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Turning regret into future disaster preparedness with no-regrets

Joy Ommer , Milan Kalas, Jessica Neumann, Sophie Blackburn, and Hannah L. Cloke

Abstract. Global efforts are focusing on long-term preparedness for disasters highlighting the need for taking well-informed decisions in advance to avoid panic behaviour when a disaster strikes. Taking well-informed decisions includes the evaluation of the potential outcomes of a decision or action to avoid regretting them afterwards. Yet, little is known about what we regret about our actions and inactions in the context of disasters. Using the responses of a survey disseminated in flood affected areas in German in 2021, this study dives into the regrets of citizens and the reasons for their regrets. The results showed the that participants only regretted preparedness actions when they threatened their life, but foremost, participants regretted their inaction. Overall, the results indicate the need for promoting long-term preparedness which can be supported with no-regrets actions which in addition need to be easy-to-implement. Furthermore, the need for integrating actions supporting psychological preparedness was identified. To increase citizens preparedness motivation, their self-responsibility needs to be enhanced which could be achieved through fostering collective action.

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