



VARIETIES OF RISK RESEARCH: EXPLORING AND EXPANDING BOUNDARIES WITHIN ACADEMIA AND BEYOND

Risk Research Symposium

*** Date & Location ***

Friday, 5th June 2009

The Weston Room, Maughan Library, Chancery Lane, London WC2A 1LR

Call for papers

We seek short, thought-provoking papers, primarily but not exclusively from early-career researchers, that

- provide, in general, critical discussions of and/or innovative proposals for the transfer of risk research from the social sciences into the non-academic world.
- more specifically,
 - explore *concepts and theories of risk* and how they can contribute to the management of potential threats, and/or
 - discuss *tools and techniques* of risk management and assessment, and/or
 - analyse *configurations of actors and institutions* operating in different risk domains, preferably from a comparative perspective.

Papers should be between **2,500-4,000** words long.

Deadlines/key dates

- **Deadline for abstracts (max 250 words): Friday, 3rd April 2009**
- Notification of acceptance: mid-April 2009
- Deadline for paper submission: Monday, 25th May 2009

Background-Themes of the Symposium

The management of risk has become a central contemporary concern of our age. The global economy is sliding into one of the worst recessions for decades, following a financial crisis in which highly complex and popular investment products turned 'toxic'. Climate scientists are increasingly issuing dire warnings about accelerating global warming and its implications on our lives. Ever since 9/11, threats of terrorist attacks loom large. These examples are just the some of the most salient ones, with other hazards, e.g. in biomedicine, nanotechnology, nuclear waste, or flooding, also attracting public attention.

Yet whilst risk management has emerged as a new discipline with its own tools and techniques, it has faced numerous challenges. Economic risk management through techniques such as 'Value at Risk' has been exposed as inadequate, climate science is contested and ignored, and terrorism risk modellers often rely on 'educated guesses' to assess a largely 'unquantifiable' risk.

Increasingly, risk has attracted the attention of a diverse range of disciplines beyond traditional risk management and the first theme of this Symposium will be to examine the variety of concepts and theories of risk, and the opportunities and limitations to their application in the outside world. Risk has, to name but a few, been conceptualised in many different ways, as an expression of the uncertainty but also of the calculability of future events; as a general principle of governance and a trigger for institutional failure; and as an instrument to exercise power and a reason to attract blame. Are such concepts and theories of

risk helpful to make better sense of contemporary risks than traditional risk management approaches?

The second theme of the Symposium will focus on the tools and techniques of risk assessment and management. Examples include risk maps and registers, incident reporting and probabilistic forecasting models. Some have been developed, some critically discussed in the social sciences. Can research from a social science perspective sharpen existing tools and/or develop alternatives?

The third theme of the Symposium deals with the varied ways in which organisations and institutions process and respond to risk. From a social science perspective, the question of who uses risk techniques and principles to deal with potential threats emerges. Is the insurance industry's modelling of terror risk different from that of governmental agencies? Why is the public invited to participate in one risk domain but not another? Why does one agency draw exclusively on expert input whilst another uses more deliberate forms of decision-making?

Structure of the Symposium

The *Symposium* seeks to assemble diverse papers mostly from early-stage researchers from multiple academic backgrounds that will be discussed by senior academics, practitioners and fellow early career researchers. The panel discussions allow participants to exchange ideas on a variety of risk research topics and perspectives, as well as to practice actual knowledge transfer to practitioners. The selected papers will be discussed under thematic sets of panels with senior discussants for each panel.

The panels will be preceded and followed by a keynote speech. The first keynote speech will reflect on new frontiers of risk research. The concluding keynote speech will look specifically at the potential value of, and obstacles to critical risk research shaping the actual practices of risk management.

Participants

Senior participants include Professor George Gaskell (LSE), Mr Donald Macrae (Risk and Regulation Advisory Council, HM Government), Dr Martin Lodge (LSE), Professor David Demeritt (King's College London), Dr Carl Macrae (LSE/National Patient Safety Agency), Professor Brian Salter (King's College London), Professor John Adams (UCL), Dr Swenja Surminski (Association of British Insurers), and Dr Henry Rothstein (King's College London).

Publication-Dissemination

There may not be enough time/space for all submitted and selected papers to be presented during the symposium but the papers of all participants will be made available on the website of the Hazard & Risk Group of King's Department of Geography (<http://www.kcl.ac.uk/schools/sspp/geography/research/hrg.html>) and as print-outs on the day of the event. Furthermore, we intend to propose some selected contributions for a Special Issue to the editors of the *Journal of Risk Research*.

Contacts

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