

Rethinking Risk Perception Influence on Local Resilience in Urban Cities and Rural Communities

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Abstract:

In this presentation I will give an introduction to Danish perceptions of natural hazards and to a research project that is conducted as a qualitative case study on perceptions of climate change, including flooding, in two areas of Denmark: Urban area of Copenhagen and a rural area of Lolland.

An often applied definition of risk is “a measure of the probability and severity of adverse effects” which refers to the idea of a calculation of how likely an incident is to occur, and given its occurrence, how dire the consequences would be.

Though I will refer to another research branch that focus on risk – as a perception of a situation or a set of actions on a personal level, under the assumption that risk avoidance depends upon an individual's risk perception, level of resilience and personal risk tolerance. Understanding risk and how it is perceived is therefore a crucial step towards creating programs, share knowledge and campaigns to raise awareness and make urban cities and rural communities safer.

Very little research has been conducted in Denmark to review how prepared as well as conscious of danger the residents of urban and rural areas are in their everyday lives, nor how prepared professionals, such as heads of institutions responsible for vulnerable groups are in case of natural hazard. I will introduce the latest ongoing research concerning risk perception of heads of institutions responsible for particularly vulnerable groups such as young children, disabled, sick and elderly people.

It will argue that a study that emphasizes risk perception among professionals with responsibility for vulnerable groups can be a crucial tool in disaster prevention and mitigation. And furthermore that the inclusion of risk perception is a necessary part and an essential prerequisite to learn more about risk identification in order to safeguard lives and property, reduce disaster losses as well as ensure sustainable development.

In contrast, lack of preparedness may create unnecessary property damage, mental injuries and stresses or even loss of life. In order to protect the most vulnerable groups, we need to learn more about the general risk perceptions according to region, responsibility, common events and likely unexpected hazards. This kind of information is needed to protect against future unintentional and intentional hazards and compare those with the institutional responsibilities. The research is to be conducted to examine the prospects and opportunities to learn more about risk perception and possibly develop new management tools or seminars for those responsible in the sector