



## **In some places, religious explanations for natural disasters are taken into account (Egypt), while in others scientific explanations are predominant (UK)**

In order to examine cultural differences in the religious explanations for natural disasters, Homan (2003) conducted two case studies: one analysed perception of an earthquake that struck Egypt in 1992, while the other analysed storms that affected the United Kingdom in 1987. The selected countries have quite different approaches towards science and expertise, meaning that the UK approach is more expert-led. The analysis revealed both similarities and differences in different cultural and religious contexts. For example, in both places people use otherworldly causes to explain the disaster that happened to them, most likely in an attempt to provide a purpose for the suffering (Homan, 2003). At the same time, differences were also evident. In the UK, religious explanations were predominately used by those who believed that these were more valid compared to the explanations provided by disaster experts. In Egypt, on the other hand, scientific explanations are considered as less valid compared to the religious ones. Or, as one respondent of the study said: “You can have science, but this (a hazard) comes from God” (Homan, 2003, p. 152). Hence, the otherworldly explanations of disasters were more frequently used in Egypt, compared to the UK (Homan, 2003). In relation to those results, Homan concluded: “although recent thinking in sociology and human geography has indicated that globalization of culture is occurring (e.g. Harvey 1990; Hannerz, 1990), environmental meaning remains culturally and ethnically constructed and subject to the idiosyncrasies of indigenous culture” (Homan, 2013, p. 141).

Note: See source document for full reference.

### **Applicable to:**

Stakeholders: [Norms/values](#), [Worldviews](#), [Attitudes toward environmental issues](#), [Ethnicity](#)

Disaster Phases: [Prevention](#), [Preparedness](#), [Response](#), [Recovery](#), [All disaster phases](#)

Types of Actors Concerned: [Non-active citizens](#)

Hazards: [Natural hazards](#)

### **Recommendations:**

- [Develop risk assessments methodologies, which consider cultural factors, the manner in which people cognitively process information and which employ a gender perspective](#)

## **Source**

[Deliverable D4.2 "Report on 'risk cultures' in the context of disasters" \(page 37\)](#)

This file was generated automatically on: 12.02.2019.

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<https://culturalmap.carismand.eu/a/4-2-35-in-some-places-religious-explanations-for-natural-disasters-are-taken-into-account-egypt-while-in-others-scientific-explanations-are-predominant-uk>



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