A community's local knowledge has value in dealing with disasters

One of Bankoff's points is that commitment (see source document for full description) to a particular knowledge system predetermines the kinds of representations made about the subject of investigation, but also provides the means for a change. In that context, discourses of vulnerability, tropicality and development belong to a knowledge system of the West and reflect the values and principles of Western culture (Bankoff, 2003). Also, mentioned discourses of the West, although described as hegemonic, can be described as discourses for a change limiting and allowing at the same time. Furthermore, the author points out that these discourses do not deny the existence of disasters and that their effects are real and creating the livelihood-destroying and different life-threatening states. These discourses illustrate that attributes that differentiate between disasters may also be cultural and part of "historical discourse that is embedded within a distinctly western construction of knowledge" (Bankoff, 2003, p. 17). In other words, Bankoff suggests that the criteria used in the classification of hazards as disasters are also a form of discourse that implicitly makes statements on what is a threat, normal or pathological. This is particularly important when it comes to the discussion of the people's resilience and their ability to cope with disasters while relying on their own psychological and other assets. All these different resources can be referred as community's local knowledge (Bankoff, 2003, 2004a). In other words, those resources represent the coping practices and mechanisms that influence not only people's preparedness but also their responses and recovery in the context of hazards. In addition, above discussed discourses of vulnerability, tropicality, and development should be understood as the important part of coping practices and mechanisms in risks and hazards mitigation given that they reflect cultural values of certain regions of the world (West) and determine the way in which people perceive disasters and organize disaster prevention and mitigation (Bankoff, 2004b).

Note: See source document for full reference.

Applicable to:

Stakeholders: Local knowledge, Norms/values
Disaster Phases: Prevention, Preparedness, Response, Recovery, All disaster phases
Types of Actors Concerned: Non-active citizens
Hazards: Natural hazards

Recommendations:

- Use local knowledge, collective memory and shared cultural values to improve disaster preparedness, response and recovery

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Source

Deliverable D4.2 "Report on 'risk cultures' in the context of disasters" (page 28)

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