

AP6

Shifts in flood risk management in Poland

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Keywords

Floods, flood risk management, flood risk management strategies, shifts in flood risk management

Abstract

During last decades Poland has faced several destructive flood events. They differed in case of location, scale, damages, related financial losses and the number of fatalities. The great flood of 1997, mostly on the river Odra and its tributaries, brought huge damages. Large towns like Wrocław suffered significantly in absolute terms, while smaller towns in mountain region, like Kłodzko, were devastated even more, in relative terms. In 2010 Poland experienced another series of large flood events, where accumulated financial losses were around 4 billion Euro.

The dynamic changes in and development in Poland begun in 1989, when the systemic transition from a communist system with centrally-planned economy into a capitalist democracy with market economy started. Within this period, institutions were adjusting their way of functioning to new political and market conditions. Large competences are now in the hands of local and regional self-government authorities, but in case of flood risk management large conflicts of jurisdiction appear, that, among other factors like, mentioned, societal and systemic changes, resulted in poor and inefficient flood management system. Moreover, it is even hard to define flood management activities undertaken in Poland as a coherent and integrated system. It can be rather seen as sectoral and investment driven.

Nevertheless, a combined set of flood risk management strategies is needed to provide an effective flood risk management system. In this respect and in the view of radical changes that are also a part of Polish water and flood risk management system the shifts in dominant strategies of flood risk management are presented. Several other milestones in the development of more efficient flood risk management system in Poland can be noted. Apart the systemic transition that begun in 1989 and the flood of 1997, a huge impact gave the accession to the European Union (in case of funding and obeying to its advanced flood-related legislation). This paper examines the situation in Polish flood risk management system and depicts the occurring shifts between dominant strategies and what discourses are represented. It is stated that different set of strategies are needed in appropriate physical circumstances related to the location. Therefore case studies from different part of the country are investigated. The research bases on a set of in-depth interviews, analysis of documents, legal acts and media releases.

International Conference

Analysis and Management of Changing Risks for Natural Hazards

18-19 November 2014 | Padua, Italy

This research was partially financed by the FLORIST project (Flood risk on the northern foothills of the Tatra Mountains, supported by a grant from the Swiss government through the Swiss Contribution to the enlarged European Union (PSPB No. 153/2010)).