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The role of local communities in a global risk landscape

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**The role of local communities in a global risk landscape:
Using Social Impact Assessment to understand, recognize, engage and empower
community resilience in vulnerable regions**

PROPOSITIONS FOR THE THESIS

1. Since the 1980s, various international declarations have promulgated a disaster risk reduction and resilience paradigm that should be the basis of disaster management and development agencies in all countries, and that advocates reducing local vulnerabilities and risks, enacting genuine community engagement and empowerment, and building community resilience in all planned interventions, before and after disasters.
2. In this thesis, community resilience is defined as being the set of cognitive (e.g. empathy, caring, social responsibility, sense of place, sense of community, sense of risk) and interactional processes (e.g. mutual aid, cooperation) that enable local people to collectively learn and transform towards addressing the negative risks and impacts they perceive and experience as common problems in times of crises and disasters.
3. Within local communities, there can be resilience, but there can also be elite capture, rent-seeking, organized crime infiltration, disaster capitalism and corruption.
4. The way states, disaster management and development agencies understand risks and impacts and organize their interventions to reduce them can facilitate negative or positive social processes in local communities.
5. Social Impact Assessment, and the innovative Social Impact Assessment Framework for Action proposed in this thesis, can support disaster management and development agencies to better understand and reduce the multiple dimensions of risks and impacts, while also facilitating positive social processes (i.e. community resilience) in local communities.
6. Unfortunately, in times of crises and disasters, states tend to rely on top-down, centralised civil protection systems and use a mechanism that facilitates disaster capitalism and protects the economic interests of the elites, rather than enhancing inclusive social learning and socially-sustainable transformations, and building resilience.
7. The mechanism adopted by states comprises a cognitive (i.e. disaster myths and techno-scientific knowledge) and an interactional dimension (i.e. emergency powers, command-and-control, and top-down planning) that create counterproductive learning and counterproductive transformations within affected local communities.
8. The mechanism facilitates fear and suspicion, rather than empathy and it creates rent-seeking opportunities and a gold rush, rather than caring and social responsibility (i.e. counterproductive learning); and it facilitates elite capture, organised crime infiltration and corruption, rather than mutual aid or cooperation (i.e. counterproductive transformation), thus building a culture of disaster capitalism rather than a culture of community wellbeing and resilience.
9. A crucial shift in disaster management and development thinking and practice from protecting vulnerable, affected communities to empowering their capacities to learn and transform, and from top-down, centralised civil protection systems to decentralised, socially-sustainable community empowerment systems is needed.
10. To enhance disaster risk reduction and build community resilience, the mechanism must be abolished, the knowledge about risks and impacts must be transformative and co-produced with local communities, and a sustainable risk governance and a global culture of resilience must be built to turn affected landscapes into landscapes of affect, rather than carcasses to exploit.