

The Social Amplification of Risk Framework: Contemporary significance and Needs for the Future

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Abstract

Now more than ever we are in a situation where the greatest challenges facing humanity come from hazards and threats where our own activities play a significant role in their creation. We are faced by a set of linked wicked problems associated with climate change, loss of biodiversity, political polarization, and defeat of expertise. Consequently, finding ways to engage with the processes and consequences of risk perceptions, as well as social responses to risks, and how these connect to physical harm and future consequences remains perhaps the biggest challenges for the risk field if we are to inform policies, interventions, and change. The Social Amplification of Risk Framework (SARF) has for almost four decades been a centerpiece within the risk field as a framework for describing (and anticipating) dynamic social processes, connecting the different social phenomenon and communication processes that shape the experience of risk, and importantly how these are connected to physical harm and future consequences. Despite its manifold applications in risk research, one can argue that the application of and its influence in risk management and policy making has been limited. In this roundtable, we present results from ongoing efforts to revisit and further develop the SARF and discuss its current and future relevance. Presenters will address topics such as the concepts of risk signals as the basic unit of risk communication, the concept of resonance, the role of visualizations, possibilities for predictive use of the framework, if and how the framework can account for the role of digital information technologies in processes of risk perception, as well as what integrative frameworks can capture that strict definitions and principles cannot.

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