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A critical analysis of French flood risk governance

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France experiences catastrophic floods on a yearly basis, with significant societal impacts. In this paper, we critically evaluate the French Flood Risk Governance (FRG) system with the aim of identifying any shortcoming and, thereby, to suggest improvements. To do so, we employ a historical assessment of catastrophic past flood events in the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur (PACA) region and perform Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats (SWOT)-analysis. Our evaluation shows that despite persistent government efforts, the impacts of flood events in the region do not appear to have lessened over time. Identical losses in the same locations (e.g. Riou de l'Argentière watershed) can be observed after repetitive catastrophic events (e.g. 2015, 2019) triggering local inhabitant protests. We argue that the French FRG system can benefit from the following improvements: a) regular updates of the risk prevention plans and tools; b) the adoption of a Build Back Better logic instead of promoting the reconstruction of damaged elements in the same locations; c) taking into account undeclared damages into flood risk models (and not only those declared to flood insurance); d) increased communication between the actors of the different steps of each cycle (prepare, control, organise etc.); e) increased communication between three main elements of the cycle (risk prevention, emergency management and disaster recovery); f) an approach that extends the risk analysis outside the borders of the drainage basin (to be used in combination with the current basin risk models); and g) increased participation in FRG from local population. We also briefly discuss the use operational research methods for the optimisation of the French FRG.