

Book Review

Trust in Risk Management: Uncertainty and Scepticism in the Public Mind

Michael Siegrist, Timothy C. Earle and Heinz Gutscher (eds), Earthscan, London, UK, 2010, ISBN 978-1-84971-106-7, **£29.99, 294 pp.**

The book originated from invited presentations at a conference workshop held during the Zurich Conference on Trust and Risk Management organised by the editors. The initial papers presented were revised by their authors based on the comments and suggestions received in the open discussions and subsequently formed the basis for the chapters within the book.

Unlike most other risk texts this book does not begin by addressing the management of risk but examines the relationship between stakeholders in risk management: individuals, experts, and the public, government and other organisations, and their perceptions and values in communication and acceptance of risk management processes. The first chapter, which is written by the editors, explores the distinction between 'trust', which is based on morality information relating to people and/or organisations, and 'confidence', which is based on evidence of performance. It goes on to review previous research and presents a model indicating the need for trust if any information about risk is to be communicated effectively.

The first part of the book, chapters 2 to 6, explores the nature of trust and the effects of a trusting environment on risk management. Inputs from studies on trust from the different disciplines are outlined and discussed. The text is quite different to most engineering books but the reader is assisted by frequent summaries, discussion and conclusion sections and in addition each of the chapters includes a section of notes and a full reference list. These are a valuable resource for anyone wishing to pursue a particular issue in more detail. However, despite these features it is

unlikely that most readers would read the complete book in sequence. It is more appropriate to select specific items of interest.

The second part, chapters 7 to 10, contains some case study examples of the role and nature of trust in uncertain and risk situations. Mad cow disease, or bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) to be precise, is the main subject of the first study, although the problems with genetically modified foods are also mentioned. The work shows the importance of knowing consumer values in establishing trust. Chapter 8 addresses trust in the smallpox vaccination as an exemplar of trust in vaccines generally. The co-operative management of US forests provides the setting for the next chapter and the section concludes with a study of local officials trust in wetlands management in a chapter that is aptly entitled 'Getting out of the Swamp'.

Finally, chapters 11 and 12 investigate systems trust and confidence, and provide a series of three case studies of trust during crisis situations. The systems in this case are computer-based systems and two experiments are described which draw interesting parallels between trust in people and trust in systems. Regarding crisis, the three case studies demonstrate how actions can build or destroy public confidence irrespective of the expertise of the individual or organisation. The cases cover Shell's Brent Spar decommissioning, the outbreak of illness in children drinking Coca-Cola in Belgium and an outbreak of listeria in Sara Lee packed meat products in Michigan. From these few examples some relevant general lessons can be learned.

Overall this book is not as directly concerned with risk management as at first appears but nevertheless the book contains interesting information and is likely to be consulted as a useful reference book by researchers.

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