bringing relationality to resilience.

Focus on *community* resilience was chosen, assuming that people affected by disasters are not individual suffering survivors, but actors that have collective agency to shape their circumstances in the aftermath of a disaster. The issue with this assumption was not that Chilean people living in informal and low-income settlements do not have agency, solidarity,

or capacity for self-organisation. That these neighbourhoods exist and were being rebuilt is a testament to that. Instead, the issue is that communities are not singular, clear-cut or isolated (e.g., Titz *et al.* 2018). In particular, communities are not disconnected from the neoliberal political economy and its subject making efforts (see Bracke, 2016). While communities may become relatively autonomous, communities are also likely to be crafted and guided by what could be called "formal" stakeholders that have access to resources and hold power in the political economy. As discussed earlier, the resilience of the "community" then is relational and dependent on these stakeholders. A focus on community, while not necessarily individualistic, cuts the connection to the unequal dynamics of the political economy at large.

Following the Valparaíso fire, the operationalized concept of community could have encompassed the people directly affected by the disaster, the people living in certain neighbourhoods (*barrios*) or on certain hills (*cerros*). The community could have been the people and their relations after the disaster, before the disaster, or over time. A division between formal and informal neighbourhoods (e.g., *toma* signifying claim/occupation) could have been made. The community could have been the people brought together by social movements, 'apolitical' community centres (*centros comunitarios*), 'official' neighbourhood organisations with link to governments (*juntas de vecinos* for formal settlements and *committees* for informal ones), or as beneficiary groups of particular NGOs (such as *TECHO para Chile* or the local *Red Cross* charter). Constructing or operationalizing the concept of a resilient community as independent of other stakeholders was almost impossible. Yet the initial research question made a strong distinction between the community as independent, and "external" aid coming from outside it.

This brings us to the notion of *external aid* in the research question, referring to "aid" provided by actors external to the community. A major issue with this conceptualisation and the initial research question is that it assumes the disaster-affected people and their communities to have human capital that aid – economic capital in some form – coming from "outside" would boost (cf. Neocleous in Bracke, 2016). Hence, by framing "aid" and formal actors of political economy providing it as external, the research question was strengthening the illusion that (1) resilience of "communities" stems from the social relations within the

group of disaster-affected people, from their human capital and labour, while (2) the economic capital in all its forms is external to "communities" and their resilience.

The vignette highlights that to provide understanding about disasters, a researcher participates in constructing how sociality is interpreted and acted upon. While a focus on *community* resilience might imply that resilience is not ontologically individualistic, it can serve to disconnect disaster-affected people's resilience from the political economy at large. "Communities" of disaster affected people are not independent from other actors, nor should economic resources be framed as being external to these communities. A more relational and political perspective to resilience is important to avoid blaming "communities" for the economic impacts of disasters that they face.

Resilience dominant model's limitations and effects when performing in Andean territories

How do we dwell in disaster risk? Risk is territoriality, understood as relations binding individuals and groups with their environments. It is both endogenous and exogenous, socially perceived and accepted. Its materialization in disasters marks landscapes and collective memories.

For Andean territories, there is an apparent contradiction between everyday life and recurring disasters, by definition irruptive, occasional and exceptional. The region's history is rich and diverse in adaptation strategies to disaster risk. Evidence of these adaptations are colonial settlements displaced due to disasters (Musset, 2011), *adobe* vernacular architecture with seismic resistant techniques (Jorquera, 2017) or current popular housing with informal seismic prevention mechanisms reappropriation (Tapia, 2019), hybrid cultural and religious expressions such as 'celestial advocates', saints and processions believed to protect from specific disaster such as Christ of May in Santiago of Chile or Cusco's 'Taytacha Temblores', Lord of the Earthquakes (Onetto, 2017).

It is intuitive to link resilience with dwelling in risk contexts, and yet the concept quickly presents several limitations that call into question its usefulness for understanding Latin American territorial processes. Indeed, Andean territories present important vulnerabilities to climate change and elevated disaster risk - due to their exposure to multiple hazards

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significant in frequencies and magnitudes, their social vulnerabilities and the physical vulnerability of their settlements, while presenting territorialities that express a rich history of adaptations to risk. Despite this, spatial practices, territorial relations, disaster responses and reconstructions contradict the intuition of an *Andean resilience* understood from the dominant conceptual frameworks, which leads us to question these frameworks.

Criticisms of resilience focus on the concept's ambiguity, its uses with conflicting effects with its desirable and positive values, its lack of consideration of social justice or situated knowledge. Less developed is the questioning of resilience frameworks and tools from their dimension of scientific, technical and conceptual *models* for the design, legitimization and implementation of territorial interventions. Models, as knowledge mediation instruments and practices, are situated, mediated and in dispute: they can facilitate or allow human actions, acting on territories.

One of resilience models' major biases is that are urban oriented, perceiving cities as networks systems and nature as a container supporting these networks, putting aside other social collective or individual alternative representations, such as space and time nonlinear conceptions of Mapuche indigenuous culture (Loncon, 2019) or multiple temporalities superposition that breaks with traditional/modern dichotomy (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2010)

In other cases, dominant conceptualizations focus on the resilience of *places* (communities or neighbourhoods) conceiving these as closed and precisely defined spaces, revealing an essentialist conceptualization of places. These models, promoted by global programs such as the OECD's Resilient cities or the United Nations' Making Cities Resilient, lack of multi-scale perspectives can lead to territorial processes in the name of resilience that have contradictory effects. For example, electromobility transition in Global North cities in the name of resilience towards climate change stresses global lithium consumption, pressuring lithium extraction sites in the *Salar de Atacama* (Chile), generating water scarcity for local indigenous communities whose resilience is then fully compromised (Agusdinata *et al.* 2018).

Inspired by Latin American decolonial literature and in continuity with regional perspectives that linked development models, disaster risk, socio-spatial inequalities, exploitation of natural resources and sustainability of lives, a current trend in disaster critical studies

proposes a reappropriation and politicization of resilience, grounded on territorial contexts, subverting global categories of hegemonic models. Sandoval-Díaz (2020) links everyday resistance tactics (social protests, demonstrations) and resilience strategies (collective mobilisation for housing relocation) post 2015 floods in Atacama, Chile, pointing out the gap between the technocratic risk perception (and subsequent risk reduction actions) and risk acceptability of local communities. Such a gap has been repeatedly highlighted in recent post-disaster conflicts, in particular regarding relocation during reconstruction (Ugarte & Salgado, 2014). By developing a situated meaning of resilience for Mapuche communities in southern Chile, Atallah (2016) challenges the depoliticized mainstream notion of resilience and highlights the importance of integrating in resilience studies dimensions such as complex histories of settler colonization, land disputes, social inequalities and political repression.

Discussion

Through the six vignettes we have discussed the use, politicization and resistance to resilience in the aftermath of disasters in four countries. The paper explores the relational social ontology of resilience, through the research question "how do we understand resilience in each of our (research) contexts and where does it come from?".

The first vignette illustrates resilience as a personal, but not an individual, experience. Disasters, conceived as socially constructed and as an outcome of structural violence, when situated in wider life historical and experiential narratives, dislocate the "eventful disaster", such as an earthquake, and recentre other more silent disasters and intersectional structural violence at play. Following a life historical account of Kalila in Kachchh, and her strategic use of "I" and "we", allows us to consider that responding to disasters and structures of violence is, from the start, intersubjective and connected in solidarity.

In seeing resilience as resistance and subversive practices (cf. Grove, 2013), the second vignette re-affirms the collective nature of resilience in contexts mediated by social structure and relations of dominion and exploitation. Barriers like impoverishment and illiteracy of members further elucidates the relevance of relationality that includes dependency on

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infrastructural conditions, legacies of discourse and institutional power that precede and structure the collective's very existence and impede collective action.

The third vignette, meanwhile, embeds resilience in cultural and political institutions in a place. The case of Acehnese could be paralleled along with Ungar (2013) that 'resilience is not as much an individual construct, but it is a quality of the environment and its capacity to facilitate growth' and that mechanisms that are related to positive developments are sensitive to social and cultural variations. The experience of Achenese shows the socio-cultural aspects of resilience, which are interdependent and communal.

The fourth vignette reflects on "resilience" as an imported concept on the one hand, and as a material practice on the other. In particular, the case of Nepal draws attention to the co-option of the term resilience by the service providers for their own advantage. It draws attention to the limitations of the resilience building projects and suggests that to make this concept work, one needs to situate it into the local context and address the root causes of the problem.

The fifth vignette problematizes the uncritical deployment of the concepts "resilience" and "community" in research on disasters. If a resilience approach associates human capital with the disaster-affected "community", while economic capital is associated with "external actors", this hides the interrelations of the political economy. The "external" actors may be the ones shaping and defining what the community is. By paying attention to conceptualisations, the case reminds that researchers participate in grafting the understanding of sociality in disasters.

The sixth vignette turns the analytical gaze on resilience on a larger scale, raising the question of bias in the dominant resilience model and the possible effects of these when used for understanding or enhancing territorial resilience. Concurrently with global and universal models of resilience, South American perspectives on resilience are seeking to situate resilience conceptual foundations, leading to a politicization of resilience practices.

Conclusions

During uncertain times, "resilience" is called for and mobilized by various actors across the political and geographical spectrum to manage shocks in the present and imagine futures beyond them. The discourse of resilience has been extensively explored and scrutinized within the disaster practitioner and researcher communities (e.g., Manyena, 2006; Alexander, 2013) and has been deployed in the aftermath of COVID-19 even in contexts that were not typically thought of as disaster prone. However, the various mutations and local interpretations of this contagious notion call for continuing the interrogation.

The compatibility of "resilience" with neoliberal agendas has duly been noted, with some critical thinkers urging abandonment of the concept altogether (MacKinnon & Derickson, 2013). However, rather than abandoning the concept, we have explored six manifestations or interpretations of resilience across diverse research contexts. The vignettes do not speak to one truth, and our effort to connect the vignettes to local everyday scales does not allow for definitive exclamations. However, there are a few key themes on social ontology of resilience that the vignettes uncover.

Firstly, if resilience is essentially seen as relational, the portrayals and framings of it should reflect this. However, the relationality can be explored on different scales and with respect to various actors. The first vignette pays attention to an individual and their ties. These ties are shown to be vital to resilience, yet not uninterrupted or uncomplicated. Meanwhile, the second vignette shows how collective resilience comes into being through action, and relationality is thus not a characteristic possessed but an action practiced. In the third vignette, in contrast, relationality is shown through drawing attention to various cultural and political institutions in the given region -- ranging from village governance structures to religion. The fourth and fifth vignettes, meanwhile, draw the role of practitioners and researchers into focus: these external actors not only define resilience post-facto, but they are also embedded in the phenomenon itself. The sixth vignette brings forth the manifestation of inter-scalar relationality in territorial resilience, looking at conceptual and technical models designed predominantly in Global North centres and circulating globally, but ultimately impacting territories in their representations, processes and every-day lives.

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Secondly, what becomes clear is that relationality of resilience not only implies the connections of people with one another but is strongly linked to the materiality of the political economy. The second vignette highlights how for those depending on land for livelihood, access to land is necessary for resilience. Here resilience is not only an end product, but part of the struggle for land. The fourth vignette subtly weaves together the materiality of losses (homes, villages, lives) and that of the disasters (earthquake, flood, fire) faced by those framed as "resilient" in the fashionable NGO-sphere lingo. The fifth affirms that , if uncritically wielded, abstract framings such as "resilient community" can end up as rather obscuring the connections between the "community" and the infrastructures, institutions and the political economy at large that sustain it. The sixth looks at alternative conceptualizations that seek to politicize resilience, situating it historically and linking it with social conflicts and collective resistance techniques.

Thirdly, the vignettes highlight that resilience and its relationalities, interdependencies should be seen as temporal. Some of the vignettes are centred on a particular disaster, and they are thus shaped around a before and an after an event. However, our reading of "resilience" allows us to see that the critiqued "bounce back" narrative (Manyena, 2006) is not present in the vignettes. Rather, the relations of people to one another and the structures that sustain them are seen as in flux, due to, and independent of disasters. The first, second and fourth vignette, for instance, highlight the continuities between pre-disaster and post-disaster and more silent structural violence at play, including extractive and exploitative cross border relations of resource use and trade. Similarly, the sixth vignette discusses changes in dominant conceptualizations of resilience when situating them in a history of territorial conflicts or questioning them with alternative time-space representations.

In summary, disaster is not an event, no singular event nor singular actor, rather pluriverse of connected, relational and intersubjective interfaces. When brought together, these lived experiences in the paper reach out to theorising on interscalarity: "zooming in and out on many scales and to the interscalar "and "[a]djustable lens to be attuned to see and hear the local and a lens that can be widened to national, regional, global or other levels" (Braithwaite & D'Costa, 2018 p. 21). Vignettes explored in this piece point towards interscalar sensitivity:

towards relationally experienced violence and power relations, but also how everydayness, and situated knowledge may help in quilting social ontologies and intersubjectively experienced disasters.

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