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Geoethical issues in long-term assessment of geohazards and related mitigation policies

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Long-term assessment of large-impact and relatively (or very) infrequent geohazards like earthquakes, tsunamis and volcanic eruptions is nowadays a common practice for geoscientists and many groups have been and are involved in producing global and regional hazard maps in response of an increasing demand of the society. Though the societal needs are the basic motivations for such studies, often this aspect is not pondered enough and a lack of communication between geoscientists and the society might be a serious limit to the effective exploitation of the hazard assessment products and to the development of adequate mitigation policies.
This paper is an analysis of the role of geoscientists in the process of the production of long-term assessments of dangerous natural phenomena (such as mapping of seismic, tsunami and volcanic hazards), with special emphasis given to the role of communicators and disseminators (with respect to the general public, to authorities, to restricted specialized audiences…), but also of providers of active support to the planners who should be given key elements for making decision. Geoethics imposes geoscientists to take clear and full responsibilities on the products resulting from their assessments, but also to be aware that these products are valuable insofar they are scientifically sound, known, understandable, and utilizable by a wide universe of users.