



Conducting research in risk communication that is both beneficial for stakeholders and scientists

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One of the key tasks for disaster risk reduction is raising awareness. One way to increase it is through risk communication, including visual risk communication. Previous research showed that visual risk communication linked to natural hazards is mostly evaluated in terms of user's requirements, ability to understand the content, or satisfaction with the diverse components of the tool(s): Its impact on risk awareness is not researched. Most of the risk communication evaluations are performed in a lab-type environments and thus their conclusions might not be fully valid in real life settings.

Our approach differs in the sense that we decided to test a real communication effort. However, we did not use an existing one but designed our own. This process was conducted according to collaborative research principles, meaning that we created the communication effort in collaboration with the local stakeholders in order to respect the social environment of the case study. Moreover, our research activity should be beneficial and significant for the community in which we work as well as for science.

This contribution will present the process that allowed us to design an exhibition in the Ubaye Valley (France) and the methodology that was developed to measure changes in risk awareness. During a 2-years project, we collaborated with local and regional stakeholders (politicians and technicians). Informal meetings with local stakeholders were organized to determine what they perceived as the needs in terms of risk communication and to investigate the potential to develop activities that would benefit both them and us. We were offered the opportunity to design an exhibition for the local public library. We proposed the content and this was adjusted in interaction with the stakeholders. Later local technicians and inhabitants contributed to the content of the exhibition and regional stakeholders helped with the funding of the exhibition. Finally, employees of the public library took the lead in advertising the activity, gathering participants and they helped designing the scientific survey.

The benefits of this exhibition for the community included triggering memories, encouraging exchanges, especially inter-generational, reinforcing stakeholders-to-stakeholders relationships and promote further communication on the topic. The scientific benefits are that we have an experiment that allows us to measure the impact of a communication effort, not in a laboratory setting but in real life. But more importantly this research highlights the responsibility of scientists that are researching in the disaster risk reduction field to involve the stakeholders in order to produce results that not only improve scientific knowledge but also have a social impact in the case studies they choose.