

Sustainability | Individual communication

IC - (20912) - COASTAL RISKS REPRESENTATIONS AND SENSE OF PLACE – LESSONS FROM CASE STUDIES IN FRANCE AND CANADA

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Background and objectives

This research focuses on the study of the social representation of coastal risks (marine erosion and flooding) by studying local knowledge and practices that inhabitants have of their living environment. More precisely, our aim is to understand how the representation of settings (uses, meanings...) participates in the construction of individuals' identity, and how these identities (including the living environment or not) contribute to the construction of risks.

Based on an international qualitative study in the West of Brittany (France) and the Maritimes of Quebec (Canada), we explore the representations of the territory in relation to the socio-cultural context. Both countries are good examples of the coastal risk issues faced by Western countries and portray two different national strategies of management.

Process and methods (for empirical research)

This study is based on semi-structured interviews conducted with 32 inhabitants. The interviews addressed the relationship to the living environment, personal trajectory, place transformations, interrelations between actors and coastal risks. The question of coastal risks was discussed at the end of the interview when the subject had not been brought up earlier.

Main results (or main arguments in the case of critical reviews)

The results underline how place representations interact with the social representation of coastal risks, and highlight the role played by sociocultural context. Variability between cases also depends on coastal use, management and national policies in place.

Implications for research and practice/policy | Importance and originality of the contribution

Studying the representation of these territories, that are subject to coastal risks, and the different forms of identification with these spaces is therefore essential in order to understand the positions taken in the face of local issues and to anticipate adaptations to possible changes for the sustainable use of this increasingly populated coastal space.

Palavras-chave : Social representation - sense of place - identity - coastal risks