

Larysa D. Klymanska
Lviv National Polytechnic University, Lwów

The role of media in the mechanism of the social amplification of risks

ABSTRAKT

Artykuł przedstawia analizę możliwych wersji socjologicznej interpretacji ryzyka. Konstruktywistyczne podejście procesowe do opisu rzeczywistości społecznej sprawia, że możliwe jest spojrzenie na ryzyko jako wynik działalności społecznej. Subiektywna ocena ryzyka w połączeniu z celem/wiedzą, pozwala przedstawić pełniejszy obraz zjawiska i określić najbardziej efektywne sposoby przeciwdziałania negatywnych skutków ryzyka. Probabilistyczną analizę ryzyka uzupełnia eksperckie badanie postrzegania ryzyka w sferze publicznej. Pojęcie "wzmocnienia społecznego ryzyka" wprowadza instytucję mediatora/moderatora systemu percepcji ryzyka, który ingeruje w proces między ryzykownymi zdarzeniami i jego skutkami i daje możliwość zmiany przyczynowej i czasowej sekwencji, w której następują. Rolę takiego moderatora mogą grać media.

Autorka bada typowe strategie używane przez dziennikarzy, w celu uzyskania informacji na temat sytuacji umożliwiających lepsze postrzeganie ryzyka przez czytelnika masowego i widza takich jak: "opowieści grozy", zabawny styl prezentacji informacji; unikanie danych naukowych; własny punkt widzenia dziennikarza; interakcja między różnymi mediami; potrzeba proaktywnego stanowiska instytucji społecznych w dostarczaniu informacji na temat ryzyka; wpływ grup nacisku; niepewność i sprzeczności jako charakterystyczne cechy opowieści o ryzyku.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: pojęcie społecznej amplifikacji ryzyka, media jako pośrednik w społecznej percepcji ryzyka, techniki dziennikarskie vs. mechanizm wzmacniania ryzyka

Problem description

The transformation of society as an open social system always contains an element of unpredictability. In its turn, unpredictability in social relations often becomes an element of risk. The concept of "risk society", which was proposed by a German sociologist U. Beck¹, in many ways outlined the contours of contemporary social reality, outlined the conceptual meaning of the term "risk", not

¹ Бек У. Общество риска. На пути к другому модерну [Текст] /У.Бек. - Пер. с нем. В. Седелника и Н. Федоровой; Послеслов. А. Филиппова. – М.: Прогресс-Традиция, 2000. – 384 с.;/ Bek U. Obshchestvo ryska. Na puty k druhomu modernu [Tekst] /U.Bek. - Per. s nem. V. Sedel'nyka y N. Fedorovoy; Posleslov. A. Fylyppova. – М.: Prohress-Tradytysya, 2000. – 384 s.

only as an economic or legal concept, but as a phenomenon of social and cultural human life that determines its life strategy.

A study of risk-producing of a modern society needs to take into account not only the objective factors, which form the risk situation (such as the environment or global economic system), but also subjective factors, which reflect activities of various social agents in the process of risk constructing.

Analysis of research and publications

Risk research is institutionalized as a distinct scientific discipline now. In the frame of this discipline several areas of research appeared that have absorbed the approaches of different sciences: psychology, political science, sociology and others. The first study area – technical, is the one associated with the term "acceptable risk", and in which risk is derived from the statistically expected number of fatal events. Another focus of the study is concentrated on the analysis of balance between risk and benefits. This kind of analysis could be used only after that moment, when the risks and benefits of technology realizing were proved in the quantitative form. The monetary expression became the standard method in this case, including the situations with health and life deprivation. This approach was cultivated mainly by economists.

The third approach is practiced by psychologists who study risk perception. The survey data results allow to measure the "subjective" risk, which later could be compared with the "objective" risk (the expected number of deaths). The difference between them is associated with the irrational perception of the real risk by population.

Identification of adequate communication in situations of risk, in other words how to provide adequate information for laymen, which will help them to adequately understand the reality of risk - is another very important area of research. This approach is closely connected with the problem of influence on public opinion by publishing various risk measures. The problem was in gaining public confidence to the identified informational sources and it had provoked sociological analytical approaches².

It is clear that each discipline has its own perspective in the study of risk. But riskology (if any it will be recognized as a branch of scientific knowledge) has clearly a lack of sociological view of the risk phenomenon as a generalized risk in terms of its role in the development of social relations, it is the amplification or weakening by human activities, human communities and institutions. Theory and practice of sociology of risk has been developed in the European and American sociology for a long time (A.Vildavski, B.Jonson, K.Drake, M.Duglas, S.Krymsky, A.Plau, D.Ropake, P.Slovik, etc.).

² Hansson S.O. Risk and safety in technology / Philosophy of Technology and Engineering Sciences. Ed. by A. Meijers (Handbook of the Philosophy of Science, Vol. 9). Amsterdam: Elsevier B.V., 2009. P. 1069-1102.

It may seem strange, but for Ukraine this scientific problem is rather new. The concept of “social risk” was firstly introduced by professor Y. Sayenko in the study devoted to the social and psychological consequences of the Chernobyl disaster. The problem of risk is under active discussion in specific areas of social relations, for example in management (V. Kuzmenko, N. Pankratova, V. Soroko), economics (V. Zaslavskyy, M. Loschynin, O. Yastremskyy etc.), radiation security and health care (L. Kovhan, I. Lihtarov, V. Prylypko, A. Prysyzhnyuk, A. Romanenko). Social risk assessment and prevention are highlighted in the works of N. Bolotina, N. Borecka, T. Boyarchuck, E. Libanova and other scientists. However, one of the most difficult problems in the field of risk analysis is why some relatively minor, according to the technical expert's assessments, risks or risk events often cause serious public problems and lead to significant impacts on society and the economy.

The purpose of this study - to analyze the role of media in forming risk situations within society with the help of constructionist procedural approach to the description of social reality. The subjective perception of risk in combination with its objective / expertise assessment, allows to submit a complete picture of the phenomenon and to determine the most effective ways to overcome the negative effects.

The main material. Despite the fact that sociologists, as it was confirmed by the analysts on the issues of risk, got involved in the research of risk rather late comparatively with the representatives of other branches of science³, we can say that sociology has a comprehensive understanding of risk as a complex social phenomenon and provides several methodological theses:

1. The development of social system (social change) constantly enhances the vulnerability of particular social groups and of the whole society. It works for all kinds of risks, demonstrating that there are some basic dimensions of risk: space-time (social space and time), subject-object (public, group, individual); demographic, technological, natural and so on;
2. There is a social allocation of risk and thus unequal security for different segments of society: social and economic processes, especially during the transformation period impose different level of risk for different social groups and individuals. These groups or individuals often feel lack of access to reliable information on potential risk or do not have skills to resolve the situation of risk, do not have the resources for recovery (physical, psychological and financial) in the case of risk realizing (adverse scenario of events);
3. Political and economic power makes it possible to impose risk on individuals and social groups, to influence the perception of risk by population, and allows to

³ Бехманн Г., Горохов В.Г. Социально-философские и методологические проблемы обращения с технологическими рисками в современном обществе (Дебаты о технологических рисках в современной западной литературе) [Текст] / Г. Бехманн, В.Г. Горохов // Вопросы философии. – 2012. - №7. - С.120-132 - С.130/ Hansson S.O. Risk and safety in technology / Philosophy of Technology and Engineering Sciences. Ed. by A. Meijers (Handbook of the Philosophy of Science, Vol. 9). Amsterdam: Elsevier B.V., 2009. P. 1069-1102.

- lobby certain positions, which are related to the assessment of risk acceptability;
4. Research experience of past catastrophes (situations of risk realizing) could be used to study and prevent future risks, but this approach should not be the primary one because of constant complication of social structure and intensification of social processes. Social risks are becoming more complex, and therefore their study should be carried out in the context of current conditions of social transformations using interdisciplinary knowledge.
 5. It is incorrect to interpret the category of "risk" exclusively from rationalist positions, when the individual's behavior (behavior of a social group or people as a whole) determines as predictable, the result of the events strictly anticipated. It is a methodological mistake to narrow the problem of risk to finding a way of more or less accurate calculation of the probability of most adverse events and the related loss. Such methodological approach to the concept of "risk" reveals its formal side, but does not explain its meaning, because it doesn't take into account important socio-cultural and socio-psychological components that define the unique attitude of the individual and society to the notional interpretation of risk and, therefore, form a strategy of behavior in situations of risk.

The concept of "Social amplification of risk" (SARF - Social Amplification of Risk Framework) is in line with this last methodological thesis. It was proposed in the late 1980s in response to differences between different research areas of risk, which inhibited understanding of social meaning and social causes of risk. Therefore SARF (the concept of "Social amplification of risk") initially was aimed at better understanding of social processes that may mediate between the event and its dangerous consequences. The phrase "social amplification of risk" refers to a phenomenon within which information processes, institutional structures, the behavior of social groups and individual reactions form the social experience of risk and thus contribute to one or other consequences of risk.

The logic of this approach is quite transparent. An important characteristic of decisions in situations of risk is their dependence on knowledge, information about the possible events which was collected and that could allow for risk to be calculated. So, dangers become personal. Dangers are events that occur independently of human activity and awareness. However, if we are aware of them, we can try to avoid them: to leave the area, where there could be an earthquake, not to build a house near the river to avoid the risk of flooding and so on. The dangers in this meaning, we can understand as fate. Risks, on the contrary, appear willful, and someone (individuals, social institutions or society in general) has to take responsibility, if somebody is exposed to it.

The reliability of information reaching the public is very important in the assessment of risk. On the one hand, false information or lack of information transparency could lead to an underestimation of risk, on the other, to groundless panic based on illusion of truthfulness of the provided information. "If we want to

have mature citizens under conditions of technological democracy, you have to create for them the conditions for a peaceful and informed management of risks. We are far from it. The first problem is that most people simply do not understand statistics. ... The second problem - people do not understand their fears"⁴.

"Social amplification of risk", according to R. Kasperson and colleagues^{5,6} indicates understanding of risk situation as a situation in which the decisive role is played by the interaction of informational processes, organizational structures, social group behaviors that form the so-called "socio-cultural" experience of risk, and thereby it defines the consequences of risky events. Interaction between the dangerous events and social processes in this context demonstrates that the risk is important only to the extent to which people interpret it in the system of coordinates about the world and relationships in this world. Thus, there is no such concept as "true" (absolute) and "distorted" (socially determined) risk. Probably, the system of information and public reaction characteristics (public response) constitute the social amplification of risk and are important elements in determining its nature and the level of extent. Risk, according to R. Kasperson, is partly a real threat to people and partly a product of culture and social experience. Threatening events are "real", they include the transformation of the physical environment or human health as a result of prolonged or sudden release of energy, matter or information, or include abrupt changes in social or value structures⁷.

The concept of "social amplification of risk» (SARF) introduces in a scheme of risk perception an additional element – a mediator / moderator who intervenes in the process between risky event and its consequences, and suggests causal and temporal order in which they operate. Information flows from different sources and channels launch the so-called "social stations of amplification" (it may be experts in a particular field, the media, business and political groups, friends and relatives), which, in their turn, trigger "individual stations of amplification" by attributing behavioral responses. They generate the so-called ripple effects of secondary impacts.

⁴ Бехманн Г., Горохов В.Г. Социально-философские и методологические проблемы обращения с технологическими рисками в современном обществе (Дебаты о технологических рисках в современной западной литературе) [Текст] / Г. Бехманн, В.Г. Горохов // Вопросы философии. – 2012. - №7. - С.120-132 - С.130;/ Hansson S.O. Risk and safety in technology / Philosophy of Technology and Engineering Sciences. Ed. by A. Meijers (Handbook of the Philosophy of Science, Vol. 9). Amsterdam: Elsevier B.V., 2009. P. 1069-1102.

⁵ Bekhmann H., Horokhov V.H. Sotsyal'no-fylosofskyye y metodolohycheskiye problemy obrashchenyya s tekhnolohycheskymy rysskamy v sovremennoy obshchestve (Debaty o tekhnolohycheskykh rysskakh v sovremennoy zapadnoy lyterature) [Tekst] / H. Bekhmann, V.H. Horokhov // Voprosy fylosofyy. – 2012. - #7. - S. 120-132.

⁶ Kasperson, Roger E. et al. (2000): The social amplification of risk: a conceptual framework / [Text] / Roger E. Kasperson, Ortwin Renn, Paul Slovic, Halina S. Brown, Jacque Emel, Robert Goble, Jeanne X. Kasperson, Samuel Ratick // Risk Analysis, Vol. 8, No. 2, 1988 – P.177-187 – P.181.

⁷ Kasperson, R. E. (1992). The social amplification of risk: Progress in developing an integrative framework / [Text] // R. Kasperson // In S. Krinsky & D. Golding (Eds.), Social Theories of Risk (Ch. 6). Connecticut: Praeger – P.140-164 - P.154.

Mass media play a special role among these "social stations of amplification". We assume that the key steps of social risk amplification through mass media may be the following:

- filtering of signals (for example only a part of all messages are processed in fact);
- attributing social values to risk information in order to have some social effects in the sphere of management or politics;
- articulation of behavioral intentions to tolerate risk, to take action against risk or to act in the risk management framework.

Professional ethics of journalists has special norms and standards that should guide journalists in their presenting certain situations of crisis or risk to the public. A rational approach to the description of risk situations requires from journalists to retranslate clear and honest information to the public because it affects significantly the risk assessment: the objective picture, which is presented in the media makes information clearer and risk is assessed at the lower level, and, conversely, little-known risks, that are poorly covered in media, do not help their rational perception and may even encourage risky decision making. In that case, the usual seasonal flu causes panic as a result of the mass consciousness by headlines like: "We are facing a terrible flu" (Volyn), "Unknown flu attacks Galicia" (Galician correspondent), "There is pneumonic plague in Ukraine! The authorities hide the truth »(PravdaUA); "The epidemic from doctor's point of view: what officials keep in secret» (Forpost); "Ministry of Health predicts many deaths from the flu epidemic in Ukraine» (TSN).

Sometimes these rules and standards might conflict with journalistic ideas about attractive and clear text, which some journalists try to send to the public if people want to read, watch and listen to such messages. It means that journalists have certain patterns that they use for strengthening information about the risk situation for better perception of such information by a typical reader and viewer. Such templates manage information about risk. Using templates by the media is important for the speed with which the media operate, and for the essence of mass media. It should cause special reactions from the regulatory authorities. In this sense, the main aim should be to push the communication about risk closer to the process of taking political decisions in risk situations. Sometimes there are a number of different hazards structures within the general danger and in different times they are converted to the subject to negotiation about the dangers. Stakeholders could focus on specific sub-dangerous structures in order to implement strategy of amplification. Controller or communication manager in risk situations could use it to support the process, to achieve the desired effect of communication.

Understanding of such patterns can be achieved through in-depth interviews where respondents (representatives of the media, journalists and editors of publications) in the unstructured or semi-structured way talked about their experiences of coverage of events that may be dangerous or seen as such within the mass consciousness. Such a study in the course "Methods of data collection. Part II "

was held by students - sociologists of the 4th year of study of National University "Lvivska Polytechnica". The main purpose of this training project was - to determine what factors, what style of the message are perceived by journalists as reinforcing the perception of risk and danger by the mass consciousness. There were 15 interviews with the representatives of printed media, television and radio media. All the respondents in the project promised to remain anonymous.

Thematic analysis of transcripts of interviews demonstrated what factors journalists consider as influential in the process of informing viewers, listeners, and readers of risk. Thematic analysis allows the researcher not to make any a priori assumptions, but to follow the logic of the data in the analysis of the obtained information. Each of the topics that arise during this analysis reveals the factors that affect how the story involving risks is represented and how the decision-making process is built. In the process of analyzing the interviews several important issues were revealed that indicate the influential factors in the process of structuring information that shapes risk content and influences its perception.

"For enhancing the perception of risk the "horror stories" should be implemented". All respondents indicated that such special "stories of risk" do not exist. All stories have an element of risk. Instead, there is a pattern of "horror stories". Horror stories are associated with a threat to many people, especially for the most defenseless but very valuable for the society (this mainly refers to children and pregnant women) ("The failsafe method in such stories is to include children. It works perfectly. Parents fall into a kind of panic, a kind of invisible threat that acts despite the desire to abstain from it"), the threat in such stories is invisible until that moment when it begins to manifest itself through serious, mostly fatal outcome with long-term consequences». Horror stories are convenient tools to attract the attention of a mass audience, which partly explains their popularity among journalists. Respondents also emphasized that the horror stories - a byproduct of complications they are experiencing when trying to tell stories about the risks: "The public does not understand what the risk is. Often the information is presented as follows «...it is three times more dangerous», " but the public does not know that the initial risk (starting point) was quite small. And that is why when you see "in three times more than next to nothing" it is often impossible to get a comparison for this message. You often see this in terms of financial security. You can see a graph that is going lower and lower until you realize that the threshold value is not zero, but the difference between 7.8 and 7.9.... and it's not easy to explain what it is. It is about reporting risks as you make it to attract attention. The public usually cannot focus on these issues for a long time and you have to keep their attention.

Sometimes the content of such "horror stories" is simplified to make it easier for non-professional audience to perceive danger. The process of simplification of arguments about risk in order to keep the audience's attention and to give them at least some information leads to the disappearance of the subtleties of interpretation, of prevention and appropriate arguments. Given the time of the

interview with journalists (December 2014), comments of the respondents often touch the most dangerous events in Ukraine - "ATO" (anti-terrorist operation) as well as the overall situation in Ukraine-Russia relations. Traditionally, a commonly known by the majority the concept of a "Russian" or a "Ukrainian" in the media changed to negatively stained terms of the "horror stories" - "crazy Kazak", "Chechen - Kadyrovtsy" on one side, and "Bandera - fascists" on the other. The elements of horror stories in the Russian media include the "horror stories" about crucified babies and thousands of women raped in the area of ATO.

The value of entertainment elements in presenting information. All respondents argued that the media do not try to "create a sensation", but rather to provide information in the entertainment style (which sometimes leads to exaggeration). Information and entertainment style mean the provision of information in such a way as to make it interesting. As for the stories associated with the risk, such an entertaining style eliminates histories, which state that there is no risk or that there is a minimal risk. More important are stories that describe a dangerous situation. Such stories easily reach large numbers of people, and they are recognized to be the "news" (as successful information events). A description of romantic stories involving participants of ATO, wedding in the hospital, are instructive in this regard.

Of course the entertainment value decreases when the description is repeated. Accordingly, if the news of a serious threat is often repeated, it will not be perceived as such at the first time. One respondent gave an example: "If we really showed concern for the dangers in our lives, we would have to, for example, write about smoking all the time because smoking is the greatest risk to which we expose our lives today. And we do write about smoking, but there is a natural limit to create these stories. How much can you write about the same thing? We have to move forward. News should be in progress".

Media should avoid the "real science". All respondents agreed that the media tend to avoid "real science" in their narratives. Most of the so-called "scientific publications" in the media contain very little science. Journalists do not write what experiments were actually carried out; they do not explain what's going on. You read literally, "the researchers found that ... you give a brief account of something where it never says that scientists did as they did, and that, in fact, other people think in the same way. Messages must be adapted, simplified to the specific audience. Describing military operations in the territory of ATO, journalists simplified enough commenting the specific situation in terms of the use of certain weapons, in fact performance characteristics of weapons can say a lot in the specific situation to a skilled expert (crash of Malaysian aircraft, bombing of civilian targets, etc.)

Avoiding scientific details may be related to the fact that few journalists, who write about the dangers of science or medicine, have been trained in the relevant areas. Interestingly, none of the respondents considered it as a disadvantage. In fact, they treated it as an advantage because they are able to "see the forest behind the

trees", focus on an important issue, and stay away from a purely technical details that "public do not understand, nor need". One of the respondents said: "I generally stay on the principle that if I can understand this, then probably my listeners and viewers can be able to understand it". Another said: "I think the mystic of science is exaggerated. It is not difficult if you talk to the person on an equal footing, he will reciprocally talk to you to on an equal footing. I usually tell people «Treat me as a 10-year-old child». Speak with me at this level, and I will understand. If you recall proteins and metabolic processes, I simply ask you formulate to me the principles of what is happening. The mechanism and principles and how it works. And real science does exactly, thus and you can... I know every profession has its own jargon and science is not an exception in the sense. And in fact when you begin insisting that you want to get from him (i.e. from a scientist) only conceptual things, only answers to the simple question 'What did you learn, and what it means?' you get exactly what you want. It's that simple." This type of reasoning is usually accompanied by two caveats: first, the assertion that, in any case, they could turn to an expert if such a need appears, the access to specialist support is a testament of the openness of the scientific community to conduct a dialogue with the media and the popularity of Internet makes the access to almost unlimited volume of literature); second, most of the respondents mentioned that they are in this case not for the first day, they have been learned "on the workplace" most of the scientific and medical details in order to understand what they mean. One of the respondents commented: "It's usually pretty easy to distinguish in the science... what is fake and pretentious and what is real."

The own perspective. All respondents agreed that the point of view of the editor or the journalist is important in the communication process, in selecting stories and determining what line of narrative will be accepted. It is generally accepted that journalists and editors may behave nicely when describing the situation, and can be very biased in that they choose and how to process a specific story. Interestingly, it was noted that these biases are relatively well known and therefore predictable.

The information war between Russian and Ukrainian mass media is a vivid example of how one and the same event can be made with very different (usually opposite) editorial content (public condemnation, mockery of the Ukrainian prisoners against the backdrop of bus with civilian destroyed by Russian weapons). The event is described in such cases without a detailed description of all the actual circumstances which are replaced by an emotional commentary from the author.

The value of the interaction between media. Respondents emphasized that to "dig information" is good, but to "dig information" alone is not interesting as the process then loses its value. It would be nice to be ahead of the competition in the approaches to the description of events, but not to be the only person who reported it. "There is safety in numbers". If this professional code works, it may explain some of the phenomena of social mechanism of amplification of risk (in terms of intensification and weakening). It is likely that the story about the risk

increases by the so-called "last wagon effect" (someone tells a story, others confirm and extend it). Risk reduction will be there, in those circumstances, where journalists do not believe that others will report the story and thus refuse to do it themselves.

Requirement of the proactive position of social institutions. Several respondents noted that the genre of investigative journalism today is declining. Journalists take up the position of waiting; they are expecting the information that can be provided to them. They are ready for proactive information delivery. These respondents repeatedly said that they would like to see social institutions to be more active in providing information. They accused the government, public, public authority to create the so-called "media vacuum" that promotes speculation and distrust. Lack of proactivity is interpreted by many respondents as not only incompetent, but also as a desire to hide "something" from the "public".

The difference between the elements, on which media are concentrated. Respondents noted that there is a relationship between the key characteristics of media and general approaches to stories. The main difference between print and television media was listed by one of the editors of a television channel: "on TV is due to the second, account on TV goes to the pictures." "The speed in presenting news" on television and radio is often underestimated by government organizations. The mismatch of expectations is obvious: government organizations want to provide information on risk, which is fully tested and reliable, television and radio want to receive that information which has just occurred, whether checked or not.

The role of pressure groups. Respondents clearly felt that pressure groups play an important role in shaping the story of risk. In some areas, pressure groups are regarded as a vital channel of information about risk, because they control access to vulnerable populations. If the newspaper wants to give evidence that people with disabilities do not like X's public policy, as a result they feel threatened, often the pressure group X is able to find a person with a disability X in order to illustrate the problem. Control over the set of examples to personalize the story associated with the risk and give them an emotional nature, is the essential element through which a pressure group has access to the media in such a situation.

Uncertainty and conflict as a characteristic feature in stories about risk. Respondents were asked questions how difficult or easy it is to report on events in which there is a small share of confidence in how risky they are. Uncertainty itself, as respondents noted, is a small problem. It is pretty easy to handle, but it (i.e. uncertainty) is "news" in nature which attracts the attention of readers, viewers and listeners. As one respondent noted, "This change in the level of uncertainty attracts the audience". Another noted that "uncertainty becomes interesting when it turns out who just cannot decide and for what reason he finds uncertainty." Almost all respondents were unanimous in the opinion that the uncertainty that comes from government officials is often politically motivated. At a time when the risks are unknown to the end, but something must be said for political reasons, they create a message with a high degree of uncertainty. In another situation, where the risks are

well known, but to recognize them is politically uncomfortable, expression of uncertainty is used as a way to delay the final revelation. Despite the cynical attitudes about the motivation of government officials when they speak of uncertainty, there was consensus among the respondents that it is events better to report the uncertain risk than to wait until all doubts are overcome. This can be considered as a response to the question: whether to provide the information about possible risk based on the "phone call from participant in the events" or from the unverified sources.

Conclusions

Thus, modern society as risk society has now to recognize that risk is not only the result of natural and technological disasters, but it is an attribute of social life. In addition, it is also recognized that risk itself is a social construct, and thus knowledge about risk is socially constructed and conflicting in its nature. In this regard, one of the urgent tasks of sociological research is to identify the roles of the different agents of social amplification of risk mechanism, especially the impact on risk perception formed by certain events.

The role of media in the mechanism of the social amplification of risks

Summary

This article examines one possible version of sociological interpretation of risk. Constructionist procedural approach to the description of social reality makes it possible to see the risk as a result of social activity. The account of the subjective assessment of risk in the complex with its objective/expertise, allows to submit a more complete picture of the phenomenon and determine the most effective ways to overcome the negative effects of risk. Probabilistic risk analysis is supplemented by expert study of public perceptions of risk. The concept of "social amplification of risk" introduces a scheme of risk perception authority mediator / moderator who intervenes into the process between risky event and its consequences, and offers causal and temporal sequence in which they operates. The role of such moderator can play the media. The author explores the templates used by journalists to gain information about the situation in line with better risk perception of such information by the mass reader and viewer: "horror stories", an entertaining style of presenting information; avoiding scientific data; the own point of view of a journalist; the interaction between different media; the demand of proactive position of social institutions in providing information about risk; the influence of pressure groups; uncertainty and contradiction as a characteristic features of stories about risk.

Key words: the concept of 'social amplification of risk', media as a moderator in social perception of risk, journalists' templates vs. mechanism of amplification of risk