

Reputational risks and participation in flood risk management and the public debate about the 2013 flood in Germany



Source: Gunnar Dressler @ufz.de

Dr. Christian Kuhlicke

Department Urban and Environmental Sociology
Leader Working Group Environmental Risks and Extreme Events

4th Annual Workshop of the Paris Risk Group (PRG), 2-3
June 2016, Berlin

Conflicts in flood risk management



Local disputes over flood risk reduction measures in Germany

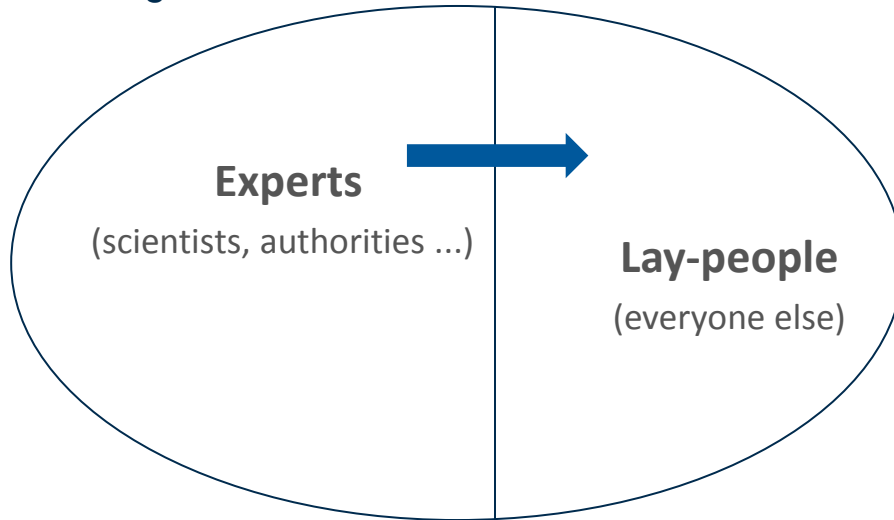
Specific measures of flood risk reduction

- Retention basins and water dams
- Dikes and flood protection walls
- Official designation of flood areas
- Discussions about resettlement projects
- Further measures
- Call for better/faster flood protection
- ▲ Criticism on plans which might downgrade current flood prevention

Source: Otto et al. (2016) Journal of Flood Risk Journal Management; online first, p. 5

Figure 2 Geographical distribution of local controversies regarding flood risk reduction measures in Germany.

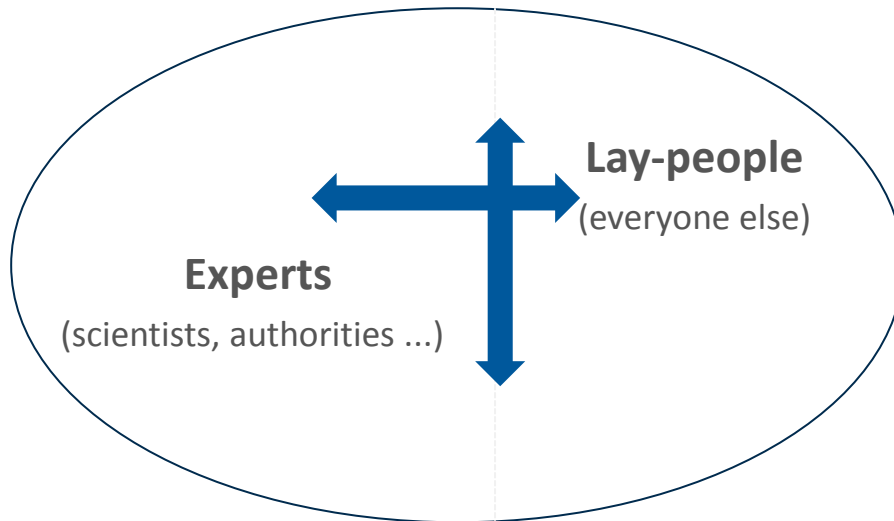
Risk management



Sharp institutional distinctions between:

- knowledge and ignorance
- right and wrong conduct
- the science of risk assessment and the politics of risk management

Risk governance



Institutional distinctions becomes blurred

- ⇒ New forms of vertical and horizontal cooperation
- ⇒ Demands and expectations of a plurality of actors
- ⇒ Challenge for responsible authorities and organisations

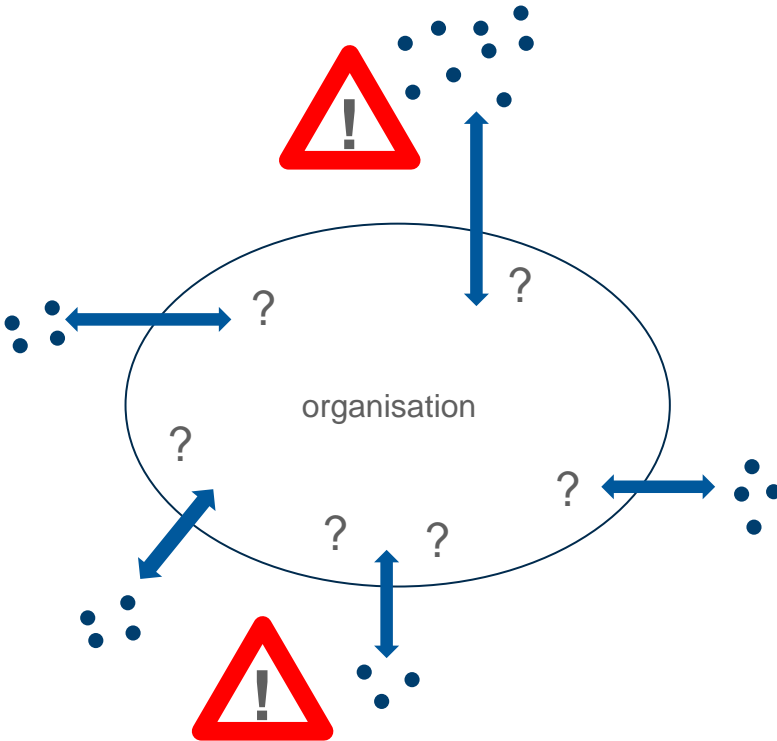
Second order reputational risks

- Organisations need to be “more open and responsive to external voices than previously science-based risk management thinking” (Power 2007, 96)
- Organisations are increasingly engaged with managing second order reputational risks, understood here as the risk of being held to account and blamed in the wider institutional setting (Rothstein et al. 2006).
- Shift the focus away from first order risks since organisations may increasingly be preoccupied with managing second order reputational risks (Rothstein et al. 2006)

Source:

Power (2007) Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy 25, 90-97.

Rothstein et al. (2006) Economy and Society 35, 91-112.



[Scapegoats]

DIE SEITE DREI SÄCHSISCHE ZEITUNG 3

Sündenböcke

164



Manuela Hentschel auf ihrem Grundstück an der Mulde in Wilkau-Haßlau, wo schon das Fundament der Schutzmauer steht. Sie klagt gegen das Projekt und wurde als QuerulantIn beschimpft.

nes Eis und berief sich auf den Bau zweier Rückhaltebecken – Mulda und Oberboitzsch – im Osterzgebirge. Die, so Tillich, würden zurzeit „von einem Naturschutzverband“ verhindert. Das hatte angeblich zur Folge, dass in Döbeln die neue Flutschutzmauer überspült wurde.

Seither gehört auch Tobias Mehnert zu den Flutstürmern im Freistaat. Er leitet den Naturschutzverband Sachsen. Bis vor wenigen Tagen lief er in seinem Heimatort an einem Holzkreuz vorbei, das Unbekannte für ihn aufgestellt hatten. „Per E-Mail bekam ich das ‚Vater unser‘ geschickt“, sagt Mehnert. In der Zeitung äußerte ein Stadtrat: „Normalerweise müsste man ihn erschlagen“. Doch der Regierungschef war wohl schlecht informiert. Denn es gibt bisher gar kein Baurecht für die Rückhaltebecken. 2009 wurden die Planungen bei der Landesdirektion eingereicht, aber bis heute nicht genehmigt – auch weil nicht ein, sondern vier Verbände beträchtliche Zweifel an dem Vorhaben äußern, das bei Behörden ebenfalls umstritten ist. Zudem soll eines der Becken in einem Gebiet errichtet werden, das der Freistaat dem Naturschutzverband vor Jahren mit dem Ziel übereignete, ein Schutzgebiet zu entwickeln. „Statt den Naturschutz an den Pranger zu stellen, sollte der Ministerpräsident nachdenken, ob er diese anerkannten Schutzgebiete auch noch der Betonlobby überlassen will“, sagt Tobias Mehnert.

E in Punkt, der dem Freistaat noch zu schaffen machen könnte, wenn die Länder an der Unterelbe analysieren, warum ihnen die Elbe diesmal mehr Wasser brachte als 2002. Sachsen setzt auf technischen Hochwasserschutz und erzielte damit auch Erfolge, wie in Dresden und Eilenburg. Aber nur fünf Millionen von den 530 Millionen Euro, die seit 2002 für Hochwasserschutz ausgegeben wurden, dienten der Schaffung von Überschwemmungsflächen, rechnet Gisela Kaltenbach vor. Umweltspeartin der Grünen im Landtag. Von den 49 im Jahr 2002 beschlossenen Vorhaben, Deiche zurückzuverlegen oder Polder zu schaffen, seien bisher nur zwei verwirklicht worden. Kaltenbach fordert ein Umsteuern in der Hochwasserschutzpolitik. Statt weniger Bürgerbeteiligung brauche man „einen frühen und echten Dialog vor Ort“.

An der Fährstraße 6 in Dresden-Laubgast sitzt Thomas Kanneberg im Garten und schnapft bei einem Tee. Elbblick hat er nicht, dennoch sind es nur hundert Meter bis zum Fluss, und wie viele hier hatte auch er das Hochwasser im Haus. Den

schen, die nichts weiter tun, als ihre Bürgerrechte wahrzunehmen“. Sie sei leichtfertig ausgelöst worden, um von Versäumnissen im Hochwasserschutz abzulenken, die möglicherweise ganz andere Ursachen haben. So liege in Wilkau-Haßlau schon die sechste Planänderung vor. Zudem stellte die Talsperrverwaltung schon 2012 fest, dass das Baufeld zu eng war, zusätzliche Spundwände gesetzt, weitere Bäume gefällt werden mussten. Als Manuela Hentschel zeitweilig niemanden auf ihr Grundstück ließ, bauten die Firmen an anderer Stelle.

Hermes. Er betont, dass es generell kaum möglich sei, Hochwasserschutzprojekte durch Klagen aufzuhalten. Die Landesdirektion ordne in aller Regel den sofortigen Vollzug solcher Planfeststellungsbeschlüsse an. „Nur wenn diese Beschlüsse schwere Mängel aufweisen, erreichen Kläger bei Gericht aufschiebende Wirkung“, sagt Hermes. „Dann aus gutem Grund.“

In den 29 derzeit öffentlich bekanntgemachten Planfeststellungsverfahren haben in 25 Fällen Bürger, Verbände und Behörden Einwände erhoben, auch in Pirna und Radebeul, so die LTV. Gegen neun Hochwasserschutzmaßnahmen werde geklagt. Etwa in Döbeln, Grimma und Meißen. In jedem Fall würden Einwendungen den Verfahrensverlauf verzögern, heißt es im Umweltministerium. Wo dadurch Schutzbauten nicht fertig wurden, kann man nicht

Manuela Hentschel

Manuela Hentschel

Manuela Hentschel

Source: Sächsische Zeitung, 15.06.2013, S 3

Responsible organisations
and politicians

Newspaper archive

- Newspaper collected between June 1st and July 2nd 2013
- *Sächsische Zeitung* and *Leipziger Volkszeitung*
- Additional: Online articles and selected nationwide newspaper articles
- Archive of 360 articles

Interviews

- 12 interviews between January and May 2014 (3 representative of citizens initiatives, 3 representatives of NGOs, 2 responsible administration, 3 representatives of municipalities, 1 politician)

Survey:

- Household survey among affected households in Saxony
- 990 questionnaires ; return rate 21,7 %

Newspaper analysis

Accusation and blame:

Participatory processes as a public scape-goat

One day after first inundations, the former Environmental Minister of Saxony

“He has pointed out again and again that flood protection is a task for several generations and not everything can be done at the same time. In such moments [as the flood event] he is particularly annoyed about the citizens’ initiatives that bring flood protection projects to court or hamper progress through other forms of opposition”

(Sächsische Zeitung, 03.06.2013, p.2).



- ⇒ Leading politicians and authorities blamed citizens for slowing down the management process
- ⇒ Deflecting from own role and responsibilities?



Newspaper analysis

Accusation and blame:

Participatory processes as a public scape-goat

One day after first flood damages former

Minister for the state of Saxony

“The Free State of Saxony will no longer accept that single citizens can prevent construction measures due to their individual interests. The protection of the general public must be rated higher than the interest of a single person [...]. Flood protection must have priority”

(Sächsische Zeitung, 06.06.2013, p.1).



- ⇒ Leading politicians and authorities blamed citizens for slowing down the management process
- ⇒ Deflecting from own role and responsibilities?
- ⇒ **Individual interested ranked higher than common interest**

Newspaper analysis

Accusation and blame:

Participatory processes as a public scape-goat

One day after first flood damages former

Environment Minister

Minister for the Environment

Leading flood management official from the Ministry for the Environment

“Without all this [protests and lawsuits] the dike would have been completed and would have prevented the flood”

(Sächsische Zeitung, 08.06.2013, p.3).



- ⇒ Leading politicians and authorities blamed citizens for slowing down the management process
- ⇒ Deflecting from own role and responsibilities?
- ⇒ Individual interested ranked higher than common interest
- ⇒ **Extent of the 2013 flood causally linked participatory processes**



| | Topic | Total |
|---------------------------|---|-----------|
| Reflection/ Discussion | Solidarity with affected residents and communities | 38 |
| | Flood management measures/strategy | 27 |
| | Participatory processes and their relation to the 2013 flood | 26 |
| | More fundamental consequences of the flood (e.g. relocation) | 9 |
| | Comparison with the 2002 flood | 4 |
| | Underlying reasons (e.g. climate) | 4 |
| | Other articles (personal/local stories) | 34 |

Newspaper analysis

Relativisation

Who is actually responsible?



Two weeks after first inundations

“They are labelled as “flood sinners”: Affected persons who reject flood protection walls and who propose alternatives. But none of them actually caused the inundations”

Leading representative of the responsible administration LTV

Flood protection measures are “complex schemes” and there are always “multiple reasons” for delays

“We should not point the finger at someone [i.e. community groups] and we did not start this debate”

(Sächsische Zeitung, 15./16.06.2013, p.3).

- ⇒ Background information are provided on the role of participatory processes
- ⇒ Are citizens responsible for causing the inundation (one article) – no they are not!



Interview analysis

View of citizens and NGOs

Citizen who objected plans

“After the flood we had for quite a while some very mean phone calls saying: ‘This mess is your fault’”

“This means, if the State Reservoir Administration of Saxony [Landestalsperrenverwaltung] claims danger is at hand [...] then no participation must take place and the environmental associations are kept out of the process, which also means we get no information about what is planned”

- ⇒ **Many faced strong public pressure and loss of personal reputation**
- ⇒ **Generally feeling of exclusion from decision-making processes (lack of political will, restricted access to relevant information)**
- ⇒ **Fundamental institutional barriers (Planfeststellungsverfahren, Plangenehmigungsverfahren, “levee decree”)**

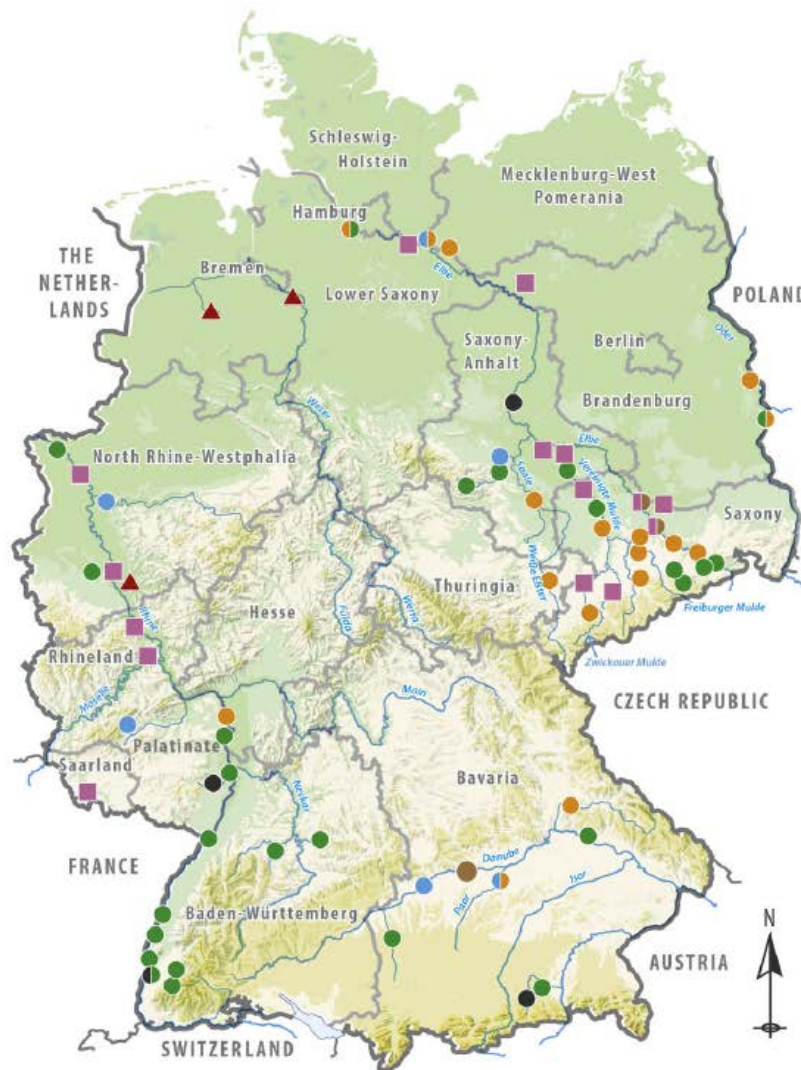
Conflicts in flood risk management

Very restricted access to decision-making processes in Saxony:

1. **Planfeststellungsverfahren** (public approval process for measures)
2. Provision of information and public consultation by **strategic environmental assessments**

More inclusive in other states:

1. **Water Framework Directive**
2. **Flood partnerships**



Local disputes over flood risk reduction measures in Germany

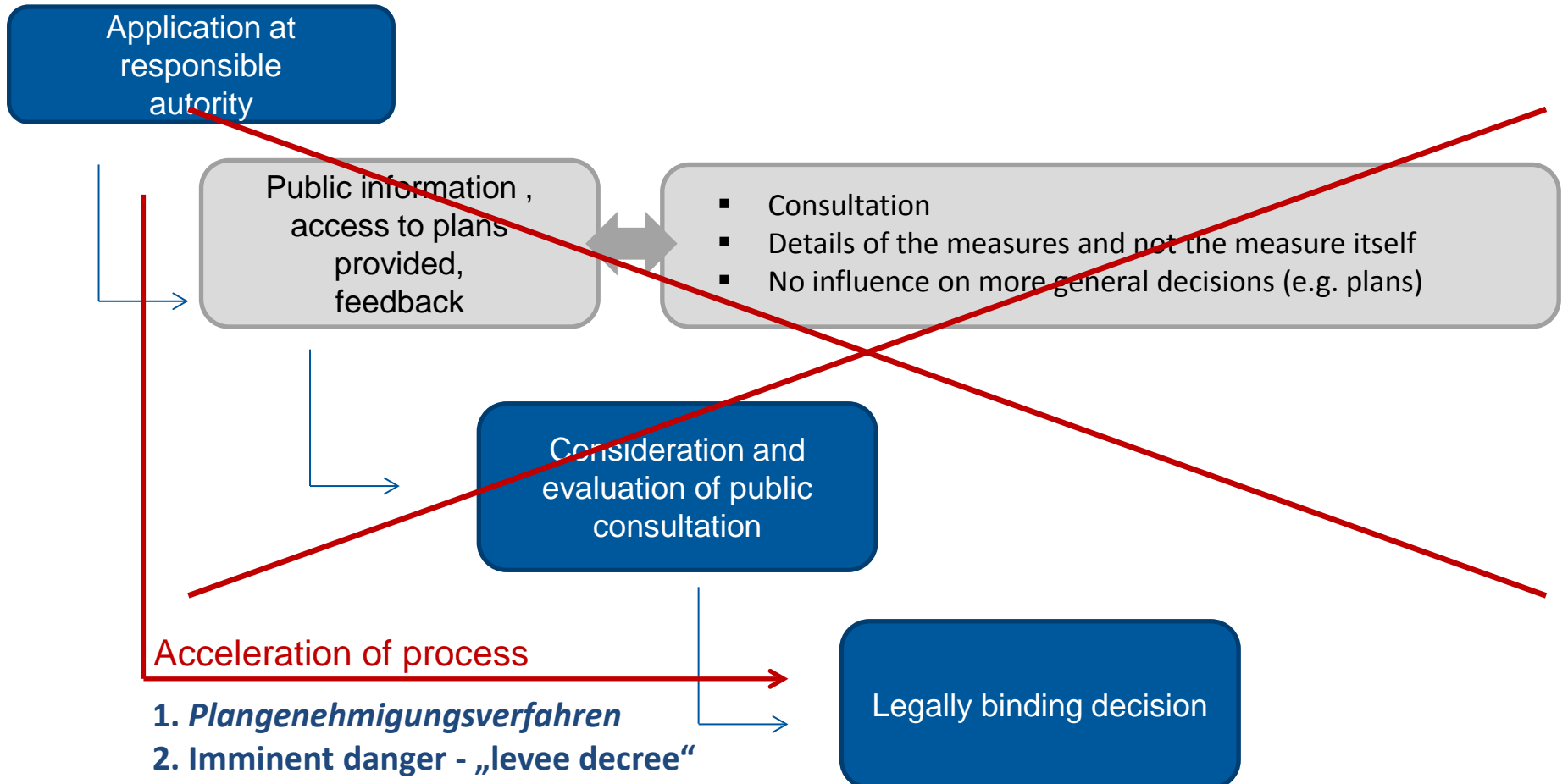
Specific measures of flood risk reduction

- Retention basins and water dams
- Dikes and flood protection walls
- Official designation of flood areas
- Discussions about resettlement projects
- Further measures
- Call for better/faster flood protection
- ▲ Criticism on plans which might downgrade current flood prevention

Figure 2 Geographical distribution of local controversies regarding flood risk reduction measures in Germany.

Participation in the context of *Planfeststellungsverfahren* (a public approval process)

- ⇒ Takes place when measures are planned and implemented
- ⇒ Aim: develop a legally binding plan
- ⇒ Administrative process regulated by administrative law



Interview analysis

Coping with conflicts?

“In this regard the interaction [with decision makers] was always constructive and I think it was useful, in the end, that we managed to get in contact with decision-makers on all levels, also with objectivity”

⇒ **Two ways of coping**

1. **“Appeasement strategy” – strong rational framing of situation by putting substantive arguments at the forefront**

Interview analysis

Coping with conflicts?

Representative of a citizen initiative

“This was a horrible experience: The legal way does not lead to success [...], our democratic rights do not count and the single citizen does not count either”

Representative of a NGO

“All this will end in a huge and dirty battle. We will not cast off”

Representative of a administration

“If I should accept the argument of a city planner or a preservationist, then he needs to take us seriously too and he needs to deal with the facts”

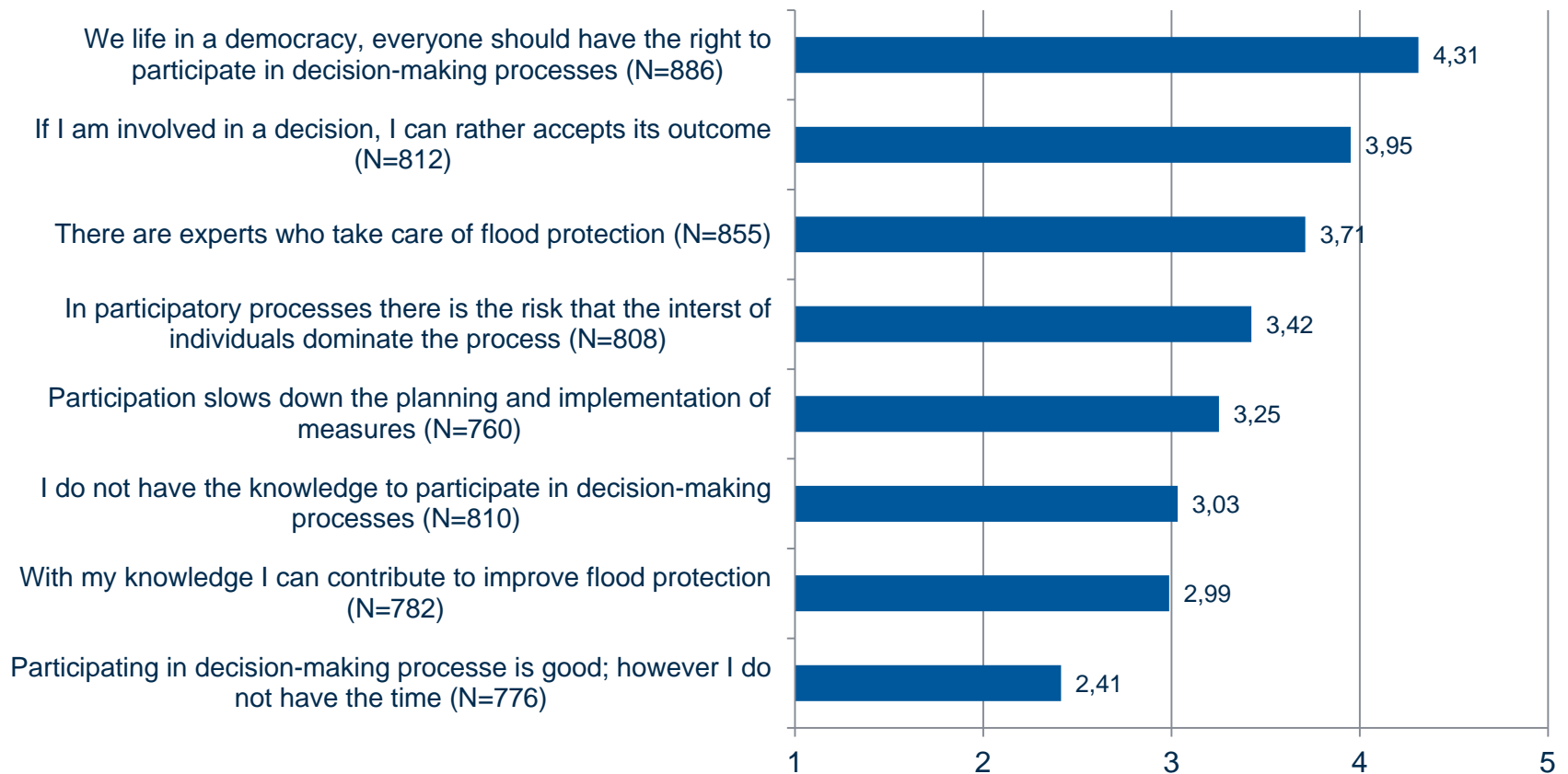
⇒ **Two ways of coping**

- 2. Radicalisation – grounded in loss of personal reputation, loss of trust in democratic institutions, exclusion from decision-making => no common ground on substantial level**

Household survey

Legitimacy of participatory processes in flood management?

Attitudes towards participation in flood management



Summary and conclusion

- Changing interrelation between authorities and public
- Participation served as a scape goat during the flood (deflecting from organisational responsibilities?)
- Those participating faced double vulnerability: Feeling excluded from decision-making processes and at the same time being blamed for the extent of the 2013 flood
- Participatory processes still highly valued among public despite critical debate in 2013

Thank you!



- Kuhlicke, C., Callsen, I., Begg, C. (2016), Reputational risks and participation in flood risk management and the public debate about the 2013 flood in Germany. *Environmental Science & Policy*. 55, Part 2, 318-325
- Kuhlicke, C., David, D. (2016), Adaptive and risk-based approaches to climate change and the management of uncertainty and institutional risk: the case of future flooding in England, *Global Environmental Change*, 37, 56-68

Thanks to Ines Callsen and Chloe Begg

christian.kuhlicke@ufz.de