



A new risk governance approach – more inclusiveness in assessment and management of mountain risks

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The aim of risk management has significantly changed. For long it was to eliminate all threats, tending to the “zero risk” illusion. With the refinement of the knowledge on hazards, a more realistic goal is pursued: living with risk.

The lack of trust in decision-makers impedes the acceptance of risk management policies by the public, reducing their efficiency.

Experiences from different risk settings have shown that the perception of risk is not homogenous: scientists, decision-makers or affected people have different understandings of risks.

Further, communication between stakeholders is unbalanced. Public authorities have a moral (and in some case legal) obligation to inform about the risks and the risk-related decisions. But the population is not interested in the technical aspects of risk assessment and risk management. People want to have concrete and plain information on how risk can influence their daily life, and what could and should be done to facilitate “living with risks”. Risk management policies could be better accepted and less criticised if people felt involved in the decision-making process.

It has been set as a priority for European Union to involve every actor of the Society in decision-making (White paper on European governance, European Commission, 2001). This could bring people to be interested and willing to participate in the process that lead to decisions affecting their quotidian. Risk-related decisions have to be taken in accordance to governance principles, involving every relevant stakeholder.

The MIDIR project (Multidimensional Integrated Risk Governance) is an answer to those concerns. Midir proposes a comprehensive framework for risk governance, and provides a tool for improving risk management and risk governance: an indicator system.

The system is based on two sets of indicators. The first set is composed of indicators about procedural and methodological aspects, which are applicable to every risk setting. The second set is composed of context-related indicators, providing a series of criterion adapted to a particular risk setting and given circumstances.

This “context-related part” allows an application of the indicator tool simultaneously on various levels (local, regional, national, program, project), and on a wide variety of risks (natural, technological, health, security). Moreover, it can also be used for multi-risk situations.

The concept has been tested on two case studies. One was dealing with hospital order treatment in forensic psychiatry clinics in Germany and the other with electronic trading (“e-commerce”) with health-services in Italy. Both cases were concerning “particular” risk settings, inasmuch as they are relatively new within the public discussion, and characterised by a high degree of uncertainty and ambiguity. Therefore, the use of the MIDIR indicator system can provide a framework to integrate, improve, simplify and enhance existing governance and risk management process. Moreover, the system is able to benchmark the performance of existing management settings in terms of attention paid to governance issues.

The indicator system will additionally be applied on three additional case-studies in Germany, France and Switzerland in context of the “Marie Curie Project Mountain Risks”. The use of a common framework will allow comparisons, permitting to point out well-working policies, efficient practices and hindrances.

After defining our own sets of indicators, an “assessment” of the risk management decision-making process will be accomplished. This shall be done at different times along the project, so that an evolution will be underscored. The sharing of information and practices between stakeholders from different backgrounds, or different regions, will be encouraged.