



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

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

### 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.<sup>1</sup> 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”, its supposed naturalness has been criticized for disguising the capitalist logics and ontologies embedded into its use. Thus, resilience is heavily

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

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3 critiqued, but scholars disagree on its scale of potentiality. Some totally reject the concept, as  
4 a form of neoliberalism (Bracke, 2016; MacKinnon and Derickson, 2012) or as a tautology that  
5 only provides a new term but no new action on the ground (Comfort *et al.*, 2001; Park, 2011  
6 and Reghezza-Zitt *et al.*, 2012). Others argue for an alternative articulation of resilience that  
7 can, or does already exist (Grove, 2013). The critiques of neoliberal resilience are varied,  
8 ranging from the roll-back of the state to appropriation of socio-structural transformative  
9 change. In this paper we build upon the problematization of the neoliberal individualist social  
10 ontology, exploring the option of a social ontology centred in relationality and  
11 interdependence - as proposed by Sarah Bracke (2016).  
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22 While the roots and implications (Manyena, 2006) of resilience have been broadly explored,  
23 its prominence and evolution call for continuing interrogation. In particular, there is a need  
24 to study the manifestation and materialization of the concept and discourse in the social  
25 world (Cretney, 2019). The conceptual models of resilience have mainly been developed in  
26 the global North, yet promotion and use has primarily concerned global South territories and  
27 communities (Aliste and Marin, 2020). To understand the translation of resilience from a  
28 generic concept to situated materialization, our paper focuses on the everyday and  
29 experiences of disasters and explores the diverse visions of resilience among marginalized  
30 individuals and communities living with risk and uncertainty.  
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41 In the rest of the manuscript, we firstly discuss a social ontology of disaster resilience that  
42 foregrounds relationality, intersectionality, and situated knowledge. Secondly, we introduce  
43 our research methodology of co-creation through quilting. Thirdly, we interrogate the uses  
44 and politics of resilience through six situated analyses, asking how the understandings of  
45 resilience change, if we are attuned to the relational social ontology. In each of our research  
46 contexts, ideas and practices of resilience stem from neoliberal/individualist forces, and  
47 streams of collective, relational and interdependent coexistence. This suggests that  
48 understanding resilience through the relational social ontology not only uncovers the  
49 neoliberal individuality of neoliberalism, but also resists the neoliberal readings of disaster  
50 prone or affected communities. We agree with Gibson-Graham (2006) in suggesting that  
51 over-theorizing neoliberal capitalism could contribute to its hegemony and obscure  
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3 alternative discourses. Thus, instead of suggesting the abandonment of “resilience” as  
4 neoliberal or redundant, we suggest reclaiming it through situated accounts of which we  
5 provide tangible examples in this article.  
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### 9 **Towards a Situated and Relational Social Ontology of Disaster Resilience**

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13 In this section, drawing from scholars of international relations, feminist disaster studies and  
14 political ecology, we propose a relational social ontology for resilience. By social ontology we  
15 mean ontology that is “centered in relationality and interdependence” (Bracke, 2016, 72, for  
16 more detailed account of social ontology, see Baumann and Rehbein 2020). Further, our focus  
17 on relationality and interdependence centres around intersectionality of power and  
18 hierarchies, situated and contextualised knowledge production, and an analytical focus on  
19 the everyday scale (Cretney, 2019; Jauhola, 2015) of disasters. By this we hope to gain a more  
20 nuanced understanding of the lived experiences of disaster resilience in different contexts  
21 and historical moments. Such situated knowledge acknowledges its own partiality, the ways  
22 in which circumstances of knowledge production shape the knowledge itself (Rose, 1997).  
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33 Scholars who build on the “ontology of potentiality” (Nelson, 2014 p. 6) recognize the  
34 potential of resilience as the foundation for more radical and subversive forms of politics to  
35 emerge, especially in post-disaster contexts (Greenberg, 2014). For such scholars, the notion  
36 of systemic and socio-structural transformation has been at the core of conceptualising  
37 resilience and a wide range of theoretical standpoints have emerged in this exercise of re-  
38 appropriation, ranging from the post-capitalist politics, Marxist political economy (O’Keefe *et*  
39 *al.* 1976), and a combination of post-colonial perspectives and assemblage theory (Grove,  
40 2013), to name a few. These explorations for alternatives, centre on everyday forms of  
41 resistance and local scale in the place of the macro social and economic systems, institutions  
42 and policy frameworks hegemonized by the neoliberal discourses. Thus, by emphasizing on  
43 the place-specific historical trajectories of resilience, it opens space for not a single unified  
44 neoliberal conception of resilience, but for many options (Grove, 2013). Consequently, the  
45 opportunity to explore place-specific historical trajectories of resilience and the diverse  
46 visions of marginalized individuals and communities from different contexts emerges: to  
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3 further the exercise of exploring alternate opportunities for resilience in the context of risk  
4 and uncertainties.  
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9 Furthermore, a number of scholars whose work actively engages with the politics of disasters  
10 and discourses on materiality of resilience, draw from empirical post-disaster research and  
11 suggest that resilience scholarship ought to take a closer look at the politics of resilience at  
12 the level of interaction, materiality and experience of disasters and their recovery efforts  
13 (such as Enarson, 2012; Cretney, 2019). Specifically, we draw on such scholars who firstly have  
14 focused on conceptualising (gendered) politics of resilience that is both situated and  
15 intersects with that of class, race, caste and other power hierarchies and differences. Feminist  
16 political ecologists (see e.g., Di Chiro, 2017) and black feminists (Jacobs, 2019), for example,  
17 have argued for situated knowledge production and attention to intersectionality in the  
18 disaster context. For example, Enarson (2012), drawing heavily from US-based Women of  
19 Color grassroots organising, has suggested that feminist approaches to disasters should  
20 acknowledge and work on a structural approach to resilience that emphasizes human action  
21 finding expression through groups, organisations, coalitions and networks (Enarson, 2012p.  
22 184). Even more critically, Lizarralde et al. (2020) in interrogating the strangeness of academic  
23 theoretical concepts to lived experiences, suggest that any analysis of the current challenges  
24 of climate change, or disasters should not be withdrawn from the struggles of social justice.  
25 Accordingly, Cretney (2019) has suggested a more dynamic and complex understanding of the  
26 politics of disasters, drawing attention to the empirical “everyday”, when the de/re-  
27 politicization of disaster experience, and interpretations of better futures are constantly  
28 contested.  
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48 In our attempt to take a critical stand of dominant individual and independent ontology of  
49 scholarship and research in neoliberal universities, and of describing practices of resilience,  
50 we draw from the rich black feminist, and indigenous practice of quilts that is extended as a  
51 metaphor to qualitative research methods (see e.g. Lyytikäinen et al. 2020; Joseph et. al.  
52 2021) and storytelling of black and brown histories that “counter the silent consuming  
53 whiteness of normative legitimated knowledge and theory” (Misra 2009 p. 2) as a form of  
54 research methodology, through which multiple, yet interconnected meaning-making  
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3 processes that connect individual life histories and structures of governance to wider cultural  
4 forces and phenomena, are analysed. In her book, bell hooks (1990 p.155) describes how for  
5 the methodology “I have relied on fragments, bits and pieces of information found here and  
6 there”. In contrast to the dominant forms of research praxis, research inspired by quilt making  
7 focuses on materiality, situated knowledge, layered temporalities, affects and memories that  
8 are embedded in each individual quilt, woven by hand . Further, rather than trying to convince  
9 the reader of the “truth” discovered through such co-creation and labouring, we suggest that  
10 research endeavours to be regarded as collective forms of learning, reflecting and provoking  
11 discussion from such situated knowledges that get easily either side-lined, missed, or  
12 forgotten in the research that is framed by speed, impact and policy-relevance.  
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23 What follows is six pieces each offering a context in which resilience is both used, politicized  
24 and resisted. Each has a connection to the aftermath of disasters, and ways in which collective  
25 action and coming together speak of sociality. These vignettes draw from the authors’  
26 research between 2015 and 2020 in six contexts on disaster resilience through various angles.  
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### 32 **Life Historical Account of Kachchh 2001 earthquake: Challenging Ontologies of Disasters and** 33 **Resilience** 34 35

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38 Resilience translates into Gujarati as સ્થિતિ થાપકતા or “sthiti thapakta”. This refers to a  
39 situation in which skin is pinched, or rubber or fresh bamboo stick is bent, and after a  
40 temporary shift, the matter moves back to its original position. We suggest that borrowing  
41 such a metaphor into a lived experience of disasters is a violent one: when something  
42 changes, it is impossible for someone to return to the same life situation. Such a narrow  
43 understanding of resilience violently narrows the holistic understanding of lived realities into  
44 insufficient lists of life as one-off events and statistical calculations.  
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53 “When I think of those days, I feel like the earth will break apart and I will merge into  
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3 This sentence, narrated one hour into a life historical interview by Kalila<sup>2</sup> in the wider context  
4 of understanding long-term recovery dynamics twenty years after the Kachchh earthquake,  
5 led us to consider: how life historical research challenges the assumed temporalities, and  
6 priorities, that disaster researchers should focus on. Kalila's life history reveals that the idiom  
7 used by her, "earth will break", does not refer to that of the 2001 Kachchh earthquake, but  
8 rather, how some ten years earlier she had left her violent husband and father-in-law in Uttar  
9 Pradesh (UP) with her small children and taken the first train on the station and arrived in  
10 Bhuj, district capital of Kachchh district in Gujarat.  
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20 Listening to Kalila's life history narrative carefully suggests that aftermaths of disasters, when  
21 situated in wider life historical narratives, varying experiential landscapes and their detail,  
22 may dislocate the eventful disaster, such as an earthquake, and recentre other more silent  
23 disasters and intersectional structural violence at play. Yet, paying attention to the  
24 longitudinal experiences of displacement, a fuller picture emerges: having broken the  
25 gendered violence of her in-law family, and rebuilding her life from scratch in Kachchh, she  
26 has entered twenty years of continued displacement and material dispossession that  
27 continues up until today. As a result, her and her family's relationship with formal disaster  
28 recovery is a complex and troubled one: through anger she paints her resistance to both the  
29 structural patriarchal values of her (in-law) family, gendered and classed discrimination  
30 questioning her motherhood experienced during the aid recovery period, and caste/religious  
31 discrimination experienced living as a single-headed minority woman in the urban Kachchh.  
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44 We suggest that life histories challenge the ontology of disasters as events, and resilience as  
45 an individual trait. Rather, they offer important ontological clue for understanding lives lived  
46 in an aftermath of a disaster, to be intimately connected to complex other life experiences  
47 that may or may not be directly connected to that of the disaster that has caused the initial  
48 post-earthquake 2001 displacement - challenging both simple beneficiary categories and  
49 fundamental understandings of what disasters consist of.  
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60 <sup>2</sup> Pseudonyms are used throughout this manuscript to protect the anonymity of all research respondents.

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

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27 The case of Vistapit Mukti Vahini, a grassroots movement for the rehabilitation of marginalized  
28 communities displaced by riverbank erosion in West Champaran district of Bihar is used to  
29 reflect on the nature of grassroots assertion in the context of disasters and its implications  
30 for building resilience. In India, the Bihar state and its West Champaran district are known for  
31 being vulnerable to floods. The vulnerability is further aggravated by extreme structural  
32 inequalities resulting in high rates of landlessness especially among agrarian communities.  
33 Historically the landless bear a disproportionate burden of recurrent floods resulting in  
34 extreme forms of marginalization and deprivation. If not floods, the plight of the poor and the  
35 exploited peasants caught public attention much earlier than independence resulting in the  
36 launch of social movements such as Gandhi's 'Champaran Satyagraha' of 1917 and the  
37 Jaiprakash Narayan's Movement of 1974, from the West Champaran district. Though not  
38 much has changed since then, the Visthapit Mukti Vahini a grassroots micro movement of the  
39 landless dalits draws inspiration from these social movements and adopts the strategy of non-  
40 violence and Satyagraha in asserting their rights for access to land. The case illustrates how  
41 the efforts of a single individual in writing applications for homestead land to various officials  
42 in 2002 emerged into a full-fledged collective micro movement to address structural  
43 inequalities over the past two decades.  
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3 In 2002, after dropping out of postgraduate education due to economic hardship, 21-year-old  
4 Mr M returned to his Musahar community living by the roadside on encroached government  
5 land. Floods, erosion and displacement were part of the community's everyday lived reality  
6 since their first displacement in 1977. Thus, Mr M put his education to the best use in writing  
7 applications seeking rehabilitation, however they went unheard. Strongly grounded in his  
8 ideology "*Everyone needs land and a voice that can be heard*", he reached out for support to  
9 mobilize his own community and similar communities in the region. Like minded micro  
10 movements - Lok Sangarsh Samiti and Parchadari Sangarsh Vahini joined hands to support  
11 each other's struggle for justice as put forth by one of the leaders: "*All three struggles are  
12 friends of each other. They participate in each other's struggle. They unite as and when  
13 required, which is how they derive their strength.....Whenever there is a crowd that gathers  
14 for a strike, the Superintendent of Police, or other government officials present at the site, will  
15 talk to them nicely. This would not have been possible had they been alone or in smaller  
16 numbers*". The micro movement that began as an individual writing applications has now  
17 become a movement of 30 marginalized communities displaced by erosion. They have  
18 managed to settle 562 families and capture 130 acres of land for the purpose of rehabilitation  
19 of displaced communities. As the movement is based on grassroots representation, building  
20 critical consciousness among the marginalized illiterate community becomes the prerequisite  
21 and a challenge.

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

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59 **Socio-cultural Resilience in the aftermath of tsunami in Aceh, Indonesia**  
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5 Focusing on interviews conducted in the aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and  
6 tsunami, this section suggests that the concept of resilience can be defined as being situated  
7 between the social and cultural construction of reality. By social construction of reality, we  
8 refer to the active role community members have in formulating their social reality, including  
9 formulations of disaster and crisis via social interaction (Falkheimer & Heide, 2009). The  
10 cultural construction of reality is related to the meaning-making of events (Panter-Brick,  
11 Eggerman & Ungar, 2012). Whether disaster is seen as an unusual or a usual event, and part  
12 of the continuum, is affected by social construction of time and temporality. These  
13 constructions influence the way people take actions to mitigate disasters.  
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23 Based on their worldview, the survivors of the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami,  
24 expressed disaster as part of an existence to live with, but also as part of relating to those you  
25 share values with, in which Islam plays a major role. Expressing oneself, and culture through  
26 Islamic religious beliefs and traditions, has deep roots in the soul of the Acehnese, often also  
27 expressed in “the need to reassert an Islamic identity” (Salim, 2004 p. 80). In fact, the  
28 Indonesian government granted Aceh autonomy by enacting a special law in 2001, as part of  
29 the attempts to resolve the thirty year-long armed conflict between the Government of  
30 Indonesia and the Aceh Free Movement (GAM) recognizing Acehnese sovereignty over  
31 managing religion, education, and customary matters.  
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42 Resilience in Indonesian translates into *ketahanan* and *theun* in Acehnese, meaning which  
43 relates to the need for physical and mental strength, resourcefulness, and adaptive capacity  
44 in unfortunate situations. Furthermore, of utmost importance is the concept of community,  
45 or *masyarakat*, expressing the idea of togetherness and mutual assistance, or *gotong royong*  
46 (Jellinek, 2000). Village life is embedded in the life of families, relatives and the community,  
47 led by the village leader. In disasters this pattern is not any different: family members look to  
48 the community members for information and mutual help (Romo-Murphy *et al.*, 2011).  
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56 Seven focus group interviews, consisting of different age groups, on lived experience of  
57 tsunami were conducted in the Greater Aceh area in 2009. These discussions revealed how  
58 respondents related their experiences to the socio-cultural aspects of resilience. As long as  
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3 participants knew their family was safe, they felt they had survived. Thus, disaster survival  
4 was basically related to considering other people's needs, and included being helped by the  
5 community, as in the case of the elderly and the children.  
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10 Religious rituals, such as Muslim prayers and chanting, facilitated disaster mitigation now and  
11 in the future, and it was suggested they might even help to avoid future disasters. Specifically,  
12 for the elderly, the religious worldview removed the fear of future disasters: *"Why to be afraid  
13 – disaster is from Allah."* Accordingly, the elderly people are believed to be protected by their  
14 religious convictions, but they also rely on the family and community for practical help.  
15 Further, seeing disasters as a continuum and part of life that can not be predicted, was  
16 manifested through expressions such as: *"Although the world and disasters were created by  
17 Allah, why do people feel they can predict disasters?"* (Non-elderly male FG participant 2)  
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27 In sum, religious conviction seems to have strengthened the capacity of the Acehnese to  
28 survive and make sense of what happened. Survival mechanisms were expressed in the  
29 communal and cultural realms. The focus group participants related resilience to the survival  
30 of others, being helped by the community, and to the will of a religious sovereign. Similar two  
31 realms of resilience were also discovered by Hestyanti (2006) in interviewing Acehnese  
32 children who survived the tsunami. Overall, the early revival of religious and cultural practices,  
33 rituals and associations have been vital in recovering from the tsunami (ACARP, 2007). Thus,  
34 it is the rich cultural repertoires, as well as the social networks, which created resilience and  
35 facilitated the survival of the Acehnese during the Indian Ocean disaster of 2004.  
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#### 45 **Resilience in Nepal: a buzz word stemming from the international aid community**

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49 Interviewer: What is the word for resilience in Nepali?

50 Interviewee: Uthanshilata (उत्थानशलिता)

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

52 Interviewee: I know! Not many people know this.

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57 (Interview with a government official in Nepal, December  
58 2016)  
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5 There is no direct translation of resilience in Nepali. A new word was curated by the concerned  
6 stakeholders as it became a buzzword in disaster management. Although *Uthanshilata*  
7 *उत्थानशलिता* is an official translation, many people in Nepal do not know this word. Locally,  
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9 resilience is understood as *lachakta* (*लचक्ता*), which could be translated as flexibility. It means  
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11 being adaptive or having the ability to survive in any situation. It's about inner strength,  
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13 realised through the support of the family and social networks. It does not refer to any  
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15 external intervention designed to build people's resilience. In this sense, resilience is a  
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17 combination of personal, social and cultural capital.  
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24 Nepal is a developing country which has been subject to many political upheavals in the past  
25 three decades. Soon after the establishment of democracy in 1990, Nepal went into a ten  
26 year long civil war (1996-2006). Although it has been 15 years since the peace agreement was  
27 signed, the country is still dealing with conflict-related grievances (Yadav, 2020). Moreover,  
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29 Nepal is vulnerable to various forms of disasters. Every year, thousands of people are affected  
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31 by floods, landslides, fire, drought and so forth. Nepal is also prone to earthquakes due to its  
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33 seismic location. The 2015 earthquake alone killed nearly 9,000 people and millions of people  
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35 lost their homes. Nepal is also known as a most climate vulnerable country, making it a perfect  
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37 location for neoliberal resilience building projects.  
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42 Nepal could broadly be categorised as a collective society, where the social and the cultural  
43 capital weigh more than the economic capital. In the times of crisis, people rely on their  
44 families and communities more than the government. For instance, when the 2015  
45 earthquake destroyed several villages, the support from their extended families and friends  
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47 arrived faster than the government or the international communities. Therefore, to  
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49 understand the ontological positioning of resilience in the local context, one has to  
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51 understand the political, social, cultural and ecological factors that have shaped the way  
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53 people view and address their problems in life.  
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59 Although resilience was not a new terminology for those working on disaster risk reduction  
60 in Nepal, it became a buzzword, and picked up momentum after the 2015 earthquakes. It has

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3 attracted a lot of funding in recent years, which also means that its interpretation and scope  
4 have also expanded. Almost every organisation in Nepal uses this term. However, out of the  
5 21 organisations interviewed as part of this research, none said that they had a working  
6 definition of resilience. Resilience was understood differently by different organisations.  
7 Some considered skills-oriented programmes to be resilience building and others claimed  
8 income generation to be their resilience building project. Although some of these  
9 organisations were happy to use the word resilience, others had reservations.

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

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

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

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54 Focus on *community* resilience was chosen, assuming that people affected by disasters are  
55 not individual suffering survivors, but actors that have collective agency to shape their  
56 circumstances in the aftermath of a disaster. The issue with this assumption was not that  
57 Chilean people living in informal and low-income settlements do not have agency, solidarity,  
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3 or capacity for self-organisation. That these neighbourhoods exist and were being rebuilt is a  
4 testament to that. Instead, the issue is that communities are not singular, clear-cut or isolated  
5 (e.g., Titz *et al.* 2018). In particular, communities are not disconnected from the neoliberal  
6 political economy and its subject making efforts (see Bracke, 2016). While communities may  
7 become relatively autonomous, communities are also likely to be crafted and guided by what  
8 could be called “formal” stakeholders that have access to resources and hold power in the  
9 political economy. As discussed earlier, the resilience of the “community” then is relational  
10 and dependent on these stakeholders. A focus on community, while not necessarily  
11 individualistic, cuts the connection to the unequal dynamics of the political economy at large.  
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21 Following the Valparaíso fire, the operationalized concept of community could have  
22 encompassed the people directly affected by the disaster, the people living in certain  
23 neighbourhoods (*barrios*) or on certain hills (*cerros*). The community could have been the  
24 people and their relations after the disaster, before the disaster, or over time. A division  
25 between formal and informal neighbourhoods (e.g., *toma* signifying claim/occupation) could  
26 have been made. The community could have been the people brought together by social  
27 movements, ‘apolitical’ community centres (*centros comunitarios*), ‘official’ neighbourhood  
28 organisations with link to governments (*juntas de vecinos* for formal settlements and  
29 *committees* for informal ones), or as beneficiary groups of particular NGOs (such as *TECHO*  
30 *para Chile* or the local *Red Cross* charter). Constructing or operationalizing the concept of a  
31 resilient community as independent of other stakeholders was almost impossible. Yet the  
32 initial research question made a strong distinction between the community as independent,  
33 and “external” aid coming from outside it.  
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47 This brings us to the notion of *external aid* in the research question, referring to “aid”  
48 provided by actors external to the community. A major issue with this conceptualisation and  
49 the initial research question is that it assumes the disaster-affected people and their  
50 communities to have human capital that aid – economic capital in some form – coming from  
51 “outside” would boost (cf. Neocleous in Bracke, 2016). Hence, by framing “aid” and formal  
52 actors of political economy providing it as external, the research question was strengthening  
53 the illusion that (1) resilience of “communities” stems from the social relations within the  
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3 group of disaster-affected people, from their human capital and labour, while (2) the  
4 economic capital in all its forms is external to “communities” and their resilience.  
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9 The vignette highlights that to provide understanding about disasters, a researcher  
10 participates in constructing how sociality is interpreted and acted upon. While a focus on  
11 *community* resilience might imply that resilience is not ontologically individualistic, it can  
12 serve to disconnect disaster-affected people’s resilience from the political economy at large.  
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14 “Communities” of disaster affected people are not independent from other actors, nor should  
15 economic resources be framed as being external to these communities. A more relational and  
16 political perspective to resilience is important to avoid blaming “communities” for the  
17 economic impacts of disasters that they face.  
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### 25 **Resilience dominant model’s limitations and effects when performing in Andean territories**

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28 *How do we dwell in disaster risk?* Risk is territoriality, understood as relations binding  
29 individuals and groups with their environments. It is both endogenous and exogenous, socially  
30 perceived and accepted. Its materialization in disasters marks landscapes and collective  
31 memories.  
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36 For Andean territories, there is an apparent contradiction between everyday life and  
37 recurring disasters, by definition irruptive, occasional and exceptional. The region's history is  
38 rich and diverse in adaptation strategies to disaster risk. Evidence of these adaptations are  
39 colonial settlements displaced due to disasters (Musset, 2011), *adobe* vernacular architecture  
40 with seismic resistant techniques (Jorquera, 2017) or current popular housing with informal  
41 seismic prevention mechanisms reappropriation (Tapia, 2019), hybrid cultural and religious  
42 expressions such as ‘celestial advocates’, saints and processions believed to protect from  
43 specific disaster such as Christ of May in Santiago of Chile or Cusco’s ‘Taytacha Temblores’,  
44 Lord of the Earthquakes (Onetto, 2017).  
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54 It is intuitive to link resilience with dwelling in risk contexts, and yet the concept quickly  
55 presents several limitations that call into question its usefulness for understanding Latin  
56 American territorial processes. Indeed, Andean territories present important vulnerabilities  
57 to climate change and elevated disaster risk - due to their exposure to multiple hazards  
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3 significant in frequencies and magnitudes, their social vulnerabilities and the physical  
4 vulnerability of their settlements, while presenting territorialities that express a rich history  
5 of adaptations to risk. Despite this, spatial practices, territorial relations, disaster responses  
6 and reconstructions contradict the intuition of an *Andean resilience* understood from the  
7 dominant conceptual frameworks, which leads us to question these frameworks.  
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13 Criticisms of resilience focus on the concept's ambiguity, its uses with conflicting effects with  
14 its desirable and positive values, its lack of consideration of social justice or situated  
15 knowledge. Less developed is the questioning of resilience frameworks and tools from their  
16 dimension of scientific, technical and conceptual *models* for the design, legitimization and  
17 implementation of territorial interventions. Models, as knowledge mediation instruments  
18 and practices, are situated, mediated and in dispute: they can facilitate or allow human  
19 actions, acting on territories.  
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27 One of resilience models' major biases is that are urban oriented, perceiving cities as networks  
28 systems and nature as a container supporting these networks, putting aside other social  
29 collective or individual alternative representations, such as space and time nonlinear  
30 conceptions of Mapuche indigenous culture (Loncon, 2019) or multiple temporalities  
31 superposition that breaks with traditional/modern dichotomy (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2010)  
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37 In other cases, dominant conceptualizations focus on the resilience of *places* (communities or  
38 neighbourhoods) conceiving these as closed and precisely defined spaces, revealing an  
39 essentialist conceptualization of places. These models, promoted by global programs such as  
40 the OECD's Resilient cities or the United Nations' Making Cities Resilient, lack of multi-scale  
41 perspectives can lead to territorial processes in the name of resilience that have contradictory  
42 effects. For example, electromobility transition in Global North cities in the name of resilience  
43 towards climate change stresses global lithium consumption, pressuring lithium extraction  
44 sites in the *Salar de Atacama* (Chile), generating water scarcity for local indigenous  
45 communities whose resilience is then fully compromised (Agusdinata *et al.* 2018).  
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55 Inspired by Latin American decolonial literature and in continuity with regional perspectives  
56 that linked development models, disaster risk, socio-spatial inequalities, exploitation of  
57 natural resources and sustainability of lives, a current trend in disaster critical studies  
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3 proposes a reappropriation and politicization of resilience, grounded on territorial contexts,  
4 subverting global categories of hegemonic models. Sandoval-Díaz (2020) links everyday  
5 resistance tactics (social protests, demonstrations) and resilience strategies (collective  
6 mobilisation for housing relocation) post 2015 floods in Atacama, Chile, pointing out the gap  
7 between the technocratic risk perception (and subsequent risk reduction actions) and risk  
8 acceptability of local communities. Such a gap has been repeatedly highlighted in recent post-  
9 disaster conflicts, in particular regarding relocation during reconstruction (Ugarte & Salgado,  
10 2014). By developing a situated meaning of resilience for Mapuche communities in southern  
11 Chile, Atallah (2016) challenges the depoliticized mainstream notion of resilience and  
12 highlights the importance of integrating in resilience studies dimensions such as complex  
13 histories of settler colonization, land disputes, social inequalities and political repression.  
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## 24 **Discussion**

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28 Through the six vignettes we have discussed the use, politicization and resistance to resilience  
29 in the aftermath of disasters in four countries. The paper explores the relational social  
30 ontology of resilience, through the research question “how do we understand resilience in  
31 each of our (research) contexts and where does it come from?”.  
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37 The first vignette illustrates resilience as a personal, but not an individual, experience.  
38 Disasters, conceived as socially constructed and as an outcome of structural violence, when  
39 situated in wider life historical and experiential narratives, dislocate the “eventful disaster”,  
40 such as an earthquake, and recentre other more silent disasters and intersectional structural  
41 violence at play. Following a life historical account of Kalila in Kachchh, and her strategic use  
42 of “I” and “we”, allows us to consider that responding to disasters and structures of violence  
43 is, from the start, intersubjective and connected in solidarity.  
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52 In seeing resilience as resistance and subversive practices (cf. Grove, 2013), the second  
53 vignette re-affirms the collective nature of resilience in contexts mediated by social structure  
54 and relations of dominion and exploitation. Barriers like impoverishment and illiteracy of  
55 members further elucidates the relevance of relationality that includes dependency on  
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3 infrastructural conditions, legacies of discourse and institutional power that precede and  
4 structure the collective's very existence and impede collective action.  
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9 The third vignette, meanwhile, embeds resilience in cultural and political institutions in a  
10 place. The case of Acehnese could be paralleled along with Ungar (2013) that 'resilience is not  
11 as much an individual construct, but it is a quality of the environment and its capacity to  
12 facilitate growth' and that mechanisms that are related to positive developments are  
13 sensitive to social and cultural variations. The experience of Achenese shows the socio-  
14 cultural aspects of resilience, which are interdependent and communal.  
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21 The fourth vignette reflects on "resilience" as an imported concept on the one hand, and as  
22 a material practice on the other. In particular, the case of Nepal draws attention to the co-  
23 option of the term resilience by the service providers for their own advantage. It draws  
24 attention to the limitations of the resilience building projects and suggests that to make this  
25 concept work, one needs to situate it into the local context and address the root causes of  
26 the problem.  
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34 The fifth vignette problematizes the uncritical deployment of the concepts "resilience" and  
35 "community" in research on disasters. If a resilience approach associates human capital with  
36 the disaster-affected "community", while economic capital is associated with "external  
37 actors", this hides the interrelations of the political economy. The "external" actors may be  
38 the ones shaping and defining what the community is. By paying attention to  
39 conceptualisations, the case reminds that researchers participate in grafting the  
40 understanding of sociality in disasters.  
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49 The sixth vignette turns the analytical gaze on resilience on a larger scale, raising the question  
50 of bias in the dominant resilience model and the possible effects of these when used for  
51 understanding or enhancing territorial resilience. Concurrently with global and universal  
52 models of resilience, South American perspectives on resilience are seeking to situate  
53 resilience conceptual foundations, leading to a politicization of resilience practices.  
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## 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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5 Secondly, what becomes clear is that relationality of resilience not only implies the  
6 connections of people with one another but is strongly linked to the materiality of the political  
7 economy. The second vignette highlights how for those depending on land for livelihood,  
8 access to land is necessary for resilience. Here resilience is not only an end product, but part  
9 of the struggle for land. The fourth vignette subtly weaves together the materiality of losses  
10 (homes, villages, lives) and that of the disasters (earthquake, flood, fire) faced by those  
11 framed as “resilient” in the fashionable NGO-sphere lingo. The fifth affirms that , if uncritically  
12 wielded, abstract framings such as “resilient community” can end up as rather obscuring the  
13 connections between the “community” and the infrastructures, institutions and the political  
14 economy at large that sustain it. The sixth looks at alternative conceptualizations that seek to  
15 politicize resilience, situating it historically and linking it with social conflicts and collective  
16 resistance techniques.  
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29 Thirdly, the vignettes highlight that resilience and its relationalities, interdependencies should  
30 be seen as temporal. Some of the vignettes are centred on a particular disaster, and they are  
31 thus shaped around a before and an after an event. However, our reading of “resilience”  
32 allows us to see that the critiqued “bounce back” narrative (Manyena, 2006) is not present in  
33 the vignettes. Rather, the relations of people to one another and the structures that sustain  
34 them are seen as in flux, due to, and independent of disasters. The first, second and fourth  
35 vignette, for instance, highlight the continuities between pre-disaster and post-disaster and  
36 more silent structural violence at play, including extractive and exploitative cross border  
37 relations of resource use and trade. Similarly, the sixth vignette discusses changes in  
38 dominant conceptualizations of resilience when situating them in a history of territorial  
39 conflicts or questioning them with alternative time-space representations.  
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51 In summary, disaster is not an event, no singular event nor singular actor, rather pluriverse of  
52 connected, relational and intersubjective interfaces. When brought together, these lived  
53 experiences in the paper reach out to theorising on interscalarity: “zooming in and out on  
54 many scales and to the interscalar ”and “[a]djustable lens to be attuned to see and hear the  
55 local and a lens that can be widened to national, regional, global or other levels” (Braithwaite  
56 & D’Costa, 2018 p. 21). Vignettes explored in this piece point towards interscalar sensitivity:  
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3 towards relationally experienced violence and power relations, but also how everydayness,  
4 and situated knowledge may help in quilting social ontologies and intersubjectively  
5 experienced disasters.  
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