

Psychological Aspects of Disasters and Natural Calamities – Romanian Disasters in 2005 and 2006

XXIII CONGRESS AND INTERGEO 2006
Munich, Germany
8-13 October 2006

Anca- Magdalena Bordeianu

1

Overview

Stampin' in the Rain

- Introduction to Romania
- Romanian Floodings in 2005,2006
- Romanian Study -case
- Human impact
- Research in Disaster Psychology

2

ROMANIA

- Medium- size country (238.391 km²) in south-eastern Europe
- Ready to join the European Union on January 1st, 2007
- Population: 21,698,181
- Exit to the Black Sea
- Bordered by the Danube which flows through the Danube Delta into the Black Sea



3

Romania...its mountains

- The mountains cover 31% of Romania's surface



4

Romania...its seaside

- There are 244 km of Romanian Black Sea shore



5

Romania...The Danube Delta

- The largest and best preserved of Europe's deltas
- Natural reservation of the Biosphere
- The largest pelican colony in Europe
- Richest Ornithological fauna in Europe



6

Romania...Nadia



- the first gymnast to ever score a perfect 10 at the 1979 Olympics



7

Flooding in Romania

- Natural disasters generally imply:
 - disruption of everyday life by unplanned physical events
 - significant damage to people and environment
 - occurrence is sudden, unexpected and disruptive
 - something can be done to mitigate effects prior and following occurrence (Kreps, 1984).



...Flooding in Romania

- Some causes:
 - increased vulnerability of buildings and infrastructure
 - drawbacks in conception and implementation of preventive measures
 - neglect in maintenance and exploitation of preventive measures
 - increased climatic variability and extreme meteorological phenomena
 - intensified use of land
 - uncontrolled deforestation



Romanian study-case 1

- Facts:
 - the flow of Danube when entering country reached historical peak of 15.800 m³/s in April 2006 (previous peak - 14.600 m³/s in 1970)
 - annually, 10.000 ha land are flooded
 - on average 10 people lose their lives
 - cumulated damages so far exceed 10 mil. Euro.



Romanian study-case 2

- 1. How was it possible for such large areas to be affected?



11

Romania study-case 3

- Why is the Danube area such a flood-threatened region?



12

Human impact

- 1. How do people understand prevention and environmental management?

People can adapt rapidly to danger recognized as imminent and life-threatening (Quarantelli, 1954, 1980)

The probability that disasters might severely affect particular individuals is low (Kunreuther, 1978)

people are not unafraid of natural disasters, but that they are preoccupied with daily problems and fail to foresee potential dangers lurking in the background

13

Human impact

- 2. How do people's attitudes affect occurrence, prevention and mitigation of flooding? Beneficial measures:

- Ensuring a clear and comprehensive legal frame and enhancing general adherence to legal norms
- Regional, national maps specifying regions with different levels of flood-threat
- Environmental education!!!
- Social protective programs – house insurance mandatory?

- 3. What is the bright side, though?

Individual knowledge concerning natural hazards and calamities is generally reduced. Increased knowledge is positively associated with perceived seriousness of threat.

issue salient → better response to protective measures.

14

Research in Disaster Psychology



- Crisis intervention
 - assist people in regaining autonomous functioning
- Psychological First- Aid
 - people with no psychotherapy practice can provide relief and support to disaster- struck communities
- Psycho-education
 - help people respond in proactive and efficient manner



15

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16

Thank you

Thank you very much for your attention



17