



A framework for profiling the characteristics of risk governance in diverse European natural hazard contexts

G Walker (1) and F Tweed (2)

(1) Lancaster Environment Centre, Lancaster University, Lancaster, United Kingdom (g.p.walker@lancaster.ac.uk), (2) Geography, Staffordshire University, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, United Kingdom (f.s.tweed@staffs.ac.uk)

Risks are always managed within a broader context of relationships between governments, citizens, civil society and private business; these relationships shift and evolve over time with changing political currents and economic conditions. In Europe over the past 20 years or so, there has been a move away from government towards a broader practice of 'governance', a shift that is as relevant to the handling of natural hazards as it is to other societal concerns such as housing, economic regeneration or transport. Key characteristics of this change include the emergence of multi-level governance processes and the 'hollowing out' of the nation state; moves away from the exercise of centralised authority towards the involvement and collaboration of a multiplicity of actors specific to each policy area; the creation of new forms of authority and control; and changing distributions of responsibilities between the state and other actors. However, the extent to which these shifts have taken place across the full diversity of European national contexts and can be observed specifically in relation to the governance of natural hazards is open to analysis and debate.

In this paper, we propose a framework for profiling risk governance approaches in relation to key characteristics identified in both the general governance literature and in more specific work on risk governance. This framework can be flexibly applied in relation to a specific hazard and national/regional context and enables qualitative profiling across a spectrum of nine governance characteristics. Past trends and likely future changes can also be represented. We discuss the formulation of this framework as well as illustrating how it can be used in a process of discussion and debate about risk governance issues. We provide examples of the ways in which the profiling approach can enable comparison between risk governance contexts and approaches, and how it can be used in a variety of potential settings.