

Natural Hazards and Disaster Risk Reduction Policies

Loredana Antronico, Fausto Marincioni (Eds.)

Information instead of fatalism: a proposal of a strategy to inform on disasters

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Abstract

During the summer-fall of 2017 numerous disasters occurred. This period stood out for concentrating a large number of tragic episodes such as hurricanes Harvey, Irma and José, the earthquake in Mexico City or the major fires in Spain or California. Each time most of mainstream mass media regularly repeated the popular linguistic formulae that refer to these phenomena as “natural disasters”. However, even if it is usual to find this formula, the adjective “natural” is far from correct in regard to a series of motivations this work tries to lie on the table. All this in order to clarify and simplify the terminology to be used for the information from generalist mass media.

The main objectives are related to understand that employing the term disaster means to talk about risk and to realise that the real conditions that favor the occurrence of a catastrophe are not “natural”, but “human”. Another key point is to keep digging for the concept of risk, so that it can be understood both in probabilistic terms and as a social construction. The last goal refers to the need to prevent fatalist behaviors and to focus on lowering vulnerabilities and fostering people’s inherent capacities.

Keywords: mass-media, hazards, vulnerability, information, disaster

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