



How to reduce the vulnerability of properties threatened by flood?

Freddy VINET, Frederic LEONE, Hugo PELLETIER, and Fanny QUERAL

Université Montpellier III, geography, Montpellier, France (freddy.vinet@univ-montp3.fr)

Over the last 20 or 30 years, increasing flood damage has compelled stakeholders to reconsider flood prevention. Indeed, the increase in damage emphasizes the failure of the current flood management policies based on river channel management instead of the mitigation of the flood risk. In the aftermath of the recent disasters in France and Europe, national and local authorities fostered an increasing number of initiatives geared towards reducing risks and rectifying the way of managing flood risks. All experts are now convinced that we must reduce risk through the mitigation of vulnerability. In this purpose, the French government and some river basin authorities try to develop programmes and laws intended to reduce the vulnerability of flood-prone buildings, mostly by retrofitting them.

Through the results of field studies conducted in France, this presentation focuses on pros and cons of retrofitting. As of now, if many assessment of the vulnerability of buildings have been conducted, only a few huge retrofitting programmes have actually been implemented. Many bottlenecks emerge when implementing concrete measures. These difficulties include technical problems, cost, and the reluctance of many property owners... On the long run, retrofitting may be an efficient way to prevent damage to buildings threatened by floodwater. However current programmes fail to address the specificities of the local context in which such actions are implemented, e.g. accurate appraisal of flooding conditions, awareness of risk, vulnerability of people... The key is to involve all local actors including people threatened by flooding rather than to impose general and inappropriate measures.