

A new pattern of risk management: The Hyogo Framework for Action and Italian practise

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Abstract

On January 2005, the World Conference on Disaster Reduction adopted the “Hyogo Framework for Action 2005–2025: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters” [UN-ISDR (United Nations, International Strategy for Disaster Reduction), Disaster Risk and Sustainable Development: understanding the links between development, environment and natural hazards leading to disasters, World Summit on Sustainable Development, August–September 2002, Johannesburg, 2002]. This “white paper” seeks to promote “an effective integration of disaster risk considerations into sustainable development policies, planning and programming at all levels” [UN-ISDR (United Nations, International Strategy for Disaster Reduction), Disaster Risk and Sustainable Development: understanding the links between development, environment and natural hazards leading to disasters, World Summit on Sustainable Development, August–September 2002, Johannesburg, 2002. p. 1] outlining a strategic and systematic approach to reduce vulnerabilities and risks to hazards.

The current paper discusses each aspect of the Hyogo approach in relation to the Italian experience. Italy represents an interesting case because of its multiple hazard environment, and the fact that it has developed an integrated approach to risk reduction planning. Strengths and weaknesses of the “Italian way” of dealing with risk are identified, and compared with the theoretical processes suggested by the framework. Implementation of selected key actions in Italy has helped identify a series of obstacles to progress, further defining the gap that still exists between theoretical framework and actual practise.

The various activities constituting “risk management” (viz., assessment, prevention, mitigation, monitoring, early warning, preparedness) are here considered in a comprehensive framework wherein each phase is connected to the others. The paper focuses on natural hazards, which are more frequent in Italy (landslides, floods, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, natural soil erosion). The main results include:

- A new process for dealing with risk, using the framework for guidance, is identified. We track the reasons for Italy gradually adopting this process in dealing with her vulnerabilities to natural hazards.
- Those factors that appear to interfere with an integrated approach to risk management are identified as a function of selected experiences.
- Guidelines for analysing vulnerabilities to disaster in a multi-hazard, integrated context are proposed.

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1. Key objectives and the proposed methodology

The key aim of this study is to investigate the Italian experience in risk reduction and assess its congruence with the main points presented by the most recent World Conference on Disaster Reduction (held in Hyogo, Japan, January 2005) in terms of the Hyogo Framework for Action.

The Italian experience can be regarded as an actual experimental laboratory on risk reduction policies since its territory is threatened by a variety of dangerous phenomena, especially natural disasters. Italy has attempted to implement, within its policies, the three principles proposed by the Hyogo Framework: a multi-hazard perspective; an integrated vision of the problem; the involvement of all policies and planning strategies acting on territory.

Nevertheless, in Italy, the implementation of some key actions has highlighted a number of real obstacles, further marking the gap that exists between theoretical framework and practise. The obstacles and their origins will be identified and discussed in the current paper, with possible intervention strategies suggested.

Additional objectives of our research here include identification of: differences between patterns promoted by the Framework and those arising from investigation of Italian practise; factors impeding policies for risk reduction; selected hints for improving current risk reduction policies.

To begin, we first identify and describe details of a new pattern of risk management based on the Hyogo Framework. In doing so, we consider the various activities of “risk management” (assessment, prevention, mitigation, monitoring, early warning, preparedness) in a comprehensive framework where each phase is connected to all others. Further, there is feedback between and amongst the phases in order to guarantee a continuous updating of the process (see Fig. 1).

Special attention will be given here to monitoring as a direct link is considered between risk prevention and mitigation and preparedness. This is a connexion not always assumed to exist in the international literature, but it has particular importance in Italy where the urban structure of historical cities makes it very difficult to manage emergency situations [1,2].

We note that our view is a multi-dimensional one in taking account of key social, political, spatial, and natural matters. In doing so, we hope, as noted above, to identify those factors essential to effective risk reduction strategies. Valid estimates will thus be needed of a region’s vulnerability to disaster within a multi-hazard and integrated context.

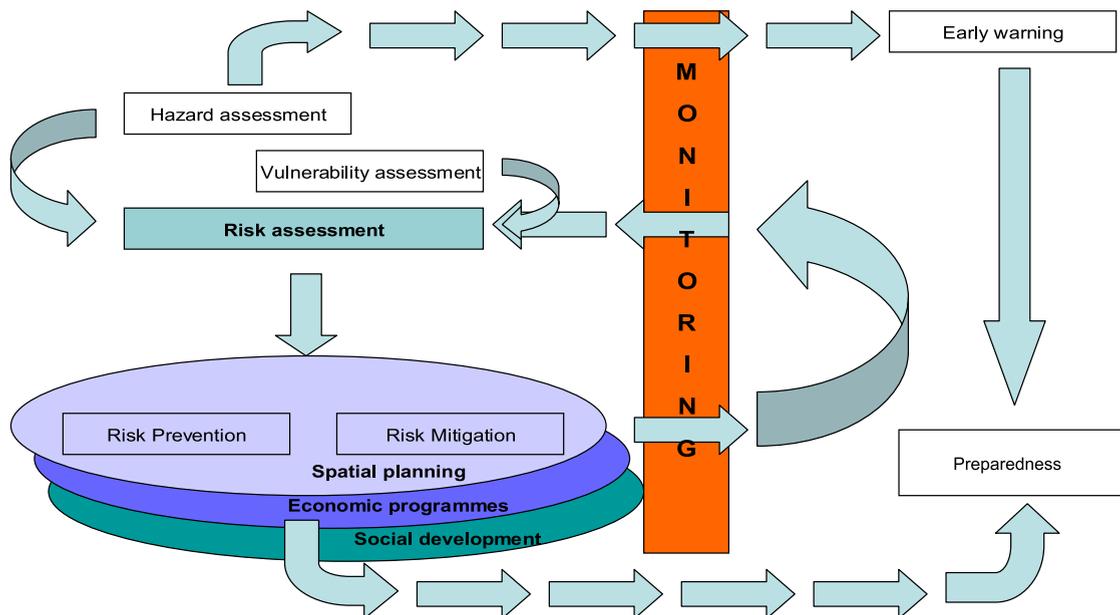


Fig. 1. Risk management process (Source: author’s construct).

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