



Ethics and transparent risk communication start with proper risk assessment methodologies

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We will use through this paper a “dialogue” between two professionals. One is aware of the misleading character of many risk assessments and wants to foster better approaches.

A discomfoting set of statements sets the background of the “story”:
public reactions to risk assessments are generally negative,
the developer find it difficult to understand the reasons for general public negative reactions,
many projects get often rejected without valid reasons by the public, anywhere in the world.

Common practice approaches in Risk Assessment are discussed from the angle of public rejection, taking into account various studies that explicitly expose common practices limitations and voids. The hiatus between rational and well-balanced risk assessments and common practices is explored.

Finally solutions to overcome the limitations of common practices and deliver to the public more realistic risk assessment on which to build a widespread consensus are reviewed.

The paper conclusions relate to the need of:
properly communicating risk throughout the life of a project, from cradle to grave,
avoiding conflict of interest,
having estimates that are understandable to foster good understanding of what a risk assessment can bring to better Human existence, in an ethical and fair way.

The paper delivers a list of possible remedies and shows that “Common Practices” do not equate to “Best Practices”: common practices are not to be proposed/used any longer if we want to avoid public distrust and misrepresentations.

Many of the “modern” issues ranging from public distrust to insurance denial could be relieved or mitigated ahead of time if misrepresentation was kept at bay using five simple rules.

Common practice Risk Assessments, especially those developed under conflict of interest situations, generally misrepresent risks and fail to give the “big picture”, hence do not help taking valid decision and are prone to generating/fostering public distrust.