

ABOUT CADAN

The Culture and Disaster Action Network (CADAN) is a growing group of anthropologists, social scientists, and practitioners interested in working to build and integrate cultural comprehension into the work of disaster risk reduction and disaster recovery. The CADAN network operates as a point of contact for disaster professionals in government, NGOs and non-profits, and the private sector to connect with researchers and educators from academic institutions, to float ideas, identify collaborators, and create partnerships.

Since CADAN's founding in 2016, the network has undertaken a variety of exciting projects. In the US context, for example, a CADAN team is developing a learning module to demonstrate how cultural considerations can be efficiently integrated into disaster response and recovery efforts for greater success. Another CADAN team is working to create a flexible, operational plan for international disaster specialists who want to enhance local buy-in and sustainability of disaster risk reduction interventions. The team presented our "Culture-based DRR" ideas in May 2017 at the UN Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction.

CADAN GLOSSARY

- **Arc of Recovery** = The rainbow colors of our Culture-Centered Arc of Recovery convey common categories of recovery work following disaster. The graphic situates a cultural group at the center of these systems of recovery to indicate that local values and practices infuse every category of recovery with relevant meaning.
- **Cultural fit** = Recovery efforts are not always thoughtfully matched to local needs, or they may inadvertently undermine cultural strengths that may not be visible to outsiders but are needed for robust resilience. When such mismatches occur, the results can be costly in both slowing recovery and increasing suffering needlessly. To recognize cultural gaps and help resolve them, culture brokers offer a powerful opportunity.
- **Culture Broker** = A culture broker is someone with the knowledge and experience to bridge two worlds: the local world impacted by disaster (with its cultural features and related needs), and the outside world of disaster specialists and NGOs (with their priorities and protocols). The successful culture broker translates information in both directions, working from trust to cross the cultural divide. Locating culture brokers can be quick and essential for success, and is one of CADAN's missions to help facilitate.

For recent scholarship related to the relevance of culture in disaster contexts, or for information about the Culture and Disaster Action Network (CADAN), please contact us at CADAN@colostate.edu
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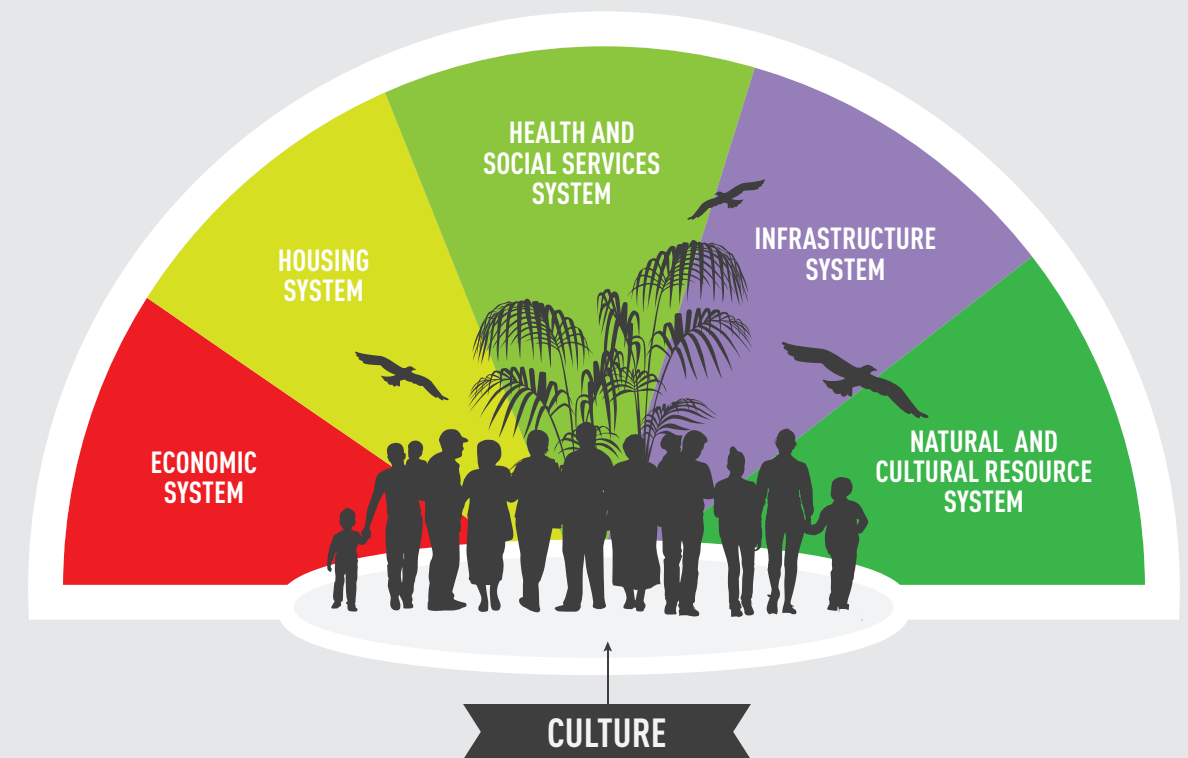
Our website cultureanddisaster.org is under construction and will be live by August 1, 2017.



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CULTURAL SUPPORT DELIVERS FASTER, FULLER RECOVERY

CULTURE-CENTERED ARC OF RECOVERY



Putting people and their cultural as well as material needs at the center of efforts to generate holistic (cross-sectoral) recovery saves time and money and produces more robust and sustainable outcomes.

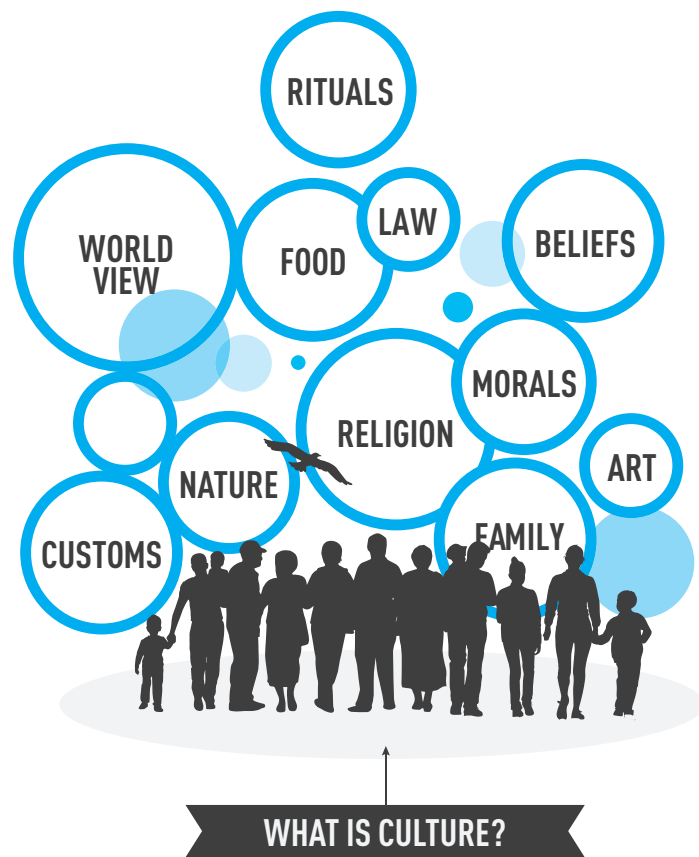
CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE = SUCCESS

CULTURE belongs at the center of disaster response and recovery policy and programs.

The National Response Framework (Third Edition, 2016) and the National Disaster Recovery Framework (Second Edition, 2016) improve coordination across agencies. Yet the focus on

rebuilding material life continues to overlook how meeting cultural needs can support human resilience.

When response and recovery specialists use culture as a lens, they hold the focus on people as integral parts of families, social groups and communities, creating more effective outcomes and more efficient use of limited resources.



Culture permeates, shapes, and defines every element of the physical, economic, and social environment.

WHAT DOES CULTURE HAVE TO DO WITH IT?

Seeing disaster-affected communities through a cultural lens means recognizing that every aspect of response and recovery planning and implementation—engineering, infrastructure, the economy, social services, communications, or training—must reflect local values and lifestyles.

Culture-based approaches place importance on local participation in a way that focuses on useful understandings of local beliefs, behavior, and worldviews. Culture is the sinew that binds a community's muscle to its bone and makes it capable of withstanding trauma. But the interior strength of a community is not easily seen by outsiders. That's why starting by asking the right questions matters. "Who lives here?" and "What do they need me to know?" can reveal culturally specific recovery needs such as community coping mechanisms, forms of social cohesion, and types of informal safety nets that will improve program design and results.

In pre- and post-disaster scenarios, many interests compete to be heard. Culture-based approaches help ensure that the voices of underserved and vulnerable groups are not drowned out by those of privileged stakeholders. Women, those with disabilities, the elderly, children, the economically poor, and all vulnerable groups are part of the plan. Listening for cultural clues to people's lives often involves paying attention to the details that don't fit our comfortable assumptions, or paying attention to who does and who does not come to participatory planning activities.

A culturally-based recovery approach adapts existing models and templates in order to identify and support culturally-specific needs. After a disaster, recovery leaders can quickly locate culture brokers from the impacted area who understand local values and needs. Authorities can then adapt their plans to match the specific cultural system in a particular location.

NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES AS A SECTOR

In FEMA's 2016 National Disaster Recovery Framework (NDRF) cultural resources appear with natural resources as a sector targeted as a "Recovery Support Function" (RSF). The framework holds that the priority for this RSF involves acts of preservation—such as preventing the loss of tangible natural and cultural heritage sites and resources.

These material aspects of cultural life are important, but culture encompasses more than this approach suggests; it cannot be confined to a sector. It is a cross-cutting force that impacts success in all sectors. Culture is not static, but comprises living, evolving, and emerging practices and processes through which all communities function and thrive.

CURRENT VS CULTURE-BASED APPROACHES

Why is culture insufficiently integrated into disaster response and recovery?

- Because recovery workers and agencies may **NOT** understand how supporting culture translates into human resilience
- think that culture is accessible given time and resource constraints
- feel comfortable deviating from existing policies and strategies
- recognize the impact of their own organizational culture
- know how to incorporate cultural factors into institutional protocols

Attention to culture leads to positive outcomes.

Disaster specialists can learn to prioritize cultural knowledge, inclusiveness, and participation among survivors. Our Culture and Disaster Action Network (CADAN) seeks to partner with recovery specialists to share ideas about how to enhance effectiveness of disaster response and recovery through culture-based approaches.



PROBLEMATIC RECOVERY

POST-KATRINA, ST. BERNARD PARISH, NEW ORLEANS

Lack of Cultural Awareness or Fit = Troubled Recovery

To recover their lives after Katrina, many African Americans from St. Bernard Parish relocated to the 240 square-foot trailers provided by FEMA. Very large families rooted to the area for generations, comprised dozens and sometimes hundreds of related individuals living in close proximity. But their style of family organization did not fit into FEMA's recovery template. There were no communal spaces for them to gather, share food, stories, and childcare. Nowhere to circulate essential information and renew bonds of interdependence. The resulting cultural blow led to widespread suffering—physical, mental, and emotional. These consequences also lengthened by years the time it took people to recover.

- Photo credit: Katherine Browne

SUCCESSFUL RECOVERY

POST-TORNADO, JOPLIN, MISSOURI

Good Cultural Fit = Recovery Success

Joplin is heralded as a model of successful recovery following the 2011 tornado that killed 161 people and damaged or destroyed over 8,000 structures, a third of the city's built environment. The process of recovery benefited enormously from survivor narratives and community organization that were readily identifiable and relatable. For the almost entirely middle-class nuclear families in the effected areas of the city, their recovery process used language and organizing activities that aligned fairly smoothly with outside organizations' existing templates for reconstruction and support. These commonalities were cultural. Highlighting the specificity of Joplin's success is neighboring Duquesne. The town's more economically diverse population shared the same tornado devastation and recovery programs, but not the same smooth recovery outcomes.

- Photo credit: Becky Browne