

# RISK DIALOG AS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF THE INTEGRAL FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT

## EXPERIENCES FROM AN AUSTRIAN CASE STUDY

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### INTRODUCTION

More than 40 years ago the small municipality of Grosskirchheim in the Austrian alpine Möll river basin had to face the last devastating flood events. These events occurred within 11 months in 1965 and 1966. Although flood protection measures have been undertaken right after these events the recently revised flood hazard map has shown that the protection level for some parts of the village is still insufficient. In the frame of the CRUE Flooding Era-Net project IMRA (Integrative flood risk governance approach for improvement of risk awareness and increased public participation) applied methods of risk communication should be evaluated for the case study of Grosskirchheim. The ongoing planning of new flood protection measures was guided by special activities to support the risk dialogue.

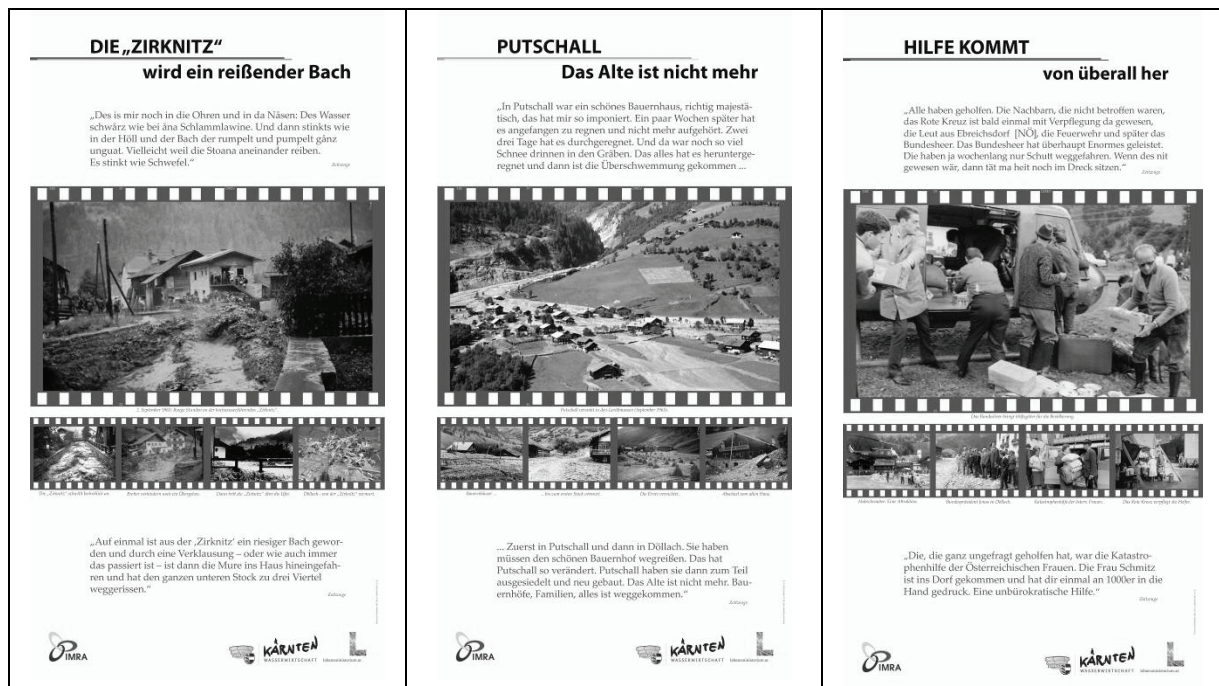


Fig. 1 Selected examples out of the poster exhibition

### HOW TO DEAL WITH (NEGLECTED) FLOOD HISTORY

Only a few inhabitants were witnesses of the last flood events. Many young and some moved in people did not even know about these floods. To be able to make the population more sensitive to the

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still existing flood risk an exhibition of panels and posters with pictures and newspaper clippings of the flood events was organised. Therefore the local population was invoked to bring in their personal mementos and pictures. The sent-in material was graphically arranged and categorised together with archive material of the flood protection administration (see Fig. 1). At the exhibitions opening ceremony the witnesses of the two flood events reported on their own experiences. Although the events were already quite a long time ago the witnesses' reports were able to hit the audiences emotions. At the informal part of the ceremony further and deeper discussions were possible. About 130 people, which is 8% of the total population, participated in the exhibitions opening ceremony.

### **SURVEY TO ASSESS THE PERSONAL AFFECTION BY FLOODS**

From the scientific point of view a survey was organised to assess the personal affection by floods. Therefore a student was sent out to do interviews with a representative group of the municipalities' inhabitants. These interviews have been done before and after other activities to be able to detect impacts of activities.

### **STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP – A POSSIBLE BASIS FOR A FUTURE NATURAL HAZARDS COMMISSION**

Another activity was the organisation of a stakeholder workshop. Therefore the stakeholders involved in the risk cycle of the integrated flood risk management were invited. The group consisted of the villages' mayor, the commander of the local fire brigade, the head of the river Möll flood protection and maintenance alliance, representatives of the torrent and avalanche control, representatives of the federal flood control service, the planning engineers, a representative of the mountain rescue team and the avalanche commission and inhabitants who were witnesses of the last flood events in the 1960ies. Within this workshop all participants were asked: 1. how the population can be made aware of the flood risk, 2. how the public can participate in the assessment of flood hazard map and 3. how the cooperation of organisations involved in the flood risk cycle works. For all questions participants gave valuable feedback. It can be summarized that the participants of the stakeholder workshop think that one of the best measures to raise public awareness is to do education on natural hazards in school, to do disaster protection exercises, to offer special training for the fire brigade and if information material is sent out the municipalities newspaper is the best way to be visible. Furthermore it was of high interest to proceed with flood risk communication. Participants thought that it should be helpful to set up a natural hazards commission, which is responsible for the organisation of trainings and further education.

### **WORKSHOP ON THE UNDERSTANDABILITY OF FOLDERS, BROCHURES AND MAPS**

To be able to evaluate informational material provided by the flood protection administration a workshop was organised with selected citizens. The participants were asked to work on a hazard map of a municipality in the neighbouring valley. Generally the group was able to read the map but some feedback came mainly concerning an improved method to orientate oneself. Before replying to some questions on technical terms, e.g. HQ100, return period, or what is and what is not possible in red zones a common folder on hazard mapping was hand out. Most of the questions could be clarified based on the folder but some had to be answered personally. The overall feedback was that the population trusts in the work of the administration and the availability of hazard maps is quite good. Additional information is necessary (e.g. folders) but should be distributed in a proper way. It is always useful to add information material to an official newspaper of the municipality and to inform on additional material in a short report within the newspaper.

**Keywords:** risk dialogue, natural hazards commission, public participation