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Integrating social capacity into risk reduction strategies

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The reduction of risk to impacts from external stresses and shocks is an important task in communities worldwide at all government levels and independent of the development status. The importance of building social capacity as part of risk reduction strategies is increasingly recognized. However, there is space for improvement to incorporate related activities into a holistic risk governance approach. Starting point for such enhancements is to promote and improve assessments of what is called ‘sensitivity’ or ‘adaptive capacity’ in the climate change community and what is named ‘vulnerability’ or ‘resilience’ in the hazard risk community. Challenging issues that need to be tackled in this context are the integration of concepts and method as well as the fusion of data.
Against this background we introduce a method to assess regional adaptive capacity to climate change focusing on mountain areas accounting for sector specific problems. By considering three levels of specificity as base for the selection of most appropriate indicators the study results have the potential to support decision making regarding most appropriate adaptation actions. Advantages and shortcomings of certain aspects of adaptive capacity assessment in general and of the proposed method in particular are presented.