CARISMAND

Body:

Introduction

People’s perception of risks or how they cope with disasters are not always objective. Most times, social and cultural factors play significant role in such scenarios. CARISMAND aims at developing a body of knowledge and toolkit that will assist policy makers and stakeholders involved in disaster management in incorporating cultural factors during disaster situations. By identifying the gaps that currently exists in such scenarios concerning cultural sensitivities, CARISMAND intends to develop from a multi-disciplinary perspective, a feedback-loop between disaster management stakeholders and citizens, and to establish, test, and refine solutions that incorporate culturally-informed best practices in disaster management.

Motivation

Disasters – natural, man-made or technical, directly impact the way affected population enjoy their human rights. For instance, destroyed shelter due to flooding, means that the right to shelter has been affected. Other ripple effects could follow: lack of food, sickness, etc., which invariably affect other human rights such as right to food, right to health, among others. Even though natural and man-made disasters have been in existence for a long time in history, it was only recently that discussions on the human rights dimension, including the cultural perspective began to emerge. Often cultural aspects that may shape and influence citizens’ risk perceptions, emotions, and risk behaviour in the context of man-made, natural and technical disasters are overlooked. Thus there is a lack of theoretical understanding on the how cultural factors could be integrated in disaster policies and procedures, and how such could be used to improved disaster management.

The goal of this project is to build up disaster resilience through analyzing the gap between current legal frameworks, policies, regulations and actual practices across different European countries regarding the inclusion of cultural aspects in disaster management and to propose new approaches that incorporate cultural aspects. The expected impact is to better meet the needs of various cultures during disaster relief, thus improving reaction time, reducing fatalities and ultimately, increasing the overall effectiveness of those who respond to disasters by identifying which cultural factors, important insights, and specific communication styles are relevant for a given cultural group during disaster situations.

By analyzing how emotional, psychological and social needs, as well as communal strengths and coping skills that arise during disasters can affect the way urban communities prepare, respond, engage in and recover from disaster, the project is expected to provide a framework for improving disaster management policies and practices through proactively targeting the needs of citizens as well as disaster managers such as first responders and local security agencies.

Challenges & Highlights

The main challenge for L3S is to review the legal situation of citizens in disaster situations, in particular regarding human rights, privacy rights, and any form of cultural rights and explore how these rights, in particular cultural rights, are being implemented. In the end, policy recommendations will be made to the European Commission and other policy makers aimed at reforming the current framework.

Project abstract:

CARISMAND deals with the issues of preparedness, response to disasters and after-crisis recovery which are inevitably influenced by cultural the background of individuals and the society affected by such disaster. Here, culture is understood as the characteristics of a particular group of people defined by everything from a set of values, history, literature, language, religion to cuisine, social habits or music and arts. As cultural factors could play an important role in peoples’ response to stress, crisis management and acceptance of disaster relief in an emergency, a disaster management which is aware of, respects, and incorporates local cultural factors will potentially be more effective and improve the community’s disaster
coping capacities. CARISMAND therefore seeks to identify these factors, explore existing opportunities for improving disaster policies and procedures, and will develop an innovative and dynamic toolkit which allows disaster managers and other stakeholders to adopt culturally-aware practices. The projects will also develop a feedback-loop between disaster management stakeholders and citizens to establish sustainable solutions for culturally-informed best practices.

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