

Socio-Natural Disasters and Vulnerability Reduction in the territorial ecosystems

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The awareness that natural hazards exist, the study of their characteristics and the most appropriate behaviour to adopt when faced with them are a realistic way of dealing with them and reducing their negative effects on the population, cultural and artistic heritage and social and economic activity in a given area.

Human communities live in territorial ecosystems where natural extreme events such as landslides, earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, hurricanes, volcanic eruptions, droughts could occur. These events become “disasters” when they involve population causing widespread human, material, economic or environmental losses. Both population growth and unsustainable economic rise have caused population expansion in areas at high hazard, increasing vulnerability. In fact, people’s vulnerability cannot be attributed only to an increase of the occurrence of extreme physical phenomena. Vulnerabilities are shaped by social, economic and political conditions. Even if considerable progress has been made for understanding causes and processes related to the mentioned natural phenomena and their probability of occurrence, further efforts need to be made for reducing disaster risk (DRR) – i.e. to reduce the damages caused by natural hazards with the complicity of the society. In fact, despite the still very frequent diffusion of the expression “natural disaster”, disasters cannot be defined simply natural but, more correctly, “socio-natural” (Mela et al., 2017), being processes - slow or sudden - that are located in the intersection between “nature and society”, resulting from the interaction between a destructive agent (such as an earthquake, a tsunami, a hurricane, a flood) and the socio-cultural and environmental context on which it impacts (Forino and Carnelli, 2017). In this way, it is necessary to focus on the following aspects :

- raising people’s awareness of risk, change and uncertainty in their lives;
- passing on historical memory together with a knowledge of diversity in a multiscale, multidisciplinary (ecological, social, cultural and political) sense in order to increase the options available and minimize risk (De Pascale et al., 2015). Furthermore, the analysis of the population’s perception of natural phenomena and possible successive intervention with regard to behaviour that is considered improper and unsuitable in the context of risk, can provide a stimulus for the adoption of positive individual and social behaviour for risk reduction;
- cohabiting adequately with natural hazards;

- reducing vulnerability of people and property, and the exposure to hazards;
- improving preparedness and early warning for adverse events, communication and emergency planning, recovery and rehabilitation initiatives.

In practice, it is necessary to activate a series of actions and strategies (policies) that involve, at different scales, every part of the society, the government, the professional and private sectors, the members of the academic community.

This Special Issue aims to present case-study based analysis of interdisciplinary approaches, also innovative, to Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Disaster Risk Management (DRM). Topics of interest include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Vulnerability reduction;
- Prevention and population preparedness, community based approach;
- Risk communication and social perception;
- Historical memory and representation of disasters in popular culture;
- Adaptive capacity and resilience;
- New technologies for investigations of hazards and risk;
- Disaster governance.

Proposed milestones

Selected manuscript submission due date: January 31, 2019;

End of peer-reviewed process due date: April 30, 2019;

Reviewed manuscript submission due date: June 30, 2019;

Full paper should be submitted online to the Journal at:
<http://oeps.aimspress.com/aimsgeo/ch/author/login.aspx>;

Before submission, authors are encouraged to carefully read over the Instructions for Authors, located at : <http://www.aimspress.com/news/115.html>