



Trust in authorities in disaster settings

Studying people living in seismic areas, (Joffe et al. 2013) argued that "to improve efficacy, disaster risk reduction initiatives should be led and promoted by those who are trusted in a particular cultural context. "The same observation can be made for technology. Trust in various authorities such as governments or the police is highly cultural (Tapio Kääriäinen 2007). For example, minority groups were found to be more likely to report a higher level of distrust toward the government (Wray & Jupka 2004). During a disaster, cultural factors impact also the perception of the legitimate authority that should be in charge of providing information. For instance, in New Zealand a survey on credibility in evacuation messaging during floods found that evacuation orders issued by disaster agencies, rather than the Prime Minister, were more trusted, while this is not the case in every country (McLean & Ewart 2015). Lack of trust in authorities and in the fact that an authority will make good use of social media is an important barrier to citizens' technology adoption and use during a disaster (Tagliacozzo & Magni 2016). They also reported that in case of lack of trust, social media can be used by citizens to provide other citizens directly with useful information or clarifying legislation. In the 1st CARISMAND Citizen Summit held in Bucharest, despite their increased distrust in authorities' capability to effectively deal with disaster situations, the Romanian participants showed a strong willingness to use social media for information exchange with authorities (receiving as well as providing information). This may be explained by low levels of trust arising from personal experience and expectation being at odds with trusting behaviour which is embedded in the acceptance of hierarchical structures as a cultural norm. At the same time, some Romanian participants appeared to take up some of the responsibility themselves by acknowledging that the authorities can only act effectively in a disaster situation when they have citizens' trust. Therefore, an increased use of social media applications in disaster communication, apart from the usefulness of the applications itself, may also serve to foster Romanian citizens' trust in the authorities. On the other hand, when the authorities are trusted enough, they are perceived to be reliable sources and their communication, especially on social media, is highly appreciated and used. During Hurricane Sandy for instance, authorities' information was highly used as it was considered as trustworthy compared to other non-certified information, especially on social media, but also on TV (Burger et al. 2013). It can help social media users electing trusted information among the very large quantity of information available from various sources. On the other hand, it was also found that, when the communication of an authority is perceived as poor during a disaster, the trust in this authority is sharply decreasing. This was the case during the Japan tsunami and earthquake of 2011 (Uslaner & Yamamura 2016). The lack of trust can also be related to the media. Trust in the media is linked to common practice but also to trusted para-social relationships built over time between the audience and the journalists or meteorologists for instance (Stokes & Senkbeil 2016). These people will be of great influence during disasters and citizens will turn to them to get information that citizens will evaluate as trustworthy (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent 2005). On the contrary, distrust in the traditional media will lead to the adoption of other technologies. For example, Ukrainians who distrust official sources of information tend to use social medias a lot during disaster to gain and share information which they perceive as being more reliable (Jones 2006). Qataris have also been found to



start distrusting television information (Meeds 2015). Nevertheless, in case of a disaster, the distrust in the media does not necessarily link to non-use of these media. For instance, studying citizens' information needs and information-gathering strategies in case of hypothetical terrorist attack using plague in the USA, Wray & Jupka (2004) found that although participants expressed distrust of the media, most of them said they would still turn on the radio or television to gather information. One should keep in mind that trust in the media, in authorities and in technology is a process that tends to reinforce itself. When a specific tool or person becomes the dominant source of information for a person's needs, it becomes more trusted and more influential (Spence et al. 2015). Also during Japan earthquake and tsunami in 2011, the local government of Tsukuba city was reported to have a very good communication on social media. Even though the city faced power outage and telecommunications were impossible due to congestion, the authorities used radio and social media (accessible through smartphones that were massively used). Vital information was spread through these media and this helped to reinforce trust toward the local authorities, but also more specifically trust in its capacity to react in an efficient way in case of disaster (Kaigo 2012). Finally, trust can also be attributed to celebrities. In the literature review celebrity cultures appeared to slightly influence technology use and adoption during all phases of a disaster. Celebrities have been reported to be more listened to than researchers and scientists, especially for disaster awareness and preparedness. This was found for instance in the Philippines, for Earthquake in Nepal (Jimee et al. 2011) or in the USA. For instance, Alexander argues that "Harry Styles and Liam Payne, members of a musical group called One Direction with a large international fan base, showed up in the results as being central information hubs for disaster relief drives" (Alexander 2015). Celebrities such as DJs and TV commentators, because they are well known and figures in people's daily lives, are key figures during disasters because "they inspire friendship, commitment, and respect, which is ultimately what we need to provide during a crisis" (Perez-Lugo 2004). However, she stated that celebrities have been neglected by both the sociology of disasters and risk communication research. We could make the hypothesis that celebrity culture influences technology use during awareness raising phases, but also the ICT uses during the crisis for instance when seeking emotional support or even information about the disaster. For instance, after Paris Attacks in November 2016, Justin Bieber posted a tweet with the #PrayForParis. His tweet was retweeted more than 50, 000 times and received 77, 000 likes in the few weeks after his post (Chong 2016). As Justin Bieber is popular especially among teenagers, many of them found out about the attacks thanks to his tweet (Chong & Kim 2016).

Note: See source document for full reference.

Applicable to:

Stakeholders: [Attitudes toward authorities](#)

Disaster Phases: [Response](#), [Recovery](#)

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

Hazards: [Natural hazards](#), [Man-made non-intentional hazards or emergency situations](#), [Man-made intentional hazards](#)

Recommendations:

- [Engage in activities and develop strategies aiming to improve trust between citizens and authorities](#)
- [Inform citizens about the risk they may face and about possible actions and measures they can take to reduce vulnerability and better prepare themselves](#)
- [Use cultural factors to improve the effectiveness of disaster communication](#)

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This file was generated automatically on: 12.02.2019.

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