

Risk analysis

This is the science of the risks and dangers facing societies, and of their management. In French it is known as cindynique, derived from the Greek kyndinos meaning danger, and the term was defined in the 1990s and popularised in 1995 by Georges-Yves Kervern. This researcher set out to specify the field, the relevant issues, the concepts and the methods for a discipline that was viewed as new, radically different from the approach of sciences that had previously studied or approached «risk» in different manners; the natural sciences, the social sciences, and human sciences. Unlike these different sciences, Kervern's risk analysis (cindynique) aimed to approach risks in global, systemic and exhaustive manner.

Only risk analysis focuses on risks as its sole, essential object, with all their particular features, attributes and specificities, while for other sciences risks are merely one of the manifestations of more general mechanisms that are their main subjects of study. In addition the risk analysis approach aims to be global and systemic, that is to say to take account of all the factors, components and influences that contribute to explaining different risks, and determine their characteristics, their occurrences and their consequences. It aims to detail the interplay and relationships among these different elements, whether of natural, social, or other origin, as far as possible implementing methods derived from systems theory and gaming theory.

The proponents of risk analysis aim to form a scientific discipline in which the basic concepts involved are carefully detailed, for instance by clearly distinguishing vagaries, hazards or risks (probability of occurrence of phenomena of a given intensity, damaging for a given society), material or human involvement (number and value of goods and persons affected by an event) and disasters (events with a major impact on human societies). Risk analysis studies the occurrences, frequencies, intensities and mechanisms of vagaries and hazards, the vulnerability of different societies towards these hazards, perceptions by the various parties involved, highly variable from one individual, one social group, or one period to another. It also endeavours to assess the cost of potential risks, as well as that of actual events (in particular on request from insurance companies). It likewise envisages the management of risk by way of precautionary measures, zoning, disaster management, and preparedness information for the general public. Geographers taking an interest in risk analysis particularly stress the spatial, socio-spatial and territorial implications of hazards and disasters, and their environmental impact.

Bibliographie

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