

The power of localism during the long-term disaster recovery process¹

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“...Now we are fighting fiercely, claw and faith
Together with the little that there is, to put the city back on its feet...
The smile hides the tears, the tight heart
But *luizense* are strong, they bring the origins of the past...
Our culture is alive; the water did not carry it away...
People’s kindness, this the flood did not remove...
Our city is enchanted, still has much beauty”
(Ditão Virgílio poet, February 15, 2010, “Flood Poem”, São Luiz do Paraitinga town)

“Were voices really being heard?”

This important question was made in the article “Let’s talk about you” (Gibson and Wisner, 2016), whose purpose was to report the Views from the Frontline (VFL) methods for engaging in conversations about everyday risk. VFL has been served an international monitoring and advocacy function. Although it was not designed for academic research, VFL has a potential resource for inspiring it. As an action research programme, it aims to not only understand social arrangements, but also to effect desired change as a path to generating knowledge and empowering stakeholders (Huang, 2010). In action research, the knowledge creation arises in a context of practice and requires researchers to work *with* practitioners.

The context of practice of your conversation refers to São Luiz do Paraitinga town, São Paulo State, Brazil,² whose voices of local people – the *luizenses* – were briefly described in the flood poem above². The town experienced extensive floods in 1863, 1967, 1971, and 1996. But the worst case occurred in 2010, when the Paraitinga River reached 12 m above its normal level, submerging nearly eighty percent of its urban area, including the entire historical center of the town, where 19th century housing structures listed by the Council of Historical, Archaeological, Artistic, and Touristic Heritage Defense of São Paulo State (CONDEPHAAT) were located. Half of the *luizenses* became homeless (5,000 persons), including members of both civil society and local government. Several external governmental agencies and different social actors were present in São Luiz. These included external government agencies from the federal level (the Army, National Historical and Artistic Heritage Institute) and from the State of São Paulo (Civil Defense, Military Fire Department, CONDEPHAAT, Secretariat for Habitation). The different social actors included officers, journalists, tourists, experts, and volunteers. The external social actors interacted with the locals, trying to impose their ideas, rules, and techniques, and therefore marginalizing locals’ perspectives. The locals, including local governmental agents and other residents, call themselves as *luizenses*, reinforcing their localism during the long-term disaster recovery, when ‘outsiders’ came to scene, and several security apparatuses of the biopolitics of disaster (Marchezini, 2015a) took place to manage risks and crisis – risk mapping, military control of public and private areas, disaster framing, the updating game of disasters’ numbers and statistics, and so on. *Luizenses* is the category that sums up the power of localism that uses several ways – using poems, for

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² The poem was video-taped and is available in Portuguese: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2uGmySvki34>

example – to express the cultural resistance against the external agents (Marchezini, 2015b). *Luizenses* is a type of brotherhood with spirit of unity and common identity that Oliver-Smith (2012) identified in the Peruvian earthquake in 1970s, and Ugarte and Salgado (2014) found in *chaiteninos* during the disaster recovery of the 2008 disaster in Chile.

The long-term listening of what is going on in the frontline of disasters' aftermath is important to avoid social abandonment and protracted crisis (Marchezini, 2014). In São Luiz do Paraitinga, at the beginning of January 2010, I began to follow the tragedy at a distance by documenting media stories. My intention was to follow the disaster not as a natural event but as a process (Hewitt, 1983; Lavell, 1993), adopting a concept of disaster that is focused on the social experiences that take place in a social time (Oliver-Smith, 1998). Fieldwork, which was conducted from January 2010 to June 2013, consisted of participant observation and qualitative data collection. I visited the temporary houses of the *luizenses* and conducted semi-structured interviews with fifty participants (1% of the 5,000 affected people), including men and women, young and elderly, who were selected using convenience sampling methods. I opted for an approach that privileges narrative and observation, dialoguing with participants to gather local knowledge and information (Oliver-Smith and Hoffman, 2002; Freire, 2005). I analyzed qualitative data in light of the disaster recovery literature, focusing on disaster recovery as an expression of power relations (Marchezini 2015a; 2015b).

In this paper, I shared some findings related to the barriers and the 'drivers of localism' during the long-term disaster recovery process of São Luiz do Paraitinga. *Localism* is a concept that scholars don't have consensus and agreement once its definitions vary according to the disciplines (Padley, 2013; Dunbar-Hester, 2013). Localism can be framed as citizens having the right and ability to challenge their political and economic leaders, about the decentralisation of power and responsibility to frontline public service staff, service users, smaller local organisations and local business (Padley, 2013). Some scholars have investigated the role of localism in disaster and risk management policies. Troutt (2008), for example, analysed the case of New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina and provided an analytic connective tissue between the tragedy of the city and the underlying doctrines of local government laws – what he defines as an expression of *legal localism*. But the influences of localism can also occur in disaster risk reduction policies. For example, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (Unisdr, 2015) mentioned the importance of "local" almost 50 times in its 25 pages, but lacks to mention the means of implementation to put words into action (Zia and Wagner, 2015). Some studies stated different perspectives about the policy challenges related to local capacity for DRR (Rebotier *et al*, 2013; Blackburn, 2014; Thaler and Priest, 2014).

Although there is no consensus and agreement about what localism is, it can be conceived as a "discursive boundary object" (Dunbar-Hester, 2013) that is malleable to accommodate different institutional and interpretative perspectives, but also robust to maintain an identity across these boundaries (Star, 2010). Defining 'localism' is difficult because the concept is fluid and connotes something having to do with immediacy, contextual meaning, and relationships between neighboring bodies. Dunbar-Hester (2013), for example, analysed the symbolic power of language within policy rhetoric, its relationship to sociotechnical arrangements, embodied in the choice of certain technological artifacts conjoined with social relations. This author provided several examples in which actors invoked localism to sketch some of the meaningful contours of what the discourse of localism encompassed during discussions of initiating and expanding low-power radio. She pointed out that actors held localism to support other disparate goals such as disaster preparedness, immigrant community affairs and health media, "community-building", among others. Our case study is focused on the 'long-term aftermath of disasters'. The main question is: what types of discourses and practices about localism are being heard and revealed in the frontline?

Section 2 explores examples of localism to highlight some barriers that community faced during the different phases of a disaster: from the emergency phase to long-term recovery.

Section 3 discusses these findings in the light of other 'drivers of localism' in Latin America. Finally, we conclude that local community, practitioners, researchers and policymakers must build a dialogue-oriented nexus approach to reduce some barriers, improving the long-term efforts to promote and sustain bridging values such as citizen science, action research and citizen-science-policy interface.

2. Barriers to... and drivers of localism

During the long-term disaster recovery process of São Luiz, several discourses and practices expressed the conflicts and barriers between the locals and the 'outsiders', but there were also discourses and practices of localism that help *luizenses* to resist and cope with day-to-day stresses. However, different social groups responded differently to the long-term disaster recovery and to the possibilities of *being luizense*. Some examples can highlight these social dynamics.

2.1 Who are the heroes? Framing the local (in) capacity during emergency rescues

Disasters can attract media coverage during emergency phase or being neglected by it, especially during the long-term disaster recovery process. Disaster narratives tend to reinforce hegemonic forces of society, so the construction of 'disaster' through semantics and numerology is highly political (Wisner and Gaillard, 2009; Kondo et al., 2011; Button, 2012; Marchezini, 2015a). The media coverage controls data/information and the social production of meaning, shaping and mediating our perception of disasters and about the different agents and objects in the scene, impacting the local people lives and framing the localism in different ways. The way public and private institutions, media and other social actors define and frame the disaster is important because definitions orient practices and policies. They define what are classified as 'social problems' and shape the solutions fabricated by institutions to solve them (Dombrowsky, 1998). Numbers, words and images matter in the field of cognitive battles and the warriors don't have the same quantity and forms of capital for the making of social reality (Bourdieu, 1991; Marchezini and Wisner, 2017).

In São Luiz do Paraitinga, the external media came to the city and produced a disaster narrative highlighted the activities of external governmental agencies. Categories and target populations were established. The locals were classified by the external agencies as helpless victims, homeless, incapable and vulnerable people who needed to be rescued by external heroes. Along the disaster narrative episodes, discourses of expert knowledge – geologists, civil protection agents – circulated, emphasizing the logic of victimization of local people and inspiring dramatic speeches. The Army and Military Firefighters were represented as heroes, emphasizing the amount of material and human resources used – the numbers of soldiers, boats, and helicopters. As reported by the Brazilian Newspaper *Folha de São Paulo* on January 2, 2010, "[T]eams of firefighters use boats to rescue the victims. The homeless are taken to the high areas of the city. The Army also assists using a helicopter" (Folha Online, 2010). These news stories produced an interpretation of the disaster for their reading public, indicating that everything was under control thanks to the efforts of state organizations, diminishing the local institutions. Everything was framed as "under control", thanks to the external actions. As *Agência Brasil* (2010, p. 4) reported on January 4, 2010:

According to the government, about 300 civil defense professionals, firefighters, military police officers, health workers, and geologists are in the Paraíba Valley, helping the locals affected by the rains. Until yesterday, the government said 3,520 people had been rescued by the fire department. Two helicopters from the Military Police rescued, between January 2 and January 3, 54 people in São Luiz do Paraitinga.

The discourses tend to victimizing local people, reinforcing the need of salvation by external heroes. The testimonies of the local people in the scene are selected, and information is ordered in time, producing a narrative that guides what is said about the disaster, identifying heroes and victims who enter the scene and how they act (Marchezini, 2015a). The external representations framed the localism are incapable, as vulnerable. However, there are other local discourses and practices that do not appear in the official storyline, and can become visible when the locals, who hold other interpretations of the disaster narrative, are listened. For example, in Marmara Earthquake, Turkey, the survivors and community residents undertook immediate search-and-rescue-type operations as outside help takes longer to arrive in the scene (Jalali, 2002). A similar situation was found in the 1991 Oakland Firestorm. There no warning, no evacuation order, or coordination. Survivors were all on their own to save their lives (Hoffman, 2012). In São Luiz do Paraitinga, the local rafting team rescued people for multiple days, sheltered neighbors and relatives, collected donations, and prepared meals for families in garages. *Luizenses* told that the Army and other military agencies arrived too late. The arrival occurred when the locals had already organized and taken actions for rescue and protection.

The power of the localism was also reinforced. *Luizenses* rejected the label of victims and stigma related to it. According to them, many of the members of the Army didn't accept the help of a local rafting team that had knowledge of the river. Confident of their competence, the officers ventured into rescue operations. Because of their lack of knowledge about the river's dynamics, many of these officers' boats capsized. Consequently, the local rafting team had to 'rescue the official heroes'. The local disaster narrative is that there were no victims in the flood thanks to the work of local rafters they came to call, the Rafting Angels. "Rafting Angels" is one way to express their localism during the disaster that "brings to light sociolinguistic application and invention" (Oliver-Smith and Hoffman, 2002, p.11). Rafting Angels was a category created by *luizenses* to name their local heroes and to contest the official discourse of victimization in the media and the discourses of the external agents of emergency, such as the officers of the Fire Department, Military Police, and the Army. The history of the Rafting Angels did not gain visibility in external newspaper *Folha de São Paulo*, but it was recalled in *Reconstruction Newspaper*, a magazine created by locals to give voice to their disaster recovery process, to express their localism and resistance (Scott, 1985). In late March 2010, the journal featured an article titled "Angels and Heroes of Rafting." The article read:

In the following days, the situation got worse: the flood that was extensive became violent. An elderly lady had the whole house affected, but soon she met the rafting guys. She said, "They were real *angels* and had all the care in the world to help us. They said words of confidence, asking us to believe in what they were doing." (Prefecture of São Luiz do Paraitinga, 2010, p.4)

In the city, Rafting Angels was a category that also became an expression of social change, a reinvention of the future. Before the flood, some *luizenses* classified rafting instructors as lazy people because they only worked on weekends when tourists were in the city. After the flood, when the outsiders came to the city, another local classification emerged, showing how localism has a contextual meaning (Dunbar-Hester, 2013) to reinventing itself in relation to symbolic power of outsiders' language. In the words of Eduardo, the municipal director of tourism and one of the Rafting Angels:

Before the flood, the rafting in São Luiz...you can ask any local rafting instructor...people said we were *lazy people* because we didn't work during the week. We came to the river to train, but to the others we were lazy people, right? *After the flood*, we became known as *Rafting Angels*. (author field notes, November 2011).

Legal localism which is fixed by local government laws (Troutt, 2008) is also confronted during disasters, when the enactment of state of exception can take place and the law can, in the places and for the time that it determines, suspend provisionally the rule of the constitution (Agamben, 2005). After the Marmara earthquake in Turkey, the Army chose to prohibit all NGOs from working in the disaster area (Jalali, 2002). During Cyclone Tracy in Australia, women and children suffered a forced evacuation from the disaster site and were first sent in the Navy and then the state police (Hoffman, 2012). In 2008 volcano disaster in Chile, residents of Chaitén suffered a forced eviction, were inspected by Army and police, and were forbidden to return to their houses, a situation that local people classified as psychological war but they found ways to resist (Ugarte and Salgado, 2014). In São Luiz, the local government authority was questioned and disputed by external governmental agencies, especially by the military, which invaded the city. The Army and other military agencies arrived with their practical elements of governance (weapons, boats, organizational strategies) and symbolic language (organized in troops, serious faces, demonstration of weapons) (Marchezini, 2015a). Increasing control and centralization is one way governmental agencies respond to the crisis, and the localism is confronted by military doctrine of emergency response. In São Luiz, the military tried to take over the local actions already taken by residents, imposing what and how should be done from that moment on. The *luizenses*, however, challenged the orders of the outside command. Sandra, a local resident and municipal social worker, recalled the conflict:

[T]he coming of the Army was chic...order and progress [national motto inscribed in the Brazilian flag]. But it was too late...one day after the flood. We were already rescuing and bringing food.... And they come up and say "stop everything, now we command." No! We're going to opine too. We did everything before you arrived. (author fieldnotes, December 2011).

2.2 What for, how and by whom the city should be 'build back better'?

The main Church in São Luiz collapsed during 2010 flood. The church and the central plaza are places of collective practices such as public gatherings, religious and cultural festivals that enabled the creation of the city (Agier, 2011). The construction of the Church began by 1830 on the banks of the Paraitinga River, as a form of social mobilization, and was lasted ten years. Throughout its history, it has had a fundamental value for the generation of local people social identity, who pride themselves for being *luizenses*. *Luizenses* maintain the lifestyle of traditional rural community whereas the main Church keeps the passage of time, and reinforces the deep sense of community.

In all of the experienced extensive floods in 1863, 1967, 1971, and 1996, the third step of the Church stairs was considered the highest level reached by the Paraitinga river floods. Residents were accustomed to monitoring its gradual flow increase, but during the 2010 flood this historical mark was exceeded. At first, citizens found a temporary shelter at the high school. Soon they noticed that the building was not safe anymore and decided to move to the main Church. Some minutes later the high school building collapsed. But as the river level continued to rise they left due to some perceived cracks in the Church's wall. A few hours later, the sacred place was flooded and succumbed, provoking an enormous wave. The fall of a revered site brought a profound sense of loss to the community. In the words of the local priest, "It was an unexpected thing...while our houses were being devastated by the waters, we felt there was still the house of God and, therefore, in a certain manner, transmitting strength. From the moment in which the house of God fell to the ground, it was as if a hole had been opened, a complete vacuum" (author field notes, November 2011). The main church, also called the *Matriz*³, is a tangible expression of localism.

³*Matriz*, from the Latin, means the Mother Church. We use this name throughout the text for São Luiz' main church.

Local people and tourists witnessed the fall of this tangible cultural heritage asset, awakening emotions described as a *collective pain*. “We had a collective pain that was the moment that the Matriz Church fell down. The population was silent, each one closed in to himself and no one complained of the damages, because they saw that the damage was total,” recounted an elderly man. The feelings of *collective grief* and *loss of identity* express that the Church was great reference for the locals. This is evinced through the testimonies of the *luizenses*, collected during interviews in December 2011. As stated by an elderly woman:

“[the feeling] of the loss of identity was very present in all of the *luizenses* at the time that we entered the city. We didn’t know that the Church had fallen...you see that cultural heritage all fallen, around which we had a very large identity, because the *luizense* has a lot of culture, is very tied to their culture, to see everything destroyed...it seems that you will never see your city back again,” tells Fabiane.

In the case of São Luiz, the first days after the 2010 flood were marked by the silence of the bells, by the absence of bread in the bakeries, and all surrounded by mud, debris and smell of rotting meat. However, resistance of the *luizenses* also marked this period in the form of daily practices of recovery. They created networks of neighbors, friends, and workers in order to clean and remove debris from houses and commercial establishments, removing mud of churches and searching for images of saints, books, photographs. They were recovering their localism and the flood poem expressed their fight to be recognized as *luizense*: “*But luizense are strong, they bring the origins of the past...Our culture is alive; the water did not carry it away...*”.

Luizenses resisted to other forms of social suffering, barriers and conflicts. This was the case of Benedito, an elderly artist and one of the enthusiasts of local carnival, who usually documents in photos special moments of São Luiz do Paraitinga’s history. From his home, in the hill of Cruzeiro, he saw the Matriz Plaza covered by the ruins of the church and other historic houses. Grabbing his camera he went to capture some images of the disaster. At the Plaza, an armed forces officer reprimanded him and pulled the camera out of his hands. Benedito recalled that while he was being reprimanded, outsiders, or disaster tourists, circulated around the ruins of the Matriz Church, taking clay bricks from this 19th century historical relic. Although he declared himself an atheist, he felt violated because the symbols of his city were violated by outsiders. Both the disaster tourists who took parts of the main Church and the military officers who interrogated him and pulled his camera off (Marchezini, 2015b).

Most historical dwellings surrounding the traditional Portuguese colonial style square plaza of the Matriz Church just collapsed with the flood, leaving elderly residents homeless. According to São Paulo Council of Cultural Heritage (CONDEPHAAT), historical dwellings must be reconstructed and restored following the technical parameters; nevertheless the owners did not have any means. In order to prevent them from accessing their ruined dwellings, CONDEPHAAT built fences; thus, impeding dwellers to recover their homes routines. The old neighborhood did not exist anymore. Therefore, the practices that created everyday life routines of public spaces, such as baptisms, weddings, and cultural festivals, no longer existed. A survivor that lost his father after the flood stated: “We are passing through a very great trial...no one died in the flood, right? (...) And after? The quantity of people who died afterwards, of sadness, of suffering, of depression, it was a lot of people...” (author fieldnotes, November 2011). These new threats identified by local people in the frontline were not incorporated in the disaster recovery plan and/or inserted in the disaster’s numbers and statistics and/or reported by newspapers.

As many houses were damaged by floods and the prices of housing market had risen, many displaced families found difficulty to find housing in the city, facing the threat of homelessness. Furthermore, the city did not offer job opportunities, so the threat of unemployment was present in the locals’ vision. Many of the displaced families moved out to another city. According to *luizenses*, about 250 people left after the flood. Survivors who abandoned the city were classified

as “fake luizenses” by local people who expressed “more localism”. The *luizense’s way of being* is clearly connected to settle in the city, to resist in it and with it, and to seeing the city as constituent of its own history. Pedro, a local resident, states: “People believe, therefore, that the city will only really have complete life when the Matriz Church is inaugurated, one of the principal works of the city...that will already begin now [December 2011, 11 months after the flood]. Then it’s this, I think that we didn’t lose strength, I think that who wasn’t from the city went away, and we stayed here...you are not going to move your feet from that which is yours, that is your history, thus it’s this, I think that the same feeling that was mine was that of everybody here, the majority.”. Interestingly, during Chaitén disaster in Chile, a similar dynamic of local conflict occurred between who stay and who left the city: “no basta decir ‘soy chaitenino porque...fui evacuado y volví a Chaitén en 2008’. ‘Soy chaitenino porque ayudé a recuperar el pueblo,’ tiene que ver un poco con ese discurso, cachai (...) tiene que ver con un tema de recuperación y con un tema de identidad, cachai, con un tema de lucha” (Ugarte and Salgado, 2014, p. 159).

The ethnography of disasters also reveals different barriers in the bureaucratic procedures of legal and exceptional measures of different governmental agencies with their jurisdictions and incoherent agendas, such as CONDEPHAAT’s regulations for reconstruction of the historical center in São Luiz do Paraitinga. In the midst of the power relations, the *luizenses* also lost their capacity to speak for themselves and to define their future. External governmental agencies organized public hearings to “give voice for the local people”, expressing the valuable discourse of localism. However, public hearings were only informative. *Luizenses* could not provide their suggestions for creating recovery policies for their own city. The subjects who held microphones and who sat in front of the table were mostly external agents. They used technical and scientific terms that disregarded any values that *luizenses* had about their city, river, and culture.

During a public hearing, an external engineer showed the project to construct walls along the Paraitinga River to protect local people from floods. Suzana, a resident of the city, recalled that she was there and noticed that very few fellow residents were consulted about their opinions. For her, the Paraitinga River is part of the culture of São Luiz; the river was part of the *luizenses’* life, as well as the floods. Suzana criticized these rebuilding projects on the part of external governmental agencies and their experts who had no connection with the place. Roberto, a local owner, also attended this public hearing about the floods. He thoroughly recounted its procedures and subtle ways of silencing the locals. In the words of this *luizense*:

They [external authorities] organized the roundtable and *held the microphone*. When you had just asked something, the person who was controlling the microphone *went away from you*. On the roundtable, an authority *answered something completely different* from your question. And *did not give you the right to reply*. So you had to scream. But *if you screamed, it would be considered a contempt of authority*. (author fieldnotes November 2011, emphasis added)

Roberto was also outraged with these forms of subordination to the external agents. For him, residents were apathetic, silencing themselves amid the expert discourses of external agents who spoke for *luizenses*, identified what was the best for them, and defined what ways the reconstruction processes should proceed (Marchezini, 2015a). He believed that people were used to create the illusion of a participatory public hearing, but it was predominated by voices of experts and other external authorities with their expert language that was unintelligible to lay people. These external agents acted in the name of *luizenses* without identifying their real needs of disaster recovery. In the voice of an elderly woman, who talked about the loss of the *luizenses’* protagonism in their city:

São Luiz was invaded by outsiders. Outsiders draw up plans for the properties. Outsiders formulate the governmental policies. Outsiders say what has to be done in the river. Outsiders say how we should build our houses. Apart from all that has happened here, our future is not defined by

ourselves. I don't know if it was our fault. We are not the protagonists of this city anymore, says Adriana. (author field notes, December 2011).

But *luizenses* also expressed their localism through several acts of resistance. Little by little, they began to come to the Plaza of the Matriz Church as a socializing space. A temporary structure was reconstructed to reinstall the church bell. The bell aided to recover the community identity maintenance, because people used to listen to it daily. *Luizenses* started to sit on the benches in the circles of conversation, speculating about the reconstruction of the Church. They created a local disaster recovery committee called "Ceresta" (Centro de Reconstrução Sustentável de São Luiz do Paraitinga) to debate if the government would remake the old Church or it should be replaced by a modern building. They voted for rebuilding the same church as their ancestors used to go, a focus for cultural resistance. In December 2011, *luizenses* observed the workers laboring behind the metallic covering, where schoolchildren draw and wrote poems about their love for São Luiz. In March 2013, works added elements such as scaffolding, metallic structures, and walls to the scenery of reconstruction. Years passed, and the deadlines to finish the work were extended several times, similarly to the case of Christchurch Cathedral reconstruction in New Zealand.

People kept onward by conducting masses in adapted spaces or having religious rituals in the streets. They also sought for other religions that allow the circulation of faith and by organized sociocultural manifestations such as the Feast of the Divine Saint Spirit and Carnival. In the days after the flood, the image of the celebrant of the Divine circulated through the streets of the city with the red flag covered with mud. They maintained the ritual of passing among houses to collect offerings to organize the Feast of the Divine. The ritual involves the entire family: the wife receives the flag, offering the ribbons that hang from the mast for all to kiss, and, while the multitudes sing, she makes an offering. In return for offerings (money or provisions), an object is placed on the flag belonging to someone in need of prayers and help. When possible, the woman carries the flag to the kitchen, so that food remains plentiful. Next, they take the flag to the couple's bedroom to bless the marriage. It is then placed on the heads of the children, so that they have good sense. Upon finishing, the wife carries the flag to the closest house and delivers it to the neighbor, who repeats the ritual.

Celebrating the Divine Saint Spirit, Carnival and other popular festivities constituted a deep expression of resistance and localism. Even with innumerable losses in 2010, *luizenses* collected offerings to organize the *afogado*, a traditional food made of stewed beef, served with manioc flour and rice, and eaten together in the city market place during the Saint Spirit Festival. Two months after the flood, the preparations for the *afogado* began at the devastated market, by building the base of the structures that would receive the large pots to cook the dish. *Luizenses* decorated the Church plaza with the Divine red flags, erected tarps at the market place to protect people from the sun and brought the ingredients for the *afogado*. The act of eating also reinforces the collective sense of the *luizense*. For the first time in history, however, the all red decoration of the plaza was not attached to the towers of the Matriz. So, in order to keep this symbolic connection, *luizenses* recovered a photograph, produced a poster with the image of the Matriz Church and placed it in the *Império*, a type of altar in which objects representing prayer requests are placed.

Cultural resistance and localism manifested themselves during profane festivals, such as Carnival. In February 2010, the *luizenses* organized themselves to retrieve old Carnivals. At that moment, Carnival expressed not only the historical opposition of the Catholic Church, but also the prohibitions of City Hall in face of the difficulties imposed by the disaster. São Luiz do Paraitinga is well known in the whole country for its special music and gaiety. Carnival facilitated the weaving of relations among the residents through sharing common meanings about the tragic event. This allowed the experiences to be re-signified and absorbed in the body of its culture, rather than denying its existence. One form of resistance was to express culturally the tragic event in a playful

way. The lyrics of the compositions produced for the Carnival emphasized significant aspects of recent history, illustrating *luizense's* resistance in face of their experiences that confronted their localism. Resistance was explicit through the reoccurrence of the verb *to confront* evoked by the songs. Eduardo, one of these composers, illustrated this process: "We made some songs, I'll remember one that I made: '*We confronted the prejudice and the dictatorship, the Carnival of marches will never contain it, we confronted the flood in a dark night.*'" (author fieldnotes, November 2011). "*We confronted the prejudice and the dictatorship*" means the local resistance against the Armed Forces and the Military Police. *Luizenses* felt alike during the first days after the flood. "*We confronted the flood in a dark night*" remembers the rescues based on the joint work of city residents and young rafters.

Art manifestation, such as painting the marks of levels reached by the flood waters on some historic mansions show an aesthetic expression chosen by the inhabitants in order to speak about the disaster and always remember. Moreover, close to the Matriz a poet announces his Flood Poem whenever a tourist or researcher asks something about the 2010 disaster, using his voice as the instrument to express the confrontation of adversities and to resist in the process of social recovery. The rhythm of the poetry compresses social time of the experience, narrating in a few minutes the chain of events that preceded and followed the flood. The poem proclaims what it is *to be luizense* in the face of suffering and recovery and voices hope for the reconstruction. The suffering revealed in the poem reflect collective marks of the tragedy in phrases such as, "*The smile hides the tears/The tight heart.*" Themes of recovery and promise of reconstruction highlight other verses always evoking the collective character of resistance and reaffirming the way of being *luizense*. The culture links people to the city, which makes it and in turn is made by it. These ways of resistance seek to evoke positive aspects - the resignification of the tragic event into the light of a higher promise of overcoming ("*Our city is enchanted, still has much beauty*"); and value brave *luizenses* ("*But the luizense has strength, brings the origins of the past*"). They anchor themselves in culture as strategic elements for the constant reinvention of forms of resistance and localism ("*Our culture is alive, this water did not carry it away*"), in face of the difficulties for recovering and reconstructing the city ("*Let's bring together the little we have, and put the city back on its feet*").

3. Discussion

Localism has been framed in diverse ways according to the interests of social groups placed in contextual meanings and, sometimes, in different phases of risk and disaster management. This article pointed out some confronting discourses and practices of local and external agents during the long-term disaster recovery process of São Luiz do Paraitinga town, Brazil.

One important driver of localism is *disaster narrative framing* that permitted to identify how localism is composed, by whom and how. The discursive battles are important to create spaces for advocating and researching in risk and disaster situations. Risk and disaster framings, terminologies, databases, indexes, approaches and metrics are always influenced by ideologies (militarism, nationalism, neoliberalism), history and culture (war and post war fragility, traditions and religions, colonial and post-colonial heritage), and social and economic structures (distribution of power, wealth and resources) (Wisner et al., 2004). São Luiz do Paraitinga had particular words that synthesized barriers and conflicts, such as rafting angels, *luizenses*, outsiders, "*fake luizenses*". These words from the frontline express the conflicts between military and civil order, the external agents' choreographies of governance and the local acts of resistance, and the diverse and even conflicting expressions of localism between the locals. Voices from Frontline (VFL) methods are important mechanism of resistance that can be used in several ways, including the monitoring of the long-term disaster recovery process, especially in regions where the political and economic instability is high. Marchezini (2014), for example, reported some cases of human rights violation

and threats in the long-term aftermath of Latin America and Caribbean disasters (Table I), where the disaster recovery process was only a promise.

Table I. New threats and human rights violations during the long-term disaster recovery process in Latin America and Caribbean countries

"Year" of the disaster	Country	New threats	Source of information
1998	Nicaragua	After the eruption of the Casita volcano, many Managua residents migrated to Costa Rica because there is no work in Nicaragua. Young people who have not emigrated they give themselves to alcohol; violence of gender was reported	Salinas Maldonado, 2008; UNFPA, 2012
1999	Venezuela	After several landslides in the State of Vargas, several cases of violation of personal integrity, arrests, disappearances forced and executions performed by Armed Forces officers; unsolved missing persons cases (Javier Hernández Paz, Óscar José Blanco Romero and José Francisco Rivas Fernández)	Analítica, 1999; Cofavic, 2011; Provea, 2000; Odriozola, 2000, CIDH, 2004
2005	Brazil	Eight years after the floods in Feliz Deserto town, families are still waiting for the reconstruction of their homes	Portal G1 Alagoas, 2014
2005	Guatemala	Eight years after hurricane Stan, more than 18 families are still waiting the reconstruction of their house.	El Orbe, 2013
2006	Colombia	Seven years 'after' the tragedy of Bendiciones, the victims continue to live without home. People are displaced because the rental subsidies ended.	Ruiz y Cárdenas, 2013
2007	Peru	Six years after the earthquake, more than 14,000 affected families in Cañete, Pisco, Chinca and Ica are still sleeping in tents; gender violence was also reported.	Agencia de Noticias Carpressica, 2013; UNFPA, 2012
2009	El Salvador	189 families displaced during hurricane "Ida" decided to move to an informal household but they are suffering the threat of a new eviction by the police officers.	Wilson, 2013
2010	Haiti	From March to November 2010, 28,000 people were displaced and 144,000 people suffered the threat of eviction in temporary shelters; complains of insecurity and attempt to murder in the camps; tents were destroyed by public officers. Three years after the earthquake, 360,000 Haitians live in tent camps and another 78,000 remain sheltered in schools and churches, many of them threatened by forced evictions and gender violence.	IJDH, 2010; Moloney, 2012; UNFPA, 2012
2010	Chile	In the town of Llico, the victims continue to live in camps. The wooden prefabricated houses with zinc roof, without bathroom or kitchen, measure barely 18 square meters; cases of gender violence were reported	Agencia de Noticias, 2011; UNFPA, 2012
2013	Mexico	In the community of San Miguel Amoltepec el Viejo, Cochoapa el Grande, Guerrero, 30 families live in camps, eat and sleep with goats, sheep, chickens and dogs in the same field. There's no water drinkable and health service; children suffer from severe malnutrition and respiratory diseases.	Lucero, 2014; Quintana Guerrero, 2014

Source: Adapted from Marchezini (2014)

Are these threats and violations being heard by institutions responsible for resilience strategies implementation? Protests have been used as a weapon (Scott, 1985) to left the invisibility of neglected disasters, protracted crisis and hidden long-term catastrophes. In Haiti, for example, people organized a protest in April 7, 2010, to make visible the threat of forced eviction

in tent camps (IJDH, 2010). In Brazil, the National Movement of People Affected in Socioenvironmental Disasters (MONADES) organized a protest in Brasilia town in November 24, 2011 to claim for housing recovery measures in the catastrophe of Rio de Janeiro (Puzzi, 2011). In Chile, affected people created the National Movement for Disaster Recovery to claim justice in reconstruction efforts after the 2010 earthquake (Observatorio Género y Equidad, 2012). In Mexico, more than 2,000 indigenous people of 13 towns of 'Guerrero' region did a famine pilgrimage in February, 2014, a few months after the hurricanes Ingrid and Manuel in September 2013 (Ocampo, 2014). In São Luiz do Paraitinga town, Brazil, there were some other expressions of resistance, such as the local newspaper created to talk about the disaster recovery process, the cultural festivals of Divine and Carnival, the poems and music about the disaster, the paintings, the creation of the Ceresta – the local committee for disaster recovery – and the locals NGOs. Culture and shared collective meanings about the need of resistance are important drivers of localism, especially when the locals are confronted by the outsiders and/or simply abandoned by public authorities.

One important aspect that needs further research is the longitudinal studies to investigate how the barriers are changing between the generations, and how intergenerational dialogues can be promoted to sustain long-term participation and localism. It is also important to ask how local capacity can be maintained for future generations when they in turn have to face disasters. In 2014-2015, during a pilot citizen science educational project with the high school of São Luiz do Paraitinga (Marchezini et al., 2017), two workshops were designed to create a Committee for Disasters Prevention and the Protection of Life (*Com-Vidação*) at the local high school. A participatory methodology ("Workshop for the Future") was organized with students, teachers, and civil defense agents. Participants were divided into four groups. Each group envisioned a collective dream (*wish tree*) for a disasters safe community, identified the main barriers (*rocks on the way*) for making their dream real, and planned (*bridge of actions*) ways to overcome barriers. All four groups stated their distrust of authorities and identified corruption and lack of information as the main obstacles for reaching their objectives (Marchezini and Trajber, 2016).

Conclusions

This ethnographic study recommends the need to identify who is talking about the importance of local and how localism has been framed in policy and action. It is important to empower the localism in order to provide ways for local people sharing what is going on in the frontline. But is it also essential to provide funding and means of implementation for local initiatives regarding advocating, researching and proposing DRR interventions led by people, once they usually have demonstrated a collective capacity during disaster recovery. More research is needed to investigate these forms of localism in different phases of risk and disaster management. What are the local capacities to resist to global disaster risk creation forces?

Researchers, policymakers, local community, and practitioners must build a dialogue-oriented nexus approach to reduce some barriers, improving the long-term efforts to promote and sustain bridging values such as citizen science, action research and citizen-science-policy interface. In research field, it is important to find ways to include VFL methods and extend integrated research on DRR to meet educational and extension objectives, such as those pointed out by the forensic investigations of disasters (FORIN) framework (Oliver-Smith et al., 2016). Views and voices from the oppressed people in the frontline – such as expressed in the flood poem – are important to avoid social abandonment, but it is also essential to dialogue about the root causes and dynamic pressures that create vulnerability and the ways safety and sustainability can be enhanced (Freire, 2005; Marchezini and Wisner, 2017). As a dialogue, oppressors – from public and private sectors – must be involved in order to avoiding acts of extremism such as the recent episode of banning words – such as vulnerable, diversity,

transgender, science-based etc. – in official documents of Trump government (Sun and Eilperin, 2017).

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