



Risk Communication: the connection between assessment and management of changing risks

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Working toward effective risk mitigation strategies amidst ever-present and increasingly changing risks requires first effective communication between assessment and management spheres. This notion permeates the spectrum of what can be considered the physical changing risk inputs that feed into the risk governance processes of assessment, management and communication of risks. Close connections and overlaps between assessment and management requires communication to serve as the crux for the close collaboration necessary for encouraging preventative, long-term strategies for reducing disaster risks.¹

More specifically, communication of risk information plays this connective role by informing and advising policy and decision making processes conducted by actors such as spatial planners who receive this information. In this way, those who assess the risks provide information to those who must manage these risks. When this one-directional communication pathway is reciprocated, risk managers provide information to risk assessors, enabling two-way communication amongst actors working toward risk reduction. This communication and exchange of information enables development of strategies and actions taken toward creating and improving risk mitigation measures within a given territory and community. Further, management actions taken (especially for mitigative measures) can alter the physical and social elements of the spatial context of their territory.² This demands an adjustment of the previous risk assessment information and communication of the change in potential risk.

These conceptual underpinnings are addressed and presented through explanation of an analytical framework encompassing changing risk inputs into risk governance processes. The framework elaborates the risk communication component and is supported by practical examples from stakeholder meetings and site visits in the Polish and Romania case study areas of the Marie Curie ITN, CHANGES.³ Specific examples are provided especially within the topic of mitigation through spatial planning, as one of the risk management actors using the provided risk information to implement effective measures. Results of example analysis indicate that, in Poland, alteration in risk assessment methods according to the implementation of the EU Floods Directive may be detrimental to local level management strategies. In the case of Romania, evidence suggests that severe deficiencies exist in the communication and use of risk assessment information especially in the formation and implementation of land use plans. Utilizing these and other examples, the research concludes with some key points gleaned from the combination of the both conceptual and practical approach in order to foster dialogue and discussion toward future research.

¹International Risk Governance Council (IRGC). 2006. Risk Governance: Towards an Integrative Approach. White Paper No.1 Geneva, Switzerland.

²German Advisory Council on Global Change (WBGU). 1999. World in Transition: Strategies for Managing Global Environmental Risks. Annual Report 1998. Springer, Berlin.

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