



Risk Governance

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Consensus communication



consensus communication = support the dialogue between the stakeholders in a risk controversy to take informed and shared decisions (examples: GMOs, nuclear waste, vaccinations)

care communication = motivate people exposed to a recognized risk to change their harmful behavior by offering them an available remedy (examples: smoking, road safety, AIDS)

crisis communication = make people aware of the risks they are exposed to promote a responsible behavior of self-protection and safeguard their safety in an emergency situation (examples: epidemics, environmental disasters)

The NIMBY syndrome



NIMBY (an acronym for Not In My Back Yard) is a pejorative characterization of opposition by local communities to a proposal for a new (and potentially dangerous) development because it is considered too close to them.

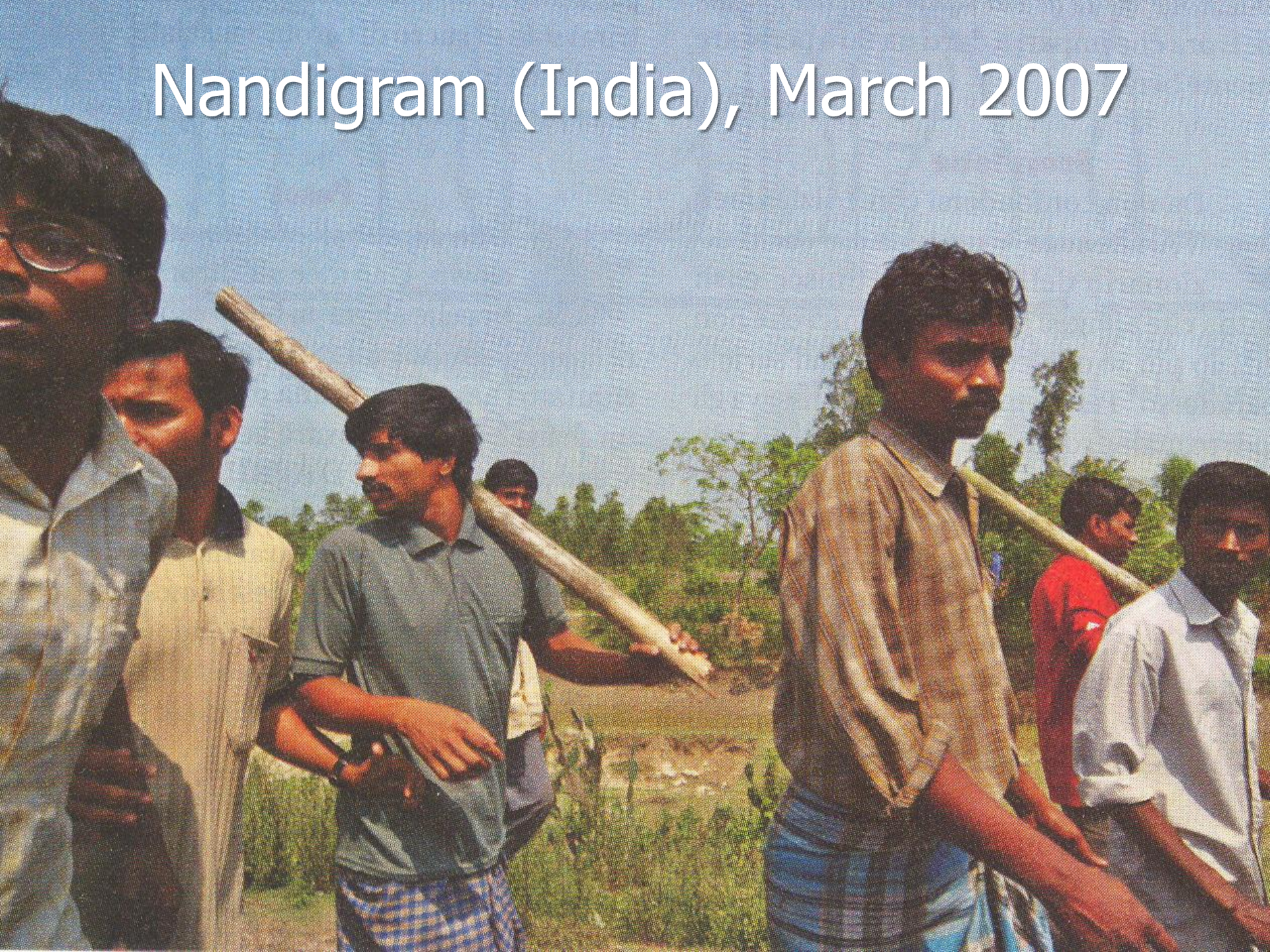
In Italy, over 90% of the industrial plants and infrastructure planned (about 350) suffers protests that cause huge delays or failures of projects.

Nimby
Forum®

Italy, November 2005



Nandigram (India), March 2007



Ningbo (China), October 2012



Algiers (Algeria), March 2015



Nord Dakota (USA), November 2016



Risk Governance



Governance is the sum of many ways individuals and institutions, public and private, manage their common affairs. It is a continuing process through which conflicting or diverse interests may be accommodated and co-operative action taken. (The Commission on Global Governance, 1995)

The DAD model



«You don't tell the frogs when you are draining the marsh».

(Rémy Carle, director of Electricité de France, when commenting upon the impressive nuclear reactor construction program completed by the French government between 1965 and 1985)

Italy, November 2003





**DAD (Decide, Announce, Defend)
is dead!**

"[This means] the end of an old tradition where scientists, industry and government got together behind closed doors, thought up the right option, thought up the right site and then announced it".

Gordon MacKerron, chair of the government committee established in 2003 in the United Kingdom to tackle radioactive-waste management.

(Geoff Brumfiel, "Forward Planning", *Nature*, vol. 440, 20 April 2006)



DAD (Decide, Announce, Defend) is dead!

- expertise
- credibility and trust
- transparent and dialogic communication
- participation in decision making

SON (Share, Open, Negotiate)

The risk of (mis)communication

John Gummer, May 1990



The first rule of Risk Communication: never deny the risks



"Any risk as a result of eating beef products is minute. Thus we believe that there is no scientific reason for not eating British beef and that it can be eaten by everyone". (David Tyrrell, chairman of the Spongiform Encephalopathy Committee, 24 July 1990)

"If this assumption proved wrong, the implications would be extremely serious". (Richard Southwood, chairman of the Working Party on BSE)



AT FAULT?

In 2009, an earthquake devastated the Italian city of L'Aquila and killed more than 300 people. Now, scientists are on trial for manslaughter.

BY STEPHEN S. HALL IN L'AQUILA, ITALY

On 21 October 2012, the Court of L'Aquila has sentenced a senior official of the Civil Protection and six scientists from the National Commission of the Major Risks to six years imprisonment for multiple manslaughter.

The Commission was convened in L'Aquila on March 31 by the former head of Civil Protection (a few days before the earthquake of 6 April, that claimed 309 lives), while L'Aquila is shaken by a seismic sequence that alarms the population.

According to recent studies, a sequence like that increases the risk of 100 times and can anticipate a stronger earthquake in 0,1-1% of cases.



The sentence was based on the charge of providing the population of L'Aquila "inaccurate, incomplete and contradictory" and not on the accusation of not having predicted the earthquake.

In the appeal process, scientists were acquitted, while the sentence was confirmed for the official of the Civil Protection who had reassured the citizens of L'Aquila.

«People aren't stupid. They know we can't predict earthquakes. They just want clear advice on what they should do».

(John Mutter, sismologo della Columbia University)



At the origin of conflicts



Risk controversies arise from the attempt to **deny the risk** and **impose decisions**.

Then the remedy lies in **transparency** and **participation**.



«Behind all references to formulas and data, sooner or later, the problem of *acceptability* arises, and with it, again, the old question of *how we want to live*.»
(Ulrich Beck, *The Risk Society*, 1986)



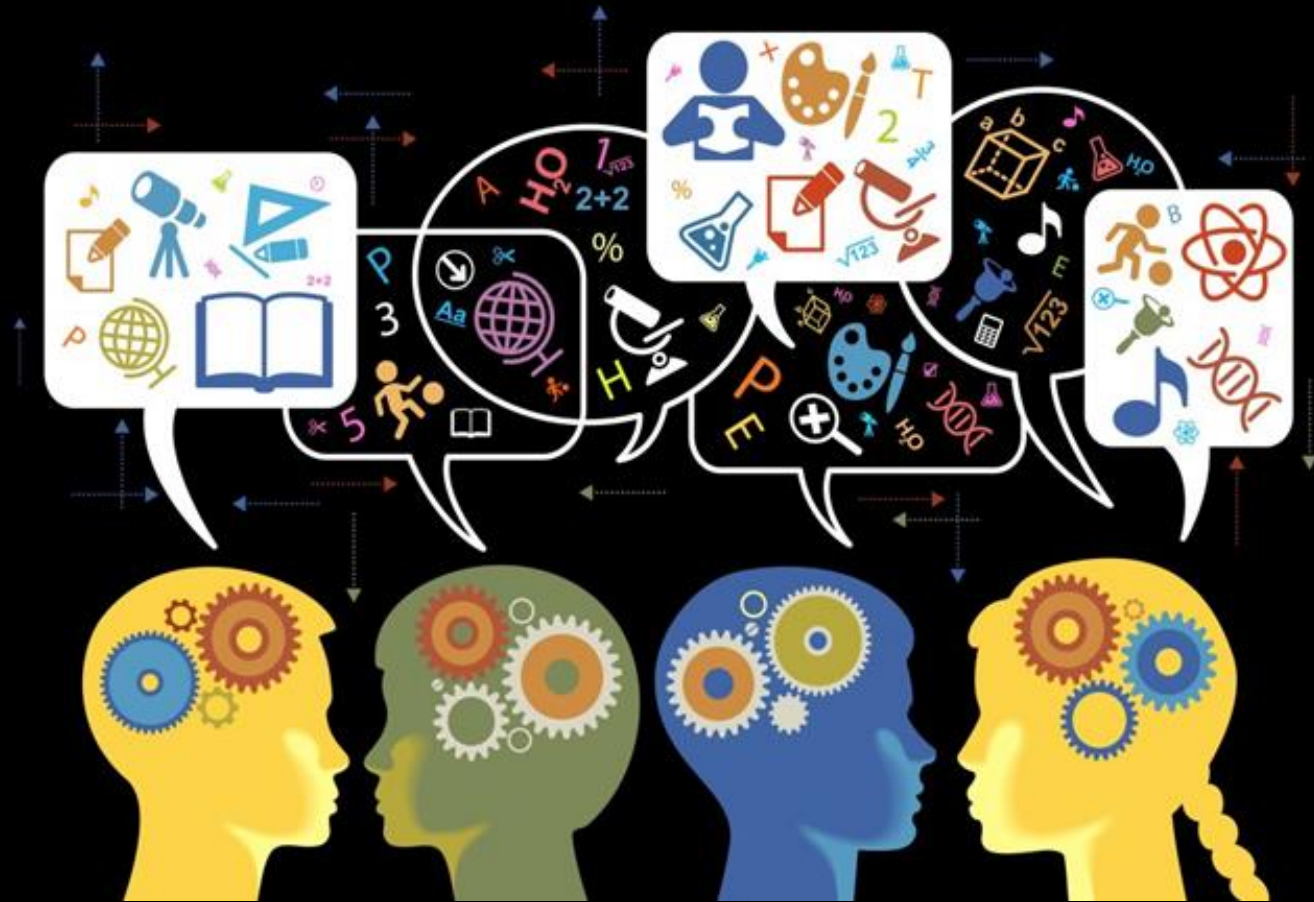
Let us please stop to associate progress with energy consume and nuclear power plants. Progress is the right to build our own future, to invest in non-polluting and renewable sources of energy, to leave a healthy environment to future generations, to support independent scientific research, to guarantee informed participation of everyone. Progress is definitely *not* nuclear power plants and atomic bunkers.

(Fulco Pratesi, *Corriere della Sera*, 16 May 1986)

Risk perception

Positive factors	Negative factors
Voluntary exposition	Involuntary or unconscious exposition
Personal control	Uncontrollability
Fair distribution risks/benefits	Unfair distribution
Familiarity to risk	Unfamiliar or novel source of risk
Natural sources	Man-made sources
Anonymous victims	Identifiable or known victims
Clear benefits	No benefits
Trust in institutions	Mistrust in institutions
Reversible damages	Hidden and irreversible damages
Understanding of processes	Ignorance of processes and consequences
Damages limited in time	Damages to future generations
No previous accidents	Similar previous accidents
No ethical implications	Violation of a widely accepted principle

Expert vs People?



In **direct democracy** the people decide directly.

People must have access to the technical knowledge to be able to make informed choices.



In **technocracy** the experts make the decisions.

The decisions are taken by competent people. But who select the experts? And based on what criteria?

Participatory processes



Participatory processes always provide a discussion with the experts and do not replace representative democracy: operate on an advisory level, leaving the final decision to the institutions.

In Europe, the model may be the **Débat Public** introduced in France in 1995.



- **No activity** of involvement and participation
 - **Very low** = the community is simply informed
 - **Low** = only a formal and symbolic consultation
 - **Medium** = listening and openness to the community suggestions (dialogue)
 - **High** = shared objectives and participatory formulation of the project (partnership)
 - **Very high** = the institution maintains a planning role but the relevant decisions are taken by the community (decision-making)
 - **Maximum** = the institution only support the choices made by the community
- (L. Ewles, I. Simnett, *Promoting Health*, Ballière Tindall, Edimburgo 1999)



The most appropriate level of participation depends on the context.

Greater involvement in decisions is an opportunity, not the solution to all problems.

In a risk controversy, participation allows to negotiate a shared solution to manage the risk.

Principles of Risk communication

The principles of risk communication

- 1) never deny or diminish risks (for example, for fear of creating panic)
- 2) provide clear, transparent, timely and comprehensive information about the risk and on counter-measures taken to mitigate/avoid/manage it
- 3) admit the limits and uncertainties of knowledge (you should not be afraid to say "I do not know")
- 4) take people's knowledge, experiences, values, beliefs and attitudes towards risk into account
- 5) identify the most suitable communication channels to reach different audiences and make every effort to create alliances with media professionals
- 6) adopt an open attitude and dialogue, by listening to all stakeholders
- 7) comply with the citizens' concerns and promote the different knowledge
- 8) support any action that would facilitate the active involvement of all stakeholders
- 9) monitor the effects of your risk communication.