Oñati Socio-Legal Series (ISSN: 2079-5971)
Oñati International Institute for the Sociology of Law
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Normalising community-led, empowered, disaster planning: Reshaping norms of power and knowledge

OÑATI SOCIO-LEGAL SERIES VOLUME 12, ISSUE 3 (2022), 506–521: NORM, NORMAL AND DISRUPTION: THE ROLE OF LAW, KNOWLEDGE AND TECHNOLOGIES IN NORMALISING SOCIAL LIFE
DOI LINK: HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.35295/OSLS.IISL/0000-0000-0000-1258
RECEIVED 09 APRIL 2021, ACCEPTED 14 JULY 2021, FIRST-ONLINE PUBLISHED 27 JANUARY 2022, VERSION OF RECORD PUBLISHED 1 JUNE 2022

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Abstract

Disasters (and the dynamics that proceed and follow them) are inherently disruptive of customary routines and taken for granted ordinariness. Many fear that in the context of climate change disasters will become "the new norm". How we prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters provide a rich terrain for exploring "normality" and interrogating normalising processes. In this article we draw on insights from empirical research on policy efforts in disaster preparedness in New South Wales, Australia. This research suggests that understandings of "the norm" is a site of contestation. This discursive debate is most evident in policy and practice prescriptions for "shared responsibility". International and national policy is shifting responsibility for disaster preparedness away from institutions of the State to the individual within the local community. In practice, we see this shift simultaneously resisted and embraced with "norms" in disasters reshaped in multiple sites and in multiple directions. The paper concludes that engagement in complex debates offers the possibility to disrupt traditional pattens and normalise community-led, empowered, responses to disasters.

Key words

Disasters; Australia; normalisation; shared responsibility

We would like to acknowledge the support of the Office of Emergency Management NSW (now Resilience NSW), Infrastructure NSW, NSW State Emergency Service, Inner Sydney Voice and the Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal.

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Resumen

Los desastres (y las dinámicas que los siguen) son intrínsecamente disruptivos de las rutinas habituales y se da por hecho su carácter ordinario. Se teme que, en el contexto del cambio climático, los desastres se conviertan en "la nueva norma". La forma en que nos preparamos, respondemos y nos recuperamos de los desastres proporciona un rico terreno para explorar la "normalidad" y preguntarnos por los procesos de normalización. En este artículo nos basamos en las ideas resultantes de una investigación empírica sobre los esfuerzos políticos para la preparación para desastres en Nueva Gales del Sur, Australia. Se sugiere que la comprensión de "la norma" es un lugar de contestación. Ese debate discursivo es evidente, sobre todo, en las prescripciones de políticas y prácticas para la "responsabilidad compartida". La política internacional y nacional están transfiriendo la responsabilidad de la preparación para desastres de las instituciones del Estado al individuo de la sociedad local. En la práctica, vemos este cambio simultáneamente resistido y adoptado con "normas" en desastres remodelados en múltiples sitios y en múltiples direcciones. El artículo concluye que la participación en debates complejos ofrece la posibilidad de interrumpir los patrones tradicionales y normalizar las respuestas a los desastres, lideradas por una sociedad empoderada.

Palabras clave

Desastres; Australia; normalización; responsabilidad compartida

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1. Introduction

How we prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters provide a rich terrain for exploring "normality" and interrogating normalising processes. The concept of "normality" is powerfully invoked in the disaster field, as a psychological longing, economic imperative, and insurance company public relations strategy. Whilst "the commonplace imagery of disasters evokes scenes of blight and disruption, of death and sorrow, of panic, chaos, and despair" it can also be (as Lanzara goes on to argue) "an opportunity for organizational learning and social innovation" (Lanzara 1983, p. 71). Despite the losses represented by more recent disaster events, this optimistic perspective remains evident.

> Potentially hazardous events do not need to end in a disaster. Disasters occur because of the intersection of *hazard* with *exposed* people and assets that are *vulnerable* to the hazard. (Dominey-Howes 2015)

This article draws on the findings of three empirical studies undertaken over a period of five years. After a brief review of salient literature and a description of the studies' methodologies, it presents and discusses two findings that emerged from interactions across the multiple research sites: the shifting discourses of power and responsibility, and the mobilization of expert knowledge. The article concludes with a challenge to attend to shared decision-making and knowledge as a basis for a more nuanced, authentic understanding of shared responsibility.

2. Literature review

The first Australian policy articulation of shared responsibility was in 2011 through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Communiqué (COAG 2011a) outlining shared responsibility as a central tenet in the *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience* (COAG 2011b). This Strategy emphasised *collective responsibility* and *shared responsibility* for government, business, individuals and households, non-government organisations and volunteers in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from disasters. The Strategy outlined increased responsibility for everyone, however the scope and agency of different social actors were quite distinct. While individuals were responsible for their own safety and for following advice, the State's responsibility was primarily for emergency management based on capability (COAG 2011b). The language and direction of the Strategy emphasised partnerships and co-operation between community leaders, non-government organisations and government, but decision-making was situated very much with government and emergency services. How this notion of shared responsibility was to be realised in practice, however, was unclear.

In 2018, the Australian Government launched its *National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework* (Commonwealth of Australia 2018), the most recent iteration of more than 20 years of Australian disaster resilience policy documentation. The National Framework is supported by Australia's adoption of the United Nations *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030* (Sendai Framework) (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction [UNISDR] 2015). The Sendai Framework created an international imperative for disaster resilience work and articulated the concept of shared responsibility between States and a range of other stakeholders. The National Framework and the Sendai Framework can both be seen as efforts to recast understandings of how we prepare,

respond to and recover from disasters. They seek to normalise local ownership and community responsibility as key to achieving the outcome of resilience (Commonwealth of Australia 2018).

Researchers however have drawn attention to key gaps in relation to operationalising shared responsibility in Australia (McLennan and Eburn 2015, Lukasiewicz *et al.* 2017, Atkinson and Curnin 2020). For these authors, the normalising of shared responsibility is a failed or incomplete project. A lack of formal status and recognition of "the community" is identified by Lukasiewicz and colleagues (2017) as hindering progress towards shared responsibility as the new norm. Atkinson and Curnin (2020) agree with Lukasiewicz *et al.* (2017), but attribute challenges in articulating and embedding shared responsibility, at least in part, to "an incomplete process of normalisation in Australian disaster management policy" (p. 3). They describe normalisation as a homogenisation of practices measured as a binary (for example, resilient/non-resilient) and mobilised through expert knowledge. Drawing on Foucault's concept of biopower, Atkinson and Curnin argue that shared responsibility remains incomplete because it has not become a nationally adopted normalising process in relation to community safety. For these authors shared responsibility must be integrated into cultural and social discourse as well as practice in order for it to be operationalised successfully across Australia. Normalising processes in relation to shared responsibility are view as multi-layered, working far beyond the realms of policy, into the everyday.

3. Methodology

This article is informed by three Participatory Action Research (PAR) projects undertaken by the authors over a period of five years, on community-led disaster preparedness and resilience. This method was chosen as it directly supports a community-led approach to disaster resilience and preparedness. PAR actively engages participants in cycles of design, implementation and reflection throughout the life of the study, and enables a researcher to work with participants to enact change during, as well as after, the research activity. The methodology grew from community activism and critical and feminist theory (Maguire 2001, McIntyre 2008, McTaggart 1997) and is focused on unsettling traditional power relationships between researcher and participant and challenging assumed paradigms. A key principle of PAR is that the outputs be of practical use, and "bring together action and reflection; theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people and, more generally, the flourishing of individual persons and their communities" (Reason and Bradbury 2000, p. 1).

The research focused on one element of the shared responsibility framework: communities. Disasters experienced by communities across the research projects included bushfire, storm and flood, prolonged drought, extreme heat events, and pandemic. The data was collected across multiple action research cycles (ranging from 7 to 20 cycles depending on the community) and included:

- participant observations (32 community meetings; 8 training and information sessions)

- semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders from emergency services, government, community members and community service organisations (n=60)
- focus groups (n=10)
- researcher reflections and process mapping (n=30)

Taken as a whole, these research projects provide a large data set through which to explore contestations on "normalising" shared responsibility. Drawing on Lanzara's (1983) work on disasters as "an opportunity for organizational learning and social innovation" (p. 71) in this article we are keen to highlight the emergence of new social practices. Broadly, this research was informed by the following questions:

- How might communities be better supported to prepare for and respond to disasters?
- What are the possibilities and barriers to shared responsibility from a community perspective?
- How can community-led disaster preparedness be better supported?

In each of the research projects, researchers returned to communities to report back, check accuracy and clarify with research participants regarding the interpretation of data and findings. Additionally, action research teams comprising university researchers, partner agencies and organisations and community members met regularly to check the accuracy of data and clarify meaning. Meetings took place during each research cycle. Conversations with communities and other stakeholders occurred over the life of each project, strengthening the rigor and trustworthiness of the data.

All research was approved through appropriate human ethics processes at the University of Newcastle and University of Sydney.

4. Findings

Our research has created a very large body of knowledge on the social processes that support or prevent the normalisation of shared responsibility in communities. Due to the scope of this article, we will focus on two insights from the research: shifting discourses of power and responsibility, and the mobilisation of expert knowledge.

4.1 Shifting discourses of power and responsibility

Our research has mapped shifts in norms of power in efforts to achieve shared responsibility through community-led disaster planning. Traditionally, planning for and responding to natural disasters has been firmly in the hand of "experts" in the Emergency Management agencies. These agencies are "used to operating in a rather coherent decision-making environment, where rules and procedures are clearly stated, functional domains have fixed boundaries and interorganizational relations are relatively settled" (Lanzara 1983, p. 72). Structurally this is reflected in co-ordinating committees with designated positions and roles. Symbolically it is also evident in the "men" (sic) in uniforms, whether the blue of Fire and Rescue or orange of the State Emergency Service (SES) or yellow of the Rural Fire Brigade. These uniforms signify these organisations as "combat agencies" with designation under the State Emergency Plan as primarily responsible for controlling the response to a particular emergency.

Combat agencies have traditionally given rise to highly hierarchical organisational cultures and structures, with clear lines of authority that are well placed to respond to crisis situations. Demands for shared responsibility unsettles this tradition suggesting that other knowledges are important to the planning. In one project, we observed the creation of new structures such as Community Resilience Committees aimed at enacting shared responsibilities.

Community Resilience Committees created a new norm in structural responses to disasters and gave rise to various defensive and adaptive mechanisms. The following quotes illustrate the contest and disruption of "normal" or expected roles and responsibilities between Emergency Management and community members.

> Well, we weren't really needed [on the community resilience committee]. There were some things I could give advice on. But most of the time, or a lot of the time, that advice wasn't adhered to anyway. So, you know, I could – I advised on policy and procedures and what we'd do at calls, and such. But, that's about it. I was [frustrated] because it seemed to be going around and around in circles and getting nowhere. (Emergency Management staff)

This quote suggests that the Emergency Management staff struggled to understand the Community Resilience Committee (CRC) and what contribution they could play. Their experience of dialogue was negative with the Committee "getting nowhere". They viewed their role as "giving advice" and hence the holder of expert knowledge that unfortunately "wasn't adhered to anyway". This type of resistance to the normalising of shared responsibility through the CRC was common among Emergency Management staff despite policy. Confirming the doubts about the effectiveness of the CRC to shift relationships of power, the Community Sector member identifies "control and command" organisational culture as unchanged.

> I think the (emergency services) culture has been male dominated, I think it's been control and command, I think it's incident focused, it's response focused. And, my sense is, from the experience people have had here in the community sector, when there's actually been a disaster emergency services come in over the top of them. (Community sector member)

The normalising of power vested in Emergency Management agencies was repeatedly evident in our research. On one occasion a presentation by a Police representative took over half of the allocated community meeting time, was very dense with crowded slides, was jargon heavy, judgmental of the community and painted a picture of disaster planning focused wholly on crisis management. The presenter was armed with a taser and gun and was wearing a flak jacket. On another occasion, a community forum attended by about 40 local people on a Sunday evening had no time for questions. Community members sat patiently through nine presentations by various arms of the Emergency Management sector but were offered no opportunity to participate. On yet another occasion, videos simulating the impact of natural disasters were played repeatedly leaving citizens afraid and overwhelmed.

In these and many other interactions, the vulnerability of community members was the unquestioned "norm" giving rise to increased forms of governmentality, surveillance and paternalism (Petherbridge 2016). In some cases, community members attempted to engage as equal contributors. For example, an established group who had been

undertaking neighbourhood-based disaster resilience building were invited to present to the Local Emergency Management Committee comprising agency representatives from the government and emergency sector. Community members came with good will expecting a shared agenda but were treated with suspicion and asked to report on their activities to ensure they were compliant with the emergency management plan. The community group left the meeting demoralised and determined to continue their work without recourse to the committee in future. Here the paternal approach of agencies to community members coupled with governmentalities embedded in emergency services policy and practice effectively re-asserted the "norm" of command-and-control authority in disasters which community members had inadvertently attempted to disrupt.

This traditional positioning of Emergency Management agencies as "saviours" however is now recognised by their own leaders as unsustainable (UNISDR 2015), despite the continued media construction of emergency services as heroic (Lewis 2019, Pestrin and Seiler 2020). Our research suggests that as the frequency and magnitude of disasters increase "shared responsibility" is being translated as "look after yourself". Increasingly communities are being asked to fend for themselves, told not to wait for the knock on the door or the boat to rescue them but to "have a plan". In this way an individual disaster plan, be it for bushfire or for flood, is seen as the responsibility of citizens. Many personnel involved in disaster planning actively participated in shifting the expectation of rescue.

> Tenants genuinely believe that they call 000 and someone will knock on their door! (Community worker)

This new norm of "look after yourself" articulated by Emergency Management leadership sits uncomfortably with the highly hierarchical and combat orientation of services on the ground. For community members this new norm creates complexity in knowing how to act: they are made responsible for their individual safety but told to follow orders whilst local knowledge is ignored. For example, in one of the communities in our study, roads that had not flooded in decades and where a slow-moving flood pattern was well known in the local community, were closed by Emergency Services head office-based hundreds of kilometres away. These road closures caused traffic gridlock on other roads, with some people driving through flood water to get to their homes. In another community, Emergency Services refused to open a causeway that would enable flood waters to empty more quickly despite local advice based on previous flood experience.

In another community, which would regularly become a flood island, local people had worked closely and informally with emergency management volunteers from the community for many years to ensure supplies could be ferried using the emergency services boat and volunteers would bring groceries, medical supplies and other necessities across regularly while the town was cut off. A change to a more centralised management of emergency services and the introduction of rigid rules about the use of the emergency boat restricted community access and disrupted long term relational norms of co-operation during a flood. This resulted in community members going without essential supplies during the flood or adopting a higher risk strategy using other

watercraft (kayaks and canoes) to cross flood waters for food and medicine. In this setting we see the emergence of social innovation,

> a ***space*** for decision and action is created, which was latent or constrained before the impact, and waits to be filled. Ephemeral organizations emerge to fill that space and take that chance. (Lanzara 1983, p. 73, original emphasis)

What we saw in this example was the disregard of informal collaboration between local emergency volunteers and community members in favour of prioritising organisational imperatives over shared responsibility with community members. Command and control norms dominated an existing relational norm within the community with poorer outcomes. The community was less able to "look after themselves" as a result of a policy and practice change enacted alongside the increasingly insistent discourse that the emergency services may not be there to help. For this community, the result was active hindrance of shared responsibility which had been working effectively for decades.

4.2. Mobilisation of expert knowledge

Our research has highlighted coexisting but contradictory discourses such as order/chaos and objectivity/subjectivity are at play within Emergency Management agencies as their capacity of "manage" climate-change related disasters unhinges. Expert knowledge is mobilised through data and information in what appears to be increasingly desperate attempts at "normality".

The appeal of data in planning for and responding to disasters was evident in many of our research sites. The appeal was shared across Emergency Management services, government, non-government and community groups. Efforts to "stay in control" are founded on the hope provided by scientific objectivity and order. In the following quote this Emergency Management personnel highlights the power of data and statistical manipulation in identifying "risk" (in this case to fire) but also concedes the ongoing value of local Emergency Management knowledge.

> We have a programme that – we paid an external – what do you call them? A number-cruncher. A market research company. And, they put together what we call a mosaic. And, they use over 400 variables to put together – from most at risk to least at risk, due to fire propensity, including census data, our fire records over the last six years, and umpteen dozen – the last one was 238 variables. But now, they've got a new one with over 400 variables. Banking data as well as the updates census data. So, they put that all together and put it into a programme for us, and we use that to determine – as well as the local stations, their local knowledge – gives us who are the most at risk in our area. (Emergency Services CRC member)

Data simulation was used extensively in another research site, portraying the catastrophic impact of flood. Very substantial resources were allocated to the creation of videos, based on previous market research survey findings. In this way data was vested with truth and shaped future government action. Research in many settings suggest that responses to disasters are far more likely to be chaotic than ordered, regardless of the extent of data available prior to the event (Cretney 2018).

In all the research sites we saw evidence of expert knowledge being mobilised as "the truth". This truth was on the whole singular and actively precluded other knowledges,

particularly localised knowledges. Those involved in resourcing communities for disasters appear to frame their work in a simplistic, linear, manner:

Awareness = Preparedness = Ready and resilient

Experience in South Australia also critiques this "information-action model" (Banks and Austin 2019) which persists despite growing recognition of its shortcomings. In our research we found that in many communities information provision is tightly guarded by Emergency Management agencies and Councils. Fear of inaccurate or misinformation during a disaster was a major concern among Emergency Management agencies. It would seem information and knowledge appear to be infused with power, hope and desperation concurrently. Anxiety over what was described by many of those we spoke with as *the one truth*, or credible reliable information to inform action was raised throughout the research. Considerable time and resources are directed towards communicating the "right" message, reducing complex situations to simple steps. Reflecting this frame, during the research we observed a consistent focus by Emergency Management agencies and some community members on the provision of simple, directive and procedural information to communities. This simple, directive, messaging sought to become "normalised" and give rise to specific behaviours ("have a plan"). This normativity however failed to engage with the nuance of specific contexts, nor did it reduce the chaotic nature of disasters as they unravel. In low-income communities for example the "Go Bag" strategy (having everything one might need in an emergency always packed) was identified as unrealistic so that it really didn't matter how often people were told they needed a Go Bag to be prepared their behaviour would not (could not?) change.

> They were big on the Go Bags; that you'd have this bag ready so that you're ready to go in an emergency. It did relate more to what people would experience here, because there are a lot of elderly people with health problems. But then again, it didn't have a big understanding of how a lot of people who live here, would live. A lot of people here are on Newstart. They don't have the extra funding to have spare kind of toiletries and things in a bag, ready to go. It wouldn't happen. Or if it did happen, they wouldn't stay there, then they'd be needed. These are people living 100 kilometres below the poverty line. (Resident)

The disaster field is now awash with technological "solutions" in all aspects: from preparedness to response to recovery. Apps (Red Cross Get Prepared), websites (Fires Near Me) and Twitter (@NSWSES) all now provide a constant stream of "information" on disasters. In our research though the technologies used to communicate and disseminate information on disasters "missed the mark" for a range of reasons. In one community, for example, residents received what appeared to be anonymous texts telling them to evacuate. The veracity of these texts was impossible for community members to verify, contradicted what they could see in front of them and led to a wide range of behaviours from panic to disregard. Those who did evacuate to the designated safe space found it dark and locked up, adding to the confusion. It later became evident that the texts were issued by the SES under a new communication program that was unfamiliar, including to those responsible for opening the evacuation centre. In another community, as the bushfire crisis on the East Coast of Australia unfolded over Christmas 2019, community members we worked with expressed frustration and surprise that the information being disseminated was chaotic, difficult to interpret and lacking in the

details they had hoped for. In the chaos, community members turned to a combination of information sources ranging from Fires Near Me, the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM), Facebook, Instagram, online, radio and television bulletins. Much of this disaster related information is designed reductively so it can be delivered in a crisis. These messages when repeated often enough gain a normality, a taken-for-granted-ness. The whole idea, for example, that people have a family to "make a plan" with and that the "plan" will protect them becomes uncontested. Despite the faith and resources invested in information as a catalyst for behaviour, research indicates that information provision *alone* has little or no effect on preparedness (Gibbs *et al.* 2015). Additionally, when the infrastructure for these communication channels fail people are left at great risk.

5. Discussion

Natural disasters (and the dynamics that precede and follow them) are inherently disruptive of customary routines and taken for granted ordinariness. Our research has highlighted that how we prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters provides a rich terrain for exploring "normality" and interrogating normalising processes. Policy imperatives that shift power and knowledge to shared responsibility are highly contested and complex. In this discussion we explore the possibilities of normalising community-led, empowered, responses to disasters that disrupts traditional patterns.

Realising the possibilities of shared responsibility requires working towards "shifting power", through facilitating participation in decision making and what counts as knowledge (Howard and Rawsthorne 2019). Power coalesces in discourse understood as "a group of statements that belong to a single system of formation" (Foucault 1989, p. 121). In this way discourses, via language, create cohesion and produce meanings about a particular field. These coherent meanings then act powerfully to define and shape particular fields. Discourse privileges particular concepts and understandings while silencing or discrediting others. In this way, discourse and hierarchy are not dichotomous but, rather, inextricably linked. Discourses provide clues about the hierarchical structures and processes that support them. Community-led disaster planning challenges established emergency management discourses by placing attention on the silent and marginalised voices, the knowledge and ideas that are not valued or noticed in dominant discussions or what Foucault calls "the subjugated knowledges", understood as

> a whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naive knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity. (Foucault 1980, p. 82)

There are however risks for Emergency Management agencies and communities in creating a new norm of shared responsibilities. Without fundamental cultural shifts in how Emergency Management agencies employ power there is a risk that only responsibility and blame will be shifted to communities. Emergency Management agencies face a loss of control and the safety that is created through hierarchical command structures. For these reasons it is not surprising that our research found many sites of resistance to shifts in power necessary to normalise community-led, empowered, responses to disasters. If the existing norm of power relations is to be changed space must be opened for community-led planning and held open for diverse community

voices to participate. It seems clear that in order to normalise shared responsibility effective community engagement (in which Emergency Management agencies step back and take a supportive role rather than stepping forward and taking charge) is needed. Although it might appear that more hierarchical communication is needed during disaster events our research suggests that respectful two-way communication and close listening are also very important during a crisis.

Contestation was evident in all research sites about "what counts as knowledge". Our research suggest that new norms of community control, ownership and action may arise from localised approaches to information design and delivery. In fact, the desire for localised, relationship-based information was a driving force in several research sites. Not surprisingly, this took different forms in different locations. In one community, the importance of connectedness at a neighbourhood level saw the production of a short video by local school children. The video was about knowing and caring for people in your neighbourhood, not about disasters per se. In another community, the production of a localised "flood map" was ruled "out of scope" for disaster preparedness due to concern about accuracy (and legal exposure) and a failure of imagination about how a "flood map" could build preparedness or resilience. Framing a "flood map" as an outcome informed by a collaborative community story-telling process gives the "flood map" a much greater value and significance.

Our research suggests that enabling community agency, including in the creation of their own disaster information, creates the possibility of shifting towards shared responsibility. In yet another community, residents initially understood "disaster preparedness" as the dissemination of information produced by Emergency Management agencies. While happy to help out, community members reported being unsure about what their role was and why the community was involved. Once community members were able to interpret ideas about resilience building and shape an approach which connected local culture and arts to knowledge of country, building and celebrating community resilience ideas and engagement increased and local narratives of resilience began to emerge. In these examples we see new forms of social practices emerging although often unrecognised or unbelieved by formal organisations used to operating in "functional domains" with fixed boundaries, rules and procedures (Lanzara 1983, p. 72). This diversity of local knowledges and solutions presents exciting possibilities for further research, to expand the repertoire of strategies available to individual communities. In particular, a close exploration of the interplay between vulnerability and power, framed within both local and overarching discourses of shared responsibility, would extend both the depth of understanding and opportunities for operationalisation of this concept.

Communities in each of these examples were not working against *the one truth* but rather, for them, the underpinning ideas (connectedness, local knowledge, safety, collaborating on resilience and preparedness) represented a *shared truth* which could effectively be conveyed by a number of different narratives. One site that was highly contested in Emergency Management was that of user generated social media. Emergency Management agencies expressed concern about the accuracy and exaggeration tendencies of Facebook and Instagram which might put people at greater risk. As discussed previously, messaging on the ground from staff of Emergency Management

agencies was that there was only "one source of truth" in terms of information (usually their own agency). Our research suggests that rather than being merely a source of gossip or misinformation social media has the potential to facilitate shared responsibility, disrupting the expert control of knowledge and information. This possibility is supported by research undertaken in Christchurch after the earthquakes by Silver and Matthews (2017) that found social media provided a process for people to "dynamically shape the experience of risk" (p. 1693), acting as an amplifier of information and eliciting pro-social behaviour in the form of volunteering, activism and charity.

Not surprisingly given disasters disrupt our customary routines and our taken for granted ordinariness, community members in our research expressed the need for practical information about both how to get ready for a disaster and what to do. We found repeated examples of chaotic information processes, despite the hope placed in the "one truth" (such as "shelter in place is not an option"). In discussions with community members people regularly reported wanting more contextual and tailored information which linked disaster preparedness, response and recovery to their particular places and communities. In each of the sites, community members were more engaged in resilience building conversations and activities when information linking their community, their local knowledge and sense of place and their agency to act together to prepare for disasters was shared and co-generated. In doing so they were resisting top-down messages and asserting a localised power in shaping normality. Most community members were less interested in delivering generic slogans, messages and advice as they saw this as the responsibility of Emergency Management agencies. Where there was an opportunity to co-design and collaborate in sharing information, community members in each of the pilot communities described feeling clearer about their role and more able to see disaster resilience as a meaningful activity in which they could participate. We found that information was experienced in a layered way by community members and meaningful information which recognised and respected cultural values such as sense of place were critical in achieving sustainable community engagement. Banks and Austin (2019) also identified two-way conversations that engage community members as active participants as more effective in engaging communities about disaster risks and help communities adapt to a changing climate. Simple, procedural information ("it is too late to leave, know what you will do") was seen as useful and important in a crisis, however, outside this, communities preferred to collaborate and share in the design and delivering of meaningful local information. Struggles over end-user generated information design and delivery points to contestation on what counts for knowledge and a desire by Emergency Management agencies to control this new norm.

6. Conclusion

Returning to Atkinson and Curnin's (2020) argument that shared responsibility is a failed project because it has not been normalised as a way of delivering community safety through policy, findings from our research challenge the notion that such normalisation is purely a question of policy and expert knowledge. Research participants in each of the communities we studied identified and enacted local social and cultural norms and drew on community history and knowledge in preparing for, responding to and recovering

from disasters, either in parallel with or resistance to simplistic one-way messages from emergency services. We argue that for shared responsibility to become normalised, that is, integrated in community understandings of a responses to disaster, a much more deliberative process needs to be developed between expertise, policy, and community knowledges.

Before shared responsibility can be normalised, it is necessary to develop a shared understanding of what it means in practice. This requires, in turn, attention to shared decision making in planning and action, and shared knowledge between communities and emergency services experts. Such conversations risk uncovering and contesting historically entrenched power mechanisms, which may otherwise continue to be enacted and even strengthened through superficial interpretations of "shared responsibility". Our research suggests that it is through participation in this complex dialogue, however, that the desire to create simplistic certainty in the context of disruptive and uncertain disaster events can give way to a shared engagement with and navigation of the uncertainties of disasters as they increase in number and intensity.

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