



Social capacity building towards flood risk resilience in England: The impact of shifts in risk governance

C. Begg and G. Walker

Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research, Leipzig, Germany (chloe.begg@ufz.de)

CapHaz-Net – capacity building for natural hazards in Europe: towards more resilient societies – sees efforts to reduce vulnerability to natural hazards as a social endeavor. One of the findings from this project is the importance of as well as the advantages and pitfalls of participation within the natural hazard management process. Although participation is seen to be important it is still only a small part of the overall management process. However, as European societies see shifts in risk governance from the state to the local level, how are these participation processes likely to change?

This paper takes these findings and looks at England as a case study. This case study focuses on the Big Society which promises to be the change that will remedy what Prime Minister David Cameron sees as a broken society. The idea has been put into practice through the Localism Act. The Act seeks not to totally repeal state control but to make decision-making processes more democratic. This includes less bureaucracy for local government to deal with and more space for innovation when dealing with local issues and support for volunteers, mutuals, co-ops, charities and social enterprises to get involved in decision-making and provision of services. But how is this shift going to be everything that it promises to be? And, what does this shift mean for flood risk management? Moreover, how are local people engaged to become involved in shaping the decisions that affect them?

By conducting interviews with key stakeholders, this research aims at gaining an understanding of forms of participation that exist in the British context and the public reaction to such opportunities. In turn, this research aims to understand the boundaries of localism in regards to the delivery of flood risk management.