

Natural Hazards and Disaster Risk Reduction Policies

Loredana Antronico, Fausto Marincioni (Eds.)

Re-assessing the role of communication in the aftermath of a disaster: case studies and lesson learned

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Abstract

The scope of the chapter is to provide an interpretive hypothesis on the different functions of different media in the aftermath of a disaster, drawing upon theoretical and empirical literature and case-studies in the light of Uses and Gratification perspective. Moving from the way people engage with media and interpersonal source, the chapter addresses disaster communication in the light of both collective needs and its related social functions, considering how people actually interact with communication to cope with disasters.

A better understanding of the ways situational constraint, individual motivations, consumption patterns and communication cycles are arranged may improve our understanding of the whole disaster communication process, thus being very helpful to ground effective communication strategies, and to better understand the possible consequences of poor message shaping or use of wrong choices of channels.

The paper will also discuss complementary roles of broadcast media, interactive digital environments and interpersonal channels to inform public discourse on disaster, improving preparedness measures, giving voice to exposed communities and informing both individual and collective decision, as well as mobilizing human and collective resources to foster return to normalcy.

Keywords: Disaster communication, Media functions in disaster, Uses and gratification, Communication theory.

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