



Information and participation of the public in a post-accident situation

Expert-to-expert interactions and social paths for recovery: insights from the PREPARE European Research project

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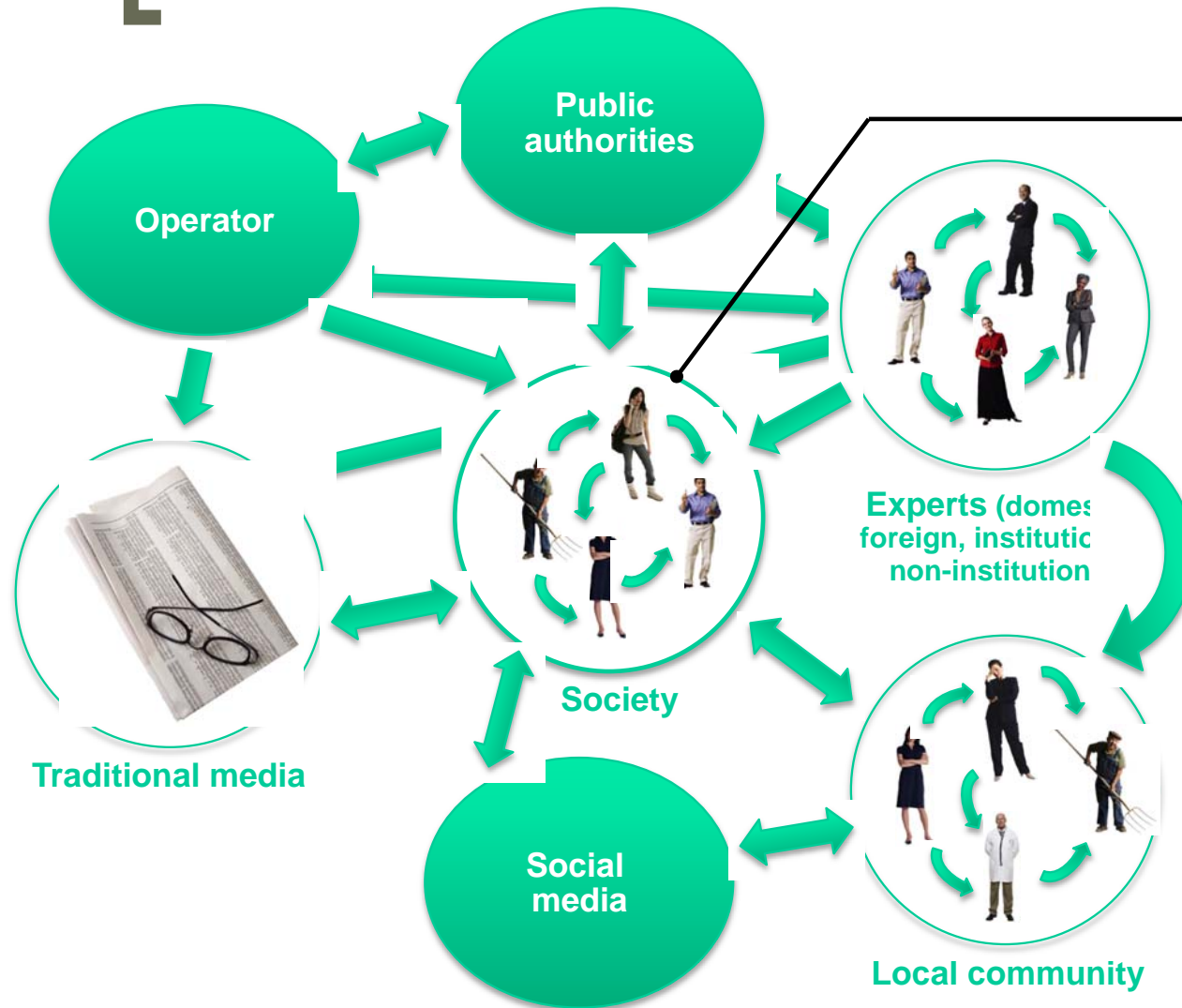
PREPARE works of information and participation of the public

- PREPARE European project: 49 organisations from 26 countries to refine and update emergency and post-emergency preparedness and response after Fukushima
- PREPARE WP6 (Leader: Mutadis) focuses on information and participation of the public. 3 research topics:
 - Investigating the **conditions for the population to build capacities in order to assess its situation and adopt appropriate protective behaviours** (leader: NRPA)
 - Investigating the **role of expert networks** (leader: EnerWebWatch)
 - Analysis of **traditional and social media** (leader: SCK-CEN)

What is pertinent, reliable and trustworthy information in emergency and post-emergency context? – The Aarhus Convention perspective

- Aarhus Convention (art. 5.1. c): ‘In the event of any imminent threat to human health or the environment, whether caused by human activities or due to natural causes, **all information which could enable the public to take measures to prevent or mitigate harm arising from the threat**,...’**is disseminated immediately** and without delay to members of the public who may be affected’.
- Information refer to
 - understanding (by the public) of the evolution of the accident (& potential risks) along its management
 - capacity of the population & communities to prevent or mitigate harm arising from the threat, individually & collectively

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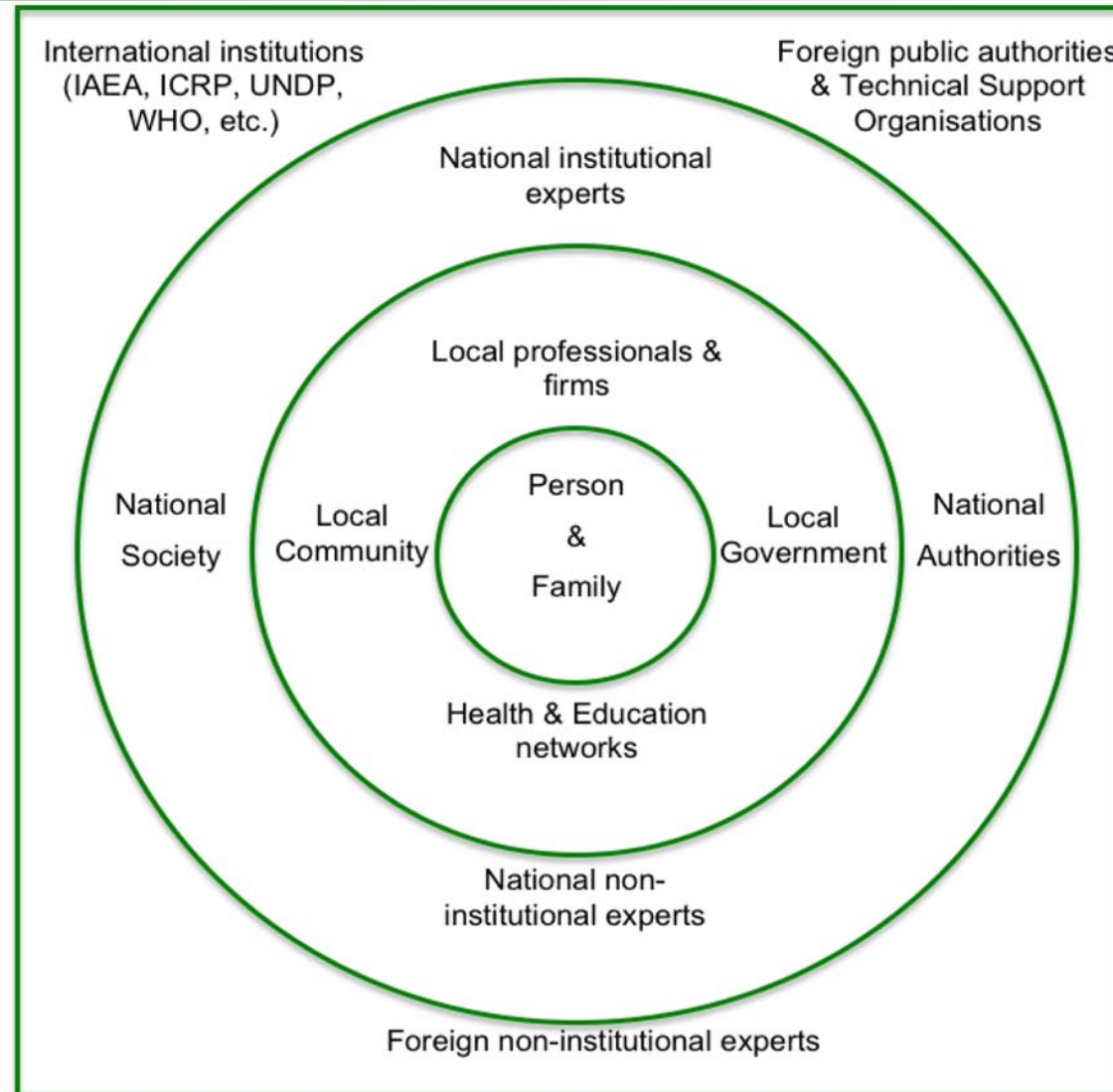
Local actors confronted to complexity in a post-accident situation (1/2)

- Local populations face the **maximum level of complexity** as their day-to-day life is disrupted in many ways by **long-lasting contamination**. This also question intergeneration relationships.
- People and families **face the post-accident situation as a whole**: the different economic, environmental, health, social and family issues that arise are not separable.
- Upper levels of decisions are expected to bring support, information, expertise and means, but **many decisions and actions stay in the hands of local actors**
- In a context in which the spreading of distrust is hindering the emergence of a consistent societal response, local population have to recreate the conditions to **access trustworthy and reliable information, understand the situation** at the individual and community level and **build relevant action**.

Local actors confronted to complexity in a post-accident situation (2/2)

- The **societal dimension** of the local response to a post-accident situation is of key importance.
- The concept of **project of life or families and communities** is at the core of local concerns. It includes human and social dimensions and the notions of **autonomy and dignity**.
- The capacity of local actors to build their response notably depends on their capacity to build **new forms of cooperation**.

A complex information & action system integrating public policies and emerging processes at different levels



Recovery: a transition process resulting from the interaction of different transition paths

- For each actor, and for the whole system of actors, recovery is a **transition process in which individual and social resources for addressing complexity are built**
- The **recovery process is the result of different interacting transition paths** (people/families, local community, professional sectors, local/regional/national/international authorities, experts...)
- These paths are **non-linear** and include an irreducible dimension of experimentation, trial and errors, adaptation...
- In many cases, they include a **phase of recognition of the irreversibility of the situation**
- Transition paths have to be **viable** (politically, socially, financially, ...) **at each step**

Public policies can support or on the contrary hinder the transition paths

- **Public policies influence social cohesion** between the concerned actors at different levels (local, national, international)
- The way public policies take into account the values of social cohesion (dignity, truth, honesty, justice, equity, solidarity, democracy) **impacts the ability of the actors to build individual and collective transition paths.**
- **3 steps evolution** of public policies in recovery processes:
 1. **Protective policies** focused on health & radiation protection
 2. **Opening of decision-making processes** to better deal with complexity
 3. **Transformation of the governance system** in order to take into account the key social nature of the recovery process

The role of experts in an emergency and post-emergency situation (1/2)

- Experts (institutional & non-institutional) constitute a group which **stands between 2 types of complexity**:
 - the complexity of the emergency / post-emergency situation
 - and the complexity of the societal needs in that situation
- They do not form a community but they have a **collective responsibility to confront complexity**:
 - The experts, in their diversity, share the responsibility to collectively fulfil the role to help society manage complexity
 - They have to deal with uncertainty and their diversity of views
- **Their role is not purely technical but also social** as they are confronted to a diversity of interactions
 - Social situation can fit or contradict with role played by expert
 - Issues raised can fit or contradict with competencies

The role of experts in an emergency and post-emergency situation (2/2)

- **Trustworthiness of information is** not the level of trust of one actor towards a given source, but **the result of the interactions between the different experts and information providers**
- The quality of interactions between experts is a potential **common good** between experts. They can share a common goal of **enlightened protection of populations**
- **Better practices in networking**, sharing of information and assessment tools between experts is key for delivering relevant answers accordingly to the needs of populations
 - This also involves building mutual recognition and exchanges between experts of various position and origin

How can public policies facilitate societal processes of recovery?

- Public policies based on **standards are not sufficient to address the complexity** of the local situation (in particular social & political issues)
- Public policies should **integrate their impact on social cohesion** (preserve communities and family cohesion, building solidarity with national community, ...)
- Public policy should **prepare the different steps of evolution** from protection of citizens to empowerment of citizens and local communities
- For this, public policies should provide **provide means, material resources, technical capacities, expertise resources, mediation and facilitation capacities** necessary for local recovery processes to develop.

How can experts facilitate societal processes of recovery?

- Expertise is not unilateral and unique: this **diversity is a resource, not a problem.**
- Through time, contribution of experts should evolve from providing elements of explanation & recommendations for population protection to **supporting local actors building their own choices**
- For local actors & communities, understanding the situation means integrating technical and non-technical issues in their own evaluation. For this, they need **actors in a position of mediation, able to translate, contextualise and give meaning** to technical elements of information in the context of local actors.
- Experts can **develop information flows and interactions in a more systemic way** and **prepare for effective networking** involving the diversity of experts
- They can build **better shared tools** to be used **for assessment and decision**