

King's College Risk Research Symposium
**VARIETIES OF RISK RESEARCH: EXPLORING
AND EXPANDING BOUNDARIES WITHIN
ACADEMIA AND BEYOND**

Programme/Abstract

*** 5th June 2009 *** King's College London, Strand, London WC2R 2LS ***

PANEL STREAM A---K2.31, 2ND FLOOR

Session 1*10:35–11:35
Tools and techniques of risk assessment**

CHRIS BENNETT (KCL)

Utilising visual risk communication to alert hospital staff to potential hazards to patient safety in routinely collected data: a visually compelling fluid balance bar chart

This paper presents the theoretical basis for, development, and implementation of a new risk management tool for use in hospitals. It represents a spin off from ongoing research exploring the human factors involved in adverse events involving hospital patients.

Much of patient care comprises routine tasks designed to monitor patients physical condition and provide early warning of problems. Failure of routine procedures may account for up to 30% of the adverse events recorded annually in the NHS. One theme emerging from data collected for this doctoral study is that staff may fail to prioritise routine tasks, however important to patient safety, choosing instead to respond to (often unanticipated) hazards perceived to require more immediate action.

One such routine task, notorious for being inadequately and inaccurately carried out, is the recording and monitoring of patients' fluid input and output. Observational and interview study data indicated that, despite awareness of the serious consequences of failure to recognise early signs of deterioration, both fluid balance charts and their contents (lists of figures) were frequently ignored by both medical and nursing staff.

Consideration of ways of triggering awareness of fluid balance data, particularly cumulative totals which show trends over time, prompted design of a fluid balance bar chart which is visible even across the ward, providing 'at a glance' information about a patient's fluid balance status. Piloted in the hospital trust involved in the research, the chart proved acceptable to staff and is in process of implementation across the trust. The chart is featured on the NHS Live website and is attracting wide interest.

James Porter (KCL)

Lost in Translation: Flood Risk Mapping, Consistency, and Institutionalised Risks

Over the last decade the UK, like its European neighbours, has been subjected to a series of major flood events. Responding to the floods, DEFRA's flood strategy '*Making Space for Water*' has called for 'softer' measures to reduce and manage these risks. Chief among these new approaches are the Environment Agency's flood risk maps. Not only do the maps promise to standardise planning decisions through a 'nationally *consistent*' picture of flood risk but also downplay the use of discretionary practices and 'pork-barrel politics' in planning so as to curb inappropriate developments in the floodplain. To produce its flood maps the Agency employed the services of a commercial consultancy, but why? Putting aside arguments of cost-savings and efficiencies, it seems, following criticisms of its mishandling of the Easter 1998 floods the Agency has tried to limit its exposure to external scrutiny by contracting-out its flood science needs as well as formalising the rules and methods used in the assessment of flood risks thus 'institutionalising risk'. Yet, does outsourcing really resolve these risks or simply create new ones? And what happens if an extreme even occurs that lies outside of the extents modelled in the maps?

Considerations about what risks to map then open up an infinite regress that can potentially damage the Agency's reputation. More importantly, such concerns also led to the introduction of 'national *consistency*' in the Agency's flood mapping. It was hoped that 'consistency' would ensure the defensibility of politically sensitive decisions by eroding the need for 'powers of argument' or 'subjective temptations'. Yet, is the standardised or consistent treatment of flood risks actually desirable? This paper argues that the translation of 'consistency' between the Agency and its consultants differed considerably and reflected a range of institutional-political, technical and pragmatic considerations about managing blame, closure, and avoiding external critiques. Drawing on work from science and technology studies and combining it with Rothstein's et al (2006a; 2006b) 'institutional risk management' thesis, I argue that the administrative rationality of trying to controlling reputational risks can compromise the flood science produced. Thus instead of serving to shield the Agency and its consultants from unwanted critiques; they become ever so more exposed to a whole new sets of risks that did not previously exist.

Discussant: Swenja Surminski (Association of British Insurers)

Chair: Tim Harries (KCL)

Session 2*11:40–12:55**

Concepts of risk: Uncertainty, rationality and modernity

Anders Munk (Oxford)

Non-modern non-certainties? Performed risk in the risky business of insurance

Risk and modernity go together. Ridding the world of uncertainty has been the ethos of modern markets and politics, an enterprise to which science, and in particular probability theory and statistics, have been instrumental. This had led to the widespread assumption that our failure to master the complex, man-made and self-perpetuating hazards now facing us has done something fundamental to modernity (e.g. Beck 1995, 2002, 2008, Giddens 1991, 1994, Bauman 2000, 2006). But what if modernity was never what it seemed to be? What if the stability of its panaceas, the

facts, depend, like everything else, on the way they are constructed and maintained in networks? And what if they perform, creatively alter, what they were otherwise thought to simply represent?

This is the argument of Bruno Latour (1991), an argument which has caught on in both economic sociology (Callon 1998, MacKenzie 2003, 2007) and political thought (Marres 2004, 2007). But how would we understand risk and uncertainty in such a non-modern setup? In this paper I take a look at the ‘Statement of Principles’ on the provision of flood insurance negotiated tri-annually between the ABI and DEFRA, and try to understand it as an instance of a long standing non-modern risk practice. Insurance is in many ways the quintessential example of the arch modern interplay between markets and science. But actuarial science and its application of probability theory to a market context is not the whole story. Insurers, not least marine ones, have long had alternative engagements with the risky objects they are dealing in.

Patrick Brown (Kent)

Beyond Reason? The limitations of rationality as a tautological and asocial concept

Notions of rationality are frequently applied as a basis of describing, understanding and evaluating the actions of individuals and organisations in relation to risk-contexts. This paper will examine the utility of this contested concept for risk research. The gradual shift away from the invocation of rationality in a dogmatic sense has culminated more recently in approaches which consider multiple rationalities or understand action as functioning between the rational and non-rational. From such a starting point this paper goes further to argue that analyses of organisational, and especially individual, decision-making and behaviour would be more complete by leaving considerations of rationality behind. It is suggested that the usefulness of rationality in describing and explaining action is limited in a number of ways, not least because of the tautological nature of the concept. Moreover a conclusive evaluation as to whether an action is ‘rational’ must be made ex-post the outcome – thus ignoring the multiplicity of contingencies, potential outcomes and limited knowledge apparent at the time of action. At the centre of the paper is the assertion that no action is irrational, and that ascriptions of such a label are merely indications of a limited grasp of the salient social variables. Three specific risk contexts are used by way of illustration.

Nina Boy (City University/PRIO)

Calculating risk and uncertainty

‘Risk as uncertainty’ and ‘risk versus uncertainty’ are the two, thoroughly antithetical, epistemologies that underpin 20th Century economic theory, based on the distinction of uncertainty as probabilistic, and as non-probabilistic. Keynes and Hayek share the theoretical position of non-probabilistic uncertainty, and both take as a point of departure the problem of knowledge as a major challenge for economic organisation. For Keynes, rational calculation cannot be accommodated by the market and requires government intervention whilst Hayek argues that the market is solely capable of dealing with uncertainty efficiently.

Given this fundamental communality, why do their policy conclusions differ so radically? Why were both then overturned by the ‘risk as uncertainty’ equivalence, which made way for the mathematisation of economics as well as for the birth of modern finance theory? What is the relevance of their epistemological stance in

regard to the current global financial crisis, which has reintroduced incalculable uncertainty as a major obstacle to risk management? This paper seeks to address these questions within the context of liberal governance.

Discussant: David Demeritt (KCL)

Chair: Martin Lodge (LSE)

Session 3*14:00–15:15**

Concepts of risk: Contestations and applications

Christopher Lawless (Durham)

Introducing the Problem of Risk in Forensic Science and Criminal Justice

The application of modern forensic scientific techniques in the service of criminal justice carries multiple risks, with significant legal, policy and ethical dimensions. Despite this, forensic science has received relatively little attention from the field of risk research. This paper seeks to introduce some of the key issues facing the study of risk in relation to forensic science, and how these issues impact upon the wider context of criminal justice. I begin by describing the rise of a new paradigm in forensic science, stimulated in part by the perceived risks posed by the erroneous interpretation of scientific evidence. This is characterised by a shift away from categorical interpretations of evidence, to a conditional approach which utilises elements of probability theory, including Bayes Theorem. I demonstrate however, that this new paradigm of evidential interpretation has met with considerable resistance from other elements of the UK criminal justice system. Through close examination of one notable initiative, the Case Assessment and Interpretation model, I reveal the spaces of contestation which appear in the course of attempts to engender risk-conscious approaches to forensic investigation. I show how these spaces emerge due to the tensions inherent in reconciling new attitudes amongst forensic scientists, with more entrenched positions apparent in other criminal justice stakeholders. An examination of these spaces highlights underlying discordancies between different actors regarding perceptions of risk. Through a critical assessment of theoretical literature, I argue that these particular discordancies present a considerable challenge to existing understandings of risk. I conclude by considering ways to address this challenge.

Jo Warner (Kent)

Risk Assessment in Child Protection as ‘Emotion Work’

Decision-making about risk in child protection has come under increasing scrutiny in recent years, most obviously in the form of numerous inquiries and reports into child deaths. Concerns about the capacity of professionals such as social workers to predict and prevent harmful outcomes are reflected in the widespread adoption of rational-technical and procedural approaches to risk assessment. However, as such tools and mechanisms have evolved in ever more sophisticated ways, it is clear that they still fall short of the predictive capability once envisaged. Recent developments in the field of judgement and decision-making highlight the influence of affect and emotion on what have hitherto been viewed as almost entirely rational and reason-based processes. Of particular relevance for the current paper is the development in psychological research of the notion of ‘risk as feelings’, in which ‘anticipatory emotions’ such as fear are seen as important features of decision making. Other powerful emotional responses, such as compassion, are equally relevant. Yet despite

the primacy of subjectivity in social work practice, the idea that emotions may have an important bearing on decision-making about risk in child protection remains a neglected area in social work research and is only narrowly explored in theoretical work in the field. This paper argues that the ‘risk work’ of social workers can be most usefully understood as ‘emotion work’ in the sociological sense. The paper outlines ways in which this reconceptualisation would contribute to the management of risk in this field.

Tessa Fox (Maastricht)

The role of uncertainty intolerance in European Risk Governance

In Van Asselt and Vos (2005; 2006), we coined the notion “uncertainty paradox”, i.e. an umbrella term for situations in which uncertainty is present and acknowledged, but the role of science is framed as one of providing certainty. In instances of the uncertainty paradox, the public, policy-makers and judicial authorities resort to experts for conclusive evidence and definite answers, despite uncertainty precluding both conclusiveness and definitiveness. Hence, on the one hand, it is recognised that science cannot provide decisive evidence on highly uncertain risks while on the other, policy-makers and judicial authorities increasingly turn to science for certainty. In this paper, we will elaborate on the role of uncertainty in regulating technology. Through a comparison of several case studies on European risk governance (van Asselt and Vos, 2006; 2008), it will become evident that the uncertainty paradox is dominant in the current technology regulation, however, it manifests itself in a different way. Uncertainty intolerance turns out to be important in understanding various manifestations of the uncertainty paradox.

This paper will show that in these particular cases it seems that a certain amount of actors involved in the risk and technology regulation acknowledges uncertainty, but that other actors, the uncertainty intolerant actors, fail to do so. Even when (pieces of) uncertainty information is provided (implicitly or explicitly) by EU Member States, risk protestors or by the risk managers and assessors, a dominant uncertainty intolerant actor may be able to push this aside and to impose uncertainty intolerance. Dominant uncertainty intolerant actors within risk regulation, which dominance might be facilitated by technocratic provisions for extraordinary circumstances that developed into the de facto standard operating procedure, are likely to invoke the uncertainty paradox or sustain it.

Discussant: Brian Salter (KCL)

Chair: Henry Rothstein (KCL)

Session 4*15:45–16:45**

Communicating and understanding risk

Jamie Wardman (Lincoln)

Blame it on the ‘choice architecture’: A critical review of contemporary advances in public risk communication thinking, learning and practice

This talk provides a reflexive critical assessment of the ‘state-of-the-art’ in public risk communication thinking, learning and practice. It is posited that a new approach to public risk communication has emerged, the scope and focus of which is characterised by attempts to establish thoughtful ‘choice architecture’ to counterbalance intuitive responses to risk typically thought to be undesirable across a variety of contexts and settings (Thaler and Sunstein 2008). That is to say, a number

of attempts are currently underway to architect the physical, social and cultural environments that support the behavioural decision-making proficiencies of organisations on the one hand, and those of their publics on the other. The paper outlines the distinctive features of these latest developments as contrasted against three preceding phases of public risk communication put forward by Leiss (1996) and with respect to Fischhoff's (1995) widely acknowledged developmental stages in risk management. Finally, the promise and prospects of this latest approach to public risk communication are discussed in view of some key fundamental challenges to organisations charged with the political management and regulation of risk, as well as some critical reflections on the appropriation of psychological knowledges, tools and techniques for such ends and purposes under the new rubric of 'libertarian paternalism'.

Marko Ahteensuu (Turku)

Decision Outcome-Based Arguments for and against Citizen Input in Environmental Risk Governance

There are several weighty reasons for citizen involvement in environmental risk governance. Public engagement has been stated, for instance, to serve democracy and secure the legitimacy of decisions, increase consensus within a society, and establish trust in decision-makers and experts. Another kind of rationale is that citizen input is typically presumed to lead to better judgment and decisions on risk. First, taking lay people's views into account in risk management might result in better answer to the non-factual questions of risk appraisal and decision-making, such as the socio-ethical ones. Citizens might have an important say in risk evaluation in which the risks described in scientific terms are translated into societal and value terms. Second, at the level of the assessment of risks citizen input might enable scientists and decision-makers to answer factual questions related to environmental matters. Lay people could help to frame the risk assessment in new ways, offer fresh points of view and pose new questions, and point out problems and failures in particular risk assessments. From the scientist's point of view it may seem, however, that taking citizen views into account necessarily deteriorates the quality of estimates and decisions. This paper discusses the ways in and stages at which the public can participate in environmental risk decision-making and the possible benefits and problems of doing so. The focus is on decision outcome-based arguments, i.e. I consider the question whether the prevailing conception of environmental risk governance leaves space for citizen input from the knowledge-producing point of view.

Discussant: Karen Bickerstaff (Durham)

Chair: Brooke Rogers (KCL)

PANEL STREAM B---

PYRAMID ROOM, 4TH FLOOR (BEFORE LUNCH)/K3.11, 3RD FLOOR (AFTER LUNCH)

Session 1*10:35–11:35**

Institutions of risk: Risk as organising principle of governance

Michael Bauer & Florian Baumann (LMU)

The European Union as a Risk Community

Taking the debates surrounding Ulrich Beck's Risk Society as conceptual point of departure, the proposed paper will argue that the European Union (EU) constitutes a risk community. As empirical examples the EU policies regarding energy and terrorism will be analysed. Being rooted in different public and academic discourses, both issues were highly politicised and even securitized in Europe recently. The main aim of the paper will be to identify the risk assessment and specific forms of risk governance in the EU.

The paper will be developed along four sets of questions: (1) How are terrorism and energy risks interpreted in the EU in terms of cause, effect, and counter-measures? What shapes the European discourse? (2) What measures are implemented or envisaged to handle these risks? Is there an emphasis on prevention or on precaution? (3) What paradoxes can be observed or expected as consequences from the EU policy? Are these potential or actual side effects subject to public debate? (4) How does the exposure to common risks affect the narrative of European integration?

Framing the EU as a risk community will attain a twofold outcome: In practical terms this concept can help to make European risk management more effective. At a more abstract level, the concept of a risk community may create a new strand of legitimacy and plausibility for European integration.

Adam Burgess (Kent)

The making and comparison of 'risk societies': A research agenda

Engaging with the aims of the conference, this paper seeks to 'analyse configurations of actors and institutions operating in different risk domains from a comparative perspective'. It proceeds from the recognition that whilst the general thesis of the 'risk society' has been exhaustively discussed there has been little research considering particular risk societies themselves in a comparative context.

The main focus is the UK, drawing on reports written by the author for the government's Risk, Regulation Advisory Council. It can be suggested that the UK has, to an extent, followed the path first blazed by the USA from the 1970s, but has added its own unique features. Further, as risk has been subject to intense politicisation in the UK it has become institutionalised in the US leading to suggestions of a regulatory 'flip flop'.

The substantial work of Moran (2003) has outlined the profound structural transformation of British society from the 1970s and the transformation of the UK from being historically the most staid bastion of informal 'club rule' to a state characterised by hyper innovation and its ready assimilation of various forms of risk governance. In a number of different realms from the politicisation of health risks, its 'risk management of everything', intense preoccupation with child safety and other developments, there is evidence that an inflated sense of risk has now become central to the operation and management of British society. Whilst other societies have

particular domains of risk it is their combination and concentration that may qualify the UK as such an exemplar.

Contrasts with 'pre-risk societies' such as China and Estonia will be indicated. Estonia is particularly interesting and ironic as it is partially through the experience of the Chernobyl nuclear accident that the country remains fixated upon the more singular threat of Russia in a manner more akin to the Cold War context than the more amorphous uncertainty of the risk society that is so pervasive in the UK.

Discussant: Henry Rothstein (KCL)

Chair: Mark Pelling (KCL)

Session 2*11:40–12:55**

Institutions of risk: Processing and negotiating risk information

Claudia Downing (Cambridge)

Negotiating genetic risk: generating and applying a model of responsibility in the context of growing awareness of risk for a late-onset genetic disorder

This paper draws on empirical work to document how family members make and live with reproductive decisions in the face of their growing awareness for a serious late-onset genetic disorder, Huntington's disease (HD). Decision-making involves negotiating two dimensions of reproductive risk – that for any child which might be born and the uncertainty that arises about the at-risk parent's ability to sustain a parenting role should he or she become symptomatic. A detailed account is given of how the model of responsibility was generated from their narratives. This model encapsulates what families find important when making these decisions. It demonstrates that *how* people make decisions in the face of risk can become as important as *what* they decide.

The model provides a framework for comparing how people deal with each dimension of risk, comparing different people's decision-making and to illuminate decision-making in the face of change. This includes addressing new options generated by recent developments in molecular genetics which can resolve uncertainty about, or avoid these risks. As such it provides a useful tool for genetic counselors in their work with at-risk families. The paper concludes by considering how the model furthers our understanding of the psychology of decision-making in the face of risk in academic, clinical and real life contexts. This includes reflections on how it maps onto claims being made by naturalistic decision-making (NDM) initiatives to account for decision-making in the real world.

Lizzie Coles-Kemp (Royal Holloway)

The Effect of Organisational Structure and Culture on Information Security Risk Processes

Risk management is regarded by many as the corner stone of any information security management framework. The international standard for information security management, ISO 27001, defines risk management as mandatory and information security literature supports this doctrine. However, the literature is lightweight in terms of its discussion of the organisational dynamics that affect the selection and use of information security risk assessment techniques. Furthermore, there is little discussion about the processes of multi-stakeholder risk negotiation and response. As a result there is little shared knowledge of the selection criteria for information security risk assessment methods and the design of information security risk

negotiation processes. This knowledge gap is a contributing factor to the development of inappropriate information security policies and the discrepancies between the information security policy and organisational behaviour that lead to information security incidents such as data loss.

In order to address this knowledge gap, an eight year ethnographic study focused on the relationship between information security management process design and organisational structure and culture. Analysis on the data collected catalogued the varying uses of information security risk assessment and negotiation techniques and identified organisational aspects that affect their selection and implementation within an information security management framework. The longitudinal aspect to this study enabled analysis of maturity paths of information security risk processes and their impact on the information security management framework. The conclusions and recommendations resulting from the ethnographic study are presented in this paper.

Matthew Kearnes & Sarah Davies (Durham)

Risk, agency and calculative action

In this paper we examine the emergence of ‘risk talk’ in public discussion concerning new and emerging technologies. We begin with the notion of ‘public ambivalence’ toward technological innovation – a consistently reported, yet latent, feature of broader public responses. As much as science’s promissory qualities feature in contemporary discourse counter-narratives of failure, accident and loss of control also populate lay responses. As Jonas (1985) suggests, ‘the other side of the triumphal advance [of science] has begun to show its face, disturbing the euphoria of success with threats that are as novel as its welcome fruits.’ (p. ix). Accordingly, contemporary cultural narratives suggest that technoscientific innovation is imbued with two ever-present realities: firstly the looming possibility of the catastrophe or disaster – what Blanchot (1980) terms the ‘ruinous purity of destruction’ – and secondly the mundane ubiquity of risk in everyday life.

In this paper we present the results of a close reading and analysis of a number of focus-group discussions on the societal dimensions of nanotechnology. In particular we examine the emergence of ‘risk talk’ in the context of the immanent presence of both ‘risk’ and ‘the catastrophe’. We suggest that whilst in lay talk ‘risk’ is constructed as transcendent – and therefore as beyond effective management – risk-narratives also entail habituated patterns of moral delegation. For example risk-talk is typically associated with moral imperatives of precaution and the delegation responsibility to institutions of formal governance. Though typically denying the possibility of calculative regulation of risky possibilities lay risk-narratives rely on pre-defined patterns of agency that structure roles and responsibilities. We conclude by suggesting that risk-discourse thus serves as a cultural terminology both for the re-imagination of individual agency and the strategic management of unknowability.

Discussant: John Adams (UCL)

Chair: Anne Schlag (KCL)

Christian Kuhlicke (UFZ)

The Social Production of Ecological Blind-Spots: Ignorance, Vulnerability and the “Flood of the Century”

The fundamental argument of this paper is that each society systematically produces ecological blind-spots, that is knowledge about the environment that has been forgotten, neglected or even suppressed, realms that lay outside of a societal imagination and that are no longer or never have been part of collective memory. If such blind-spots are discovered, they radically surprise people and unravel their vulnerability.

The aim of the paper is threefold: In a first step it specifies the interrelation of ignorance and vulnerability. People are vulnerable when they discover something entirely unknown (their *nescience*) exceeding by definition previously established routines, stocks of knowledge and resources. This definition explicitly takes the view of different actors serious and departs from their being surprised. In a second step, a general understanding is developed on how knowledge about the environment stabilizes to such an extent that it is taken for granted and how this very process is connected with the social production of ecological blind-spots. In a third step, the theoretical argument is substantiated by a case-study: the “Flood of the Century” of 2002. By referring to a community located at the Mulde River (Saxony, Germany) it is shown how the vulnerability of a community is influenced by an institutionalized space of experience that was defined by “heavy” expectations, which did not consider the possibility that the “stability” of the river is artificially created by engineering achievements.

The presentation concludes with elaborating how more robust management strategies may be organized to come to a more resilient dealing with the unknown. It is argued that one of the central challenges ahead is the question of how to confuse seemingly stable beliefs about nature in a manner that is meaningful to people.

Silvia Bruzzone (Picardie)

One risk, multiple stories: sensemaking in fire prevention practices

Complex organizational phenomena often take shape from technical artefacts structuring organizational networks. Organizational objects intervene first of all as a labelling and classification tools to tell and give visibility to organizational phenomena. These identify suitable actors and suggest plausible acts for managing and coordination.

In this contribution, I concentrate on different processes of sensemaking unfolding from a technical artefact at the base of a new organizational practice. If, as Weick and Sutcliff (2005) suggest, the question to be searched in organizing phenomena is “What’s the story”, my concern is *how different stories* co-exist and intervene in organizing one same practice? And how is this variety handled? How are conflicting interpretations managed in daily practices?

The contribution concentrates on an innovative practice of forest-fire prevention in a region of Northern Italy. As central feature is the adoption of an information system for the production of a daily map/bulletin of risk prediction.

This technological artefact identifies and coordinates a variegated work practice including three main communities of practice such as predictors, foresters and volunteer fire-fighters. It is about a complex practice involving multiple actors

and expertise: academic departments and a fire simulation laboratory are in charge of scientific knowledge for forecasting; the forest service is mainly in charge of the coordination of volunteer workers and diffusion of alerts information among different actors (fire brigade, civil defence, prefecture); volunteers patrol, upkeep forests and put out fire.

The intention is to show how the different communities involved unfold different processes of sensemaking of the artefact, of their activity and last but not least of fire as risk. For each community the artefact makes sense and tells quite a different story about the risk itself and about their activity of forest-fire prevention.

The stories I encountered are the result of specific institutional frameworks, organizational cultures, personal values and tacit knowledge in contextual work practices. For predictors, fire mainly represents the product of a chemical reaction whereby interventions can be improved through more research work on natural inducing factors (weather, vegetation elements, orographic factors), data collecting, more effective simulation modelling. For the forestry service fire fighting is mainly a question of accountable coordination and information work among multiple agents, means (helicopters, canadairs, trucks, ect), hierarchical levels and media. Voluntary fire-fighters' story is mainly based on what Desmond (2007) calls "country competence": familiarity with local forests, its uses, practical knowledge of all stuff and artefacts mediating their daily work activity of patrolling and on fire.

How the different stories compose together or conflict in the implementation of the practice? How the scientific plot goes together with the bureaucratic/hierarchical one performed by the forest service? how do the previous ones fit with the volunteers' one? And to what extent, instead might conflicting processes of sensemaking promote organizational learning?

Antoine Debure (INRA)

Debates over conservative assumptions among experts: the assessment of risk for flavouring agents in food

"Invisible colleges" or "epistemic communities" have been considered as the central feature to explain decision making in scientific experts committees on international level. These networks are independent and not related to the expert body or the regulatory authorities asking for advice. Individuals gathered in formal or informal meetings where they develop and refine methodologies. With a high scientific credit and reputation (at least for the institutions requesting experts' opinions), they can propose and make adopt their tools in the experts committee context. These networking frameworks have two important outcomes. At first, they demonstrate the mix of knowledge that individuals produce by interiorizing the political and economical needs of the regulators in the scientific information. The second outcome is related to the balance of power in the experts committees, where such networks tend to dominate debates and decision making process.

This paper will discuss an alternative approach to the allocation of power and the importance of such epistemic communities while restating the hybridity embedded in the knowledge produced. The case study demonstrated is focusing on the debates that have occurred at a joint expert committee on Food Additives and Contaminants (JECFA) of the FAO and WHO upon the exposure assessment methodologies of flavoring agents in foodstuff between 2005 and 2008. The JECFA is providing advice in response to a demand expressed by the Codex Alimentarius Commission, an intergovernmental organization which has developed voluntary-enforceable international standards for food since 1962.

The existing assessment model is supported by a subgroup of experts which tends to rule the decision making, and an alternate proposal is defended by a smaller group of new comers. The first is mainly formed of toxicologists with a long history in the committee while the second is made of nutritionists and epidemiologists who have been recently selected and with less-stabilized assessment tools and networks. Political assumptions appear central in the negotiations among experts in particular with respect to the definition of conservatism as a mean to validate a model toward another. The provision of scientific advice is not a result of a scientific consensus, as stated by FAO and WHO in their guidelines documents, but more as a compromise over different norms and principles shared by different groups of experts. Paradoxically, negotiations were not in favor of the leading epistemic community. Their model was finally replaced by the alternative proposition but not so much because it was proven scientifically less robust. In fact the new comers' group was able to implicitly pressure the FAO/WHO secretariat which could jeopardize the credibility of the committee. They could also integrate at the same time less conservative assumptions in their model to ease acceptance among experts.

This research combines methodologies: qualitative interviews with experts, FAO and WHO officials coordinating the provision of scientific advices and a quantitative analysis of experts' publications.

Discussant: Martin Lodge (LSE)

Chair: John Downer (LSE)

Session 4*15:45–17:45**

Institutions of risk: Public and private risk management

Christian Huber (Innsbruck)

Risk Management in Private and Public Prisons

This paper – part of an ongoing research project – tries to explore how risk management practices which are a significant part of current trends in governance shape and change the treatment of risk in prisons. This poses insofar a relevant question as differences in profit-orientation, governance and accountability between public and private prisons influence the scope for quasi-judicial actions (Andrew, 2007) of these institutions. The administration of punishments is inseparable from prisoners' experiences of their sentence – an interconnection which can be termed prisons' quasi-judicial powers. They have a direct affect on the goals and *raison d'être* of prisons – both in an ethical and an economic dimension.

Risks lie at the very heart of the challenge penal institutions derive their social value from. Therefore Risk Management is the most prominent contemporary accounting (and governance) practice which shapes the self-perception and behavior of these institutions and its members. While Risk Management in prisons used to be confined to the likelihood of breakouts and riots, new managerialist approaches in governance have created the need for accountability for all kinds of risks – from reputation to staff development issues. This paper compares conceptually and on the level of policies developments towards the privatization of prisons in the UK with more recent changes in Germany and Austria. In a next step these trends are addressed from a generic social science perspective which links to the organizational and societal consequences of risk management in public and private prisons, building on the works of Power (2007) and Hood (2004).

Kati Kangur (KCL)

Europeanisation of risk regulation in Eastern Europe: case of drinking water safety in Estonia and Lithuania

This paper focuses at the EU environmental health policy transfer to its new member states. The application of EU Drinking Water Directive is analysed in the context of Estonia and Lithuania. The EU accession has intensified the neo-liberal restructuring of Estonian and Lithuanian political economies. However, the historical experiences and the developments these countries have been through pose a decisive impact on their capabilities, physical structures, legal and cultural contexts, as well as the way the above characteristics have shaped the institutionalisation of EU safety policies. This paper endeavours to systematically assess the importance of pressures inside the state bureaucracies and from outside the regulatory spheres in shaping the drinking water safety regulation.

The different paths taken by Estonian and Lithuanian political elites in drinking water regulation have allowed for varying influence of other drivers in safety regulation. Estonian early economic and political devolution, has resulted in a situation where the decentralisation has gone too far. The small scattered municipal water companies, under the influence of local elite groups are struggling to provide safe drinking water and lag behind in making use of the European support funds. In Lithuania, to the contrary, large municipal water suppliers are guarded by state system, which has benefited the viability of companies. Furthermore, going beyond the European requirements, safety measures have been institutionalised in areas that are not connected to the public water supply. However well designed, Lithuanian drinking water safety nets are weakened by lagging administrative capacities and rigid bureaucratic cultures.

Discussant: Carl Macrae (National Patient Safety Agency)

Chair: David Demeritt (KCL)