



Increase in the exposition to floods in the Alicante coast (Valencia region, Spain)

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During the last two decades, Flood episodes along the Alicante coastline have caused important material losses and general disruptions of everyday life in the municipalities affected. We can speak of an increase in the vulnerability to floods chiefly as a result of an increase in exposition. In turn this increase is fundamentally linked to the nature of the recent urbanization process in this area and the corresponding occupation of flood prone land.

The province of Alicante occupies one of the first positions in Europe regarding flood risk (ESPON 2006). Even counting with legislation that regulates land uses, processes leading to the occupation of flood risk areas have proven very difficult to manage. In this sense, the Valencia region has enacted legislation such as the Land Use Planning Law of 1989, the Law on Urban Growth Regulations of 1994, and the Planning Regulations of 1998. All these legal pieces attempted to prohibit development in flood prone land declaring this land as “non.urban”. New laws such as the Law on Land Use Planning and Landscape protection of 2004, the Law on New Urban Land (2004), and the Decree on Landscape (2006) also consider the need to include the flood hazard in planning activities. Furthermore in 1997, the so-called “Cartography of the flood hazard at the regional level” was elaborated. This mapping exercise was the base for the “Territorial Plan for the Reduction of Flood Risks (PATRICOVA) approved in 2003 and currently the main planning tool for flood management in Valencia.

On the other hand, the European Directive 60/2007 pointed towards the need to take into consideration the social perception of Flood risks in order to develop integrated actions of risk management. Accordingly we have undertaken 285 interviews in the coastal communities of Alicante, Calpe and Campello (95 interviews each). We have chosen these municipalities for two reasons: first their significance in population and economic activity terms, and second, their different approach in specific measures to reduce the impact of floods