

# **An investigator's introduction to risk management**



# My background

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- **Risk and risk perception**
- **Disaster management**
- **Societal safety**

Disclaimer:

I've adapted and simplified the academic literature (a lot).

# Before we start

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## **Risk is context specific and constantly evolving**

— At the end of the day, you are responsible for your risk. If you have a particularly high level of risk, seek training and professional advice

## **Investigate your risk**

- Risk assessment is a mindset, not a checklist
- ... and it requires collaboration, too.

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# RISK ASSESSMENT



## Defining risk

Risk has *many* definitions! (but one is especially useful)

**Risk is the answer to three questions:**

- ① What can happen?
- ② How likely is it?
- ③ What will the consequences be?



# What can happen?

*One way to answer this question is to use scenarios.*

## **Success Scenario (S0):**

Defines what a “normal situation” means in a specific context.

## **Risk Scenario (Sn):**

Any “abnormal situation” that deviates from S0.



# What can happen?





# What can happen?





## Example: Collecting pesticide samples

- Adapted example from The Kit — Away From Your Screen, Out in the Field by Mario Rautner.

### Objectives:

- *“Collect 50 water samples from private and public groundwater wells over a three-week period after high levels of herbicide use.*
- *Follow scientific sampling protocols and ship the samples to be tested for herbicides to an accredited lab.*
- *Carry out and film interviews with local communities about the impact herbicide spraying has had on their lives.”*

## Example: Collecting pesticide samples

	<b>Transport/ Accommodation</b>	<b>Sampling</b>	<b>Testing</b>	<b>Interview</b>
<b>Success Scenario (S0)</b>	Drive to and from site with a camper van	Collect 50 water samples	Send samples to lab for analysis	Conduct and record interviews
<b>Potential Risk Scenarios (Sn)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Driving accident</li> <li>- Arriving late</li> <li>- Getting lost</li> <li>- Other</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Getting arrested</li> <li>- Acute poisoning</li> <li>- Other</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Problem with shipment</li> <li>- Other</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Confrontation</li> <li>- Loss or theft of equipment</li> <li>- Other</li> </ul>

## Example: Collecting pesticide samples

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→ Include scenarios that you cannot foresee.



# What can happen?

## **Worst (credible) scenario:**

Describes the worst that can happen (but things could always get worse).

VS

## **Most likely scenario:**

Describes the most likely to happen (but that may not be the most important scenario to prepare for).

→ How likely is it? What will the consequences be?



## Likelihood? Consequences?

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- Describing likelihood:
  - Very unlikely / Unlikely / Likely / Very Likely...
  - Scale 1 to 5
  - Etc.
  
- Describing consequences:
  - Minimal / Minor / Major / Serious / Catastrophic...
  - Scale 1 to 5
  - Etc.



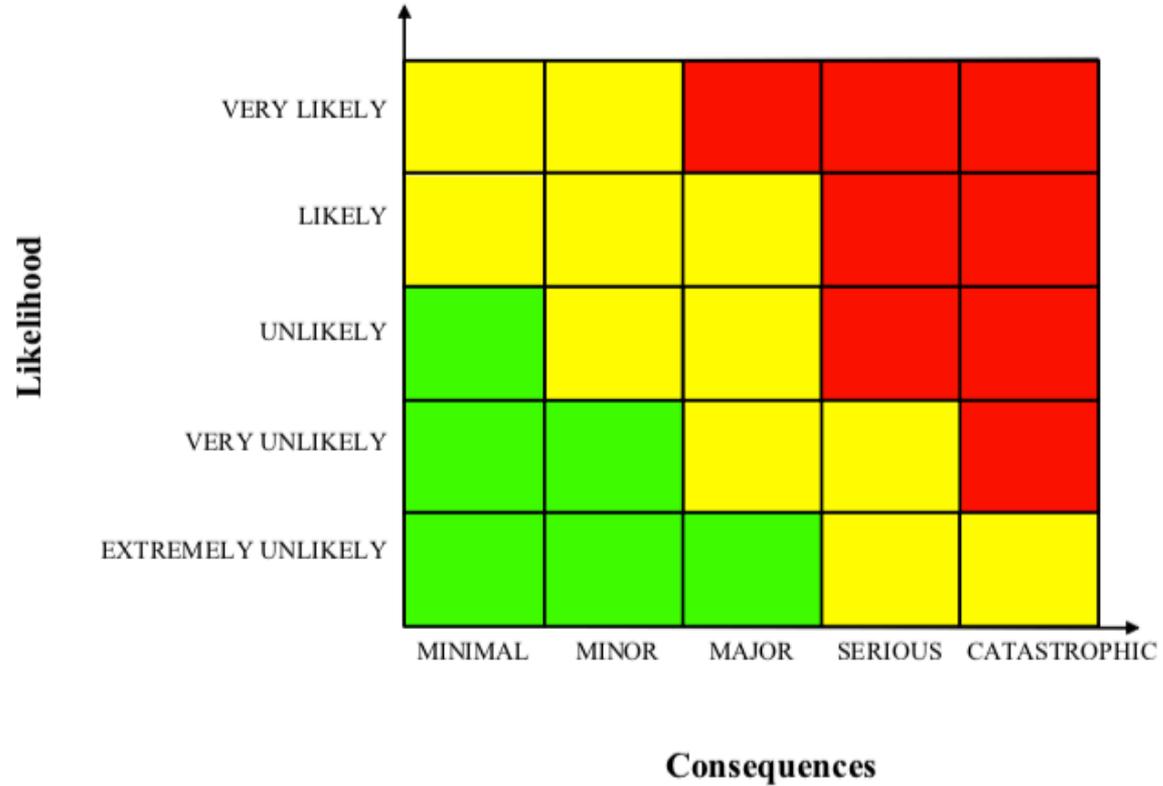
## Example: Collecting pesticide samples

Potential threat	Likelihood	Consequence
Issues with transport	Likely	Minor
Getting arrested	Unlikely	Serious
Pesticide poisoning	Very Unlikely	Catastrophic
Confrontation	Likely	Major
Problem with shipment	Very likely	Serious
Loss or theft of material	Unlikely	Serious



The concept

# Risk Matrix

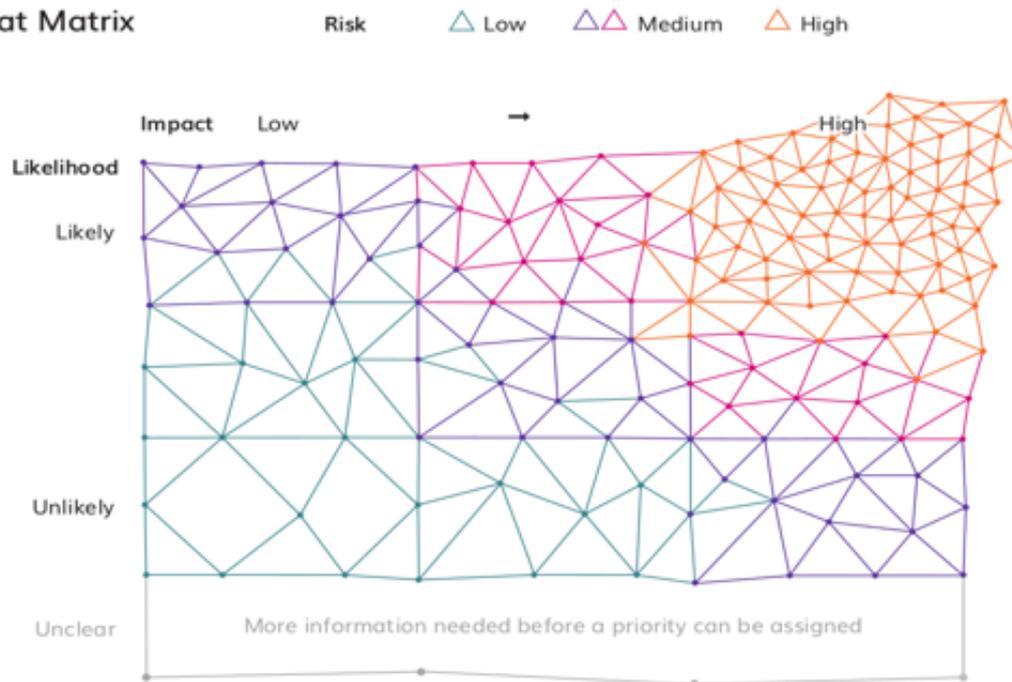




The reality: not as “squared”

# Risk Matrix

Threat Matrix





## Example: Collecting pesticide samples

Potential Threat	Likelihood	Consequence	Priority
Problem with shipment	Very likely	Major	1
Confrontation	Likely	Major	2
Issue with transport	Likely	Minor	3
Getting arrested	Unlikely	Serious	4
Poisoning	Very Unlikely	Catastrophic	5
Loss or theft of material	Unlikely	Serious	6

→ *Assessing and prioritizing scenarios is very subjective.*



## Recap

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# RISK PERCEPTION



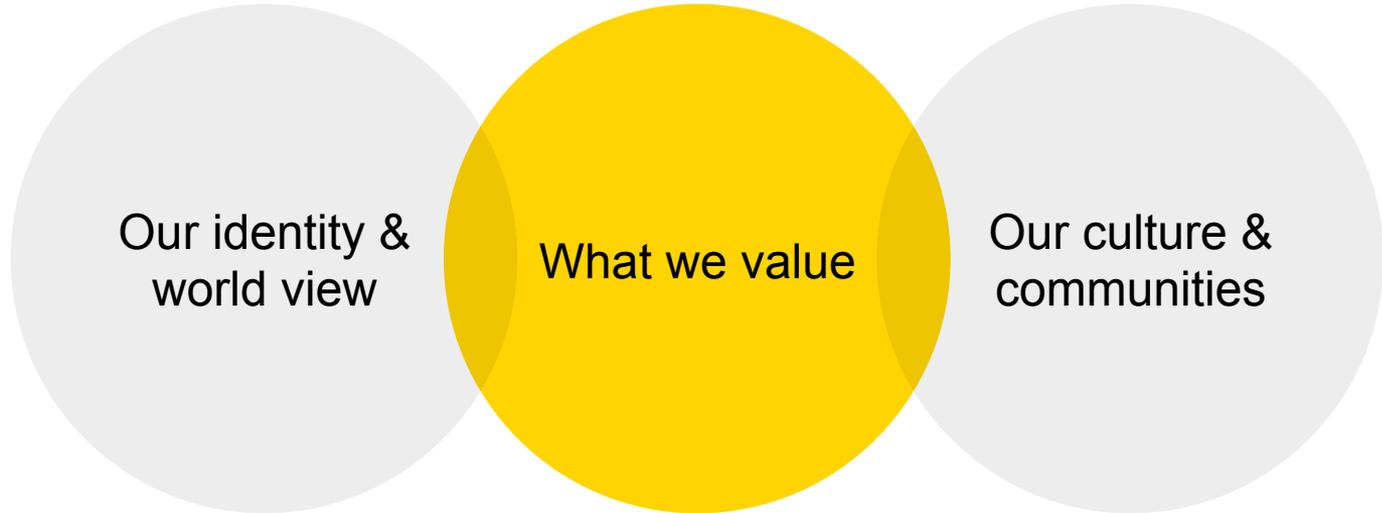
## Risk perception

Risk perception — Our subjective judgement of a risk, as well as its related likelihood and consequence.

→ Influences our assessments, actions and behaviour.



## Risk perception is affected by:





## Risk perception is affected by:

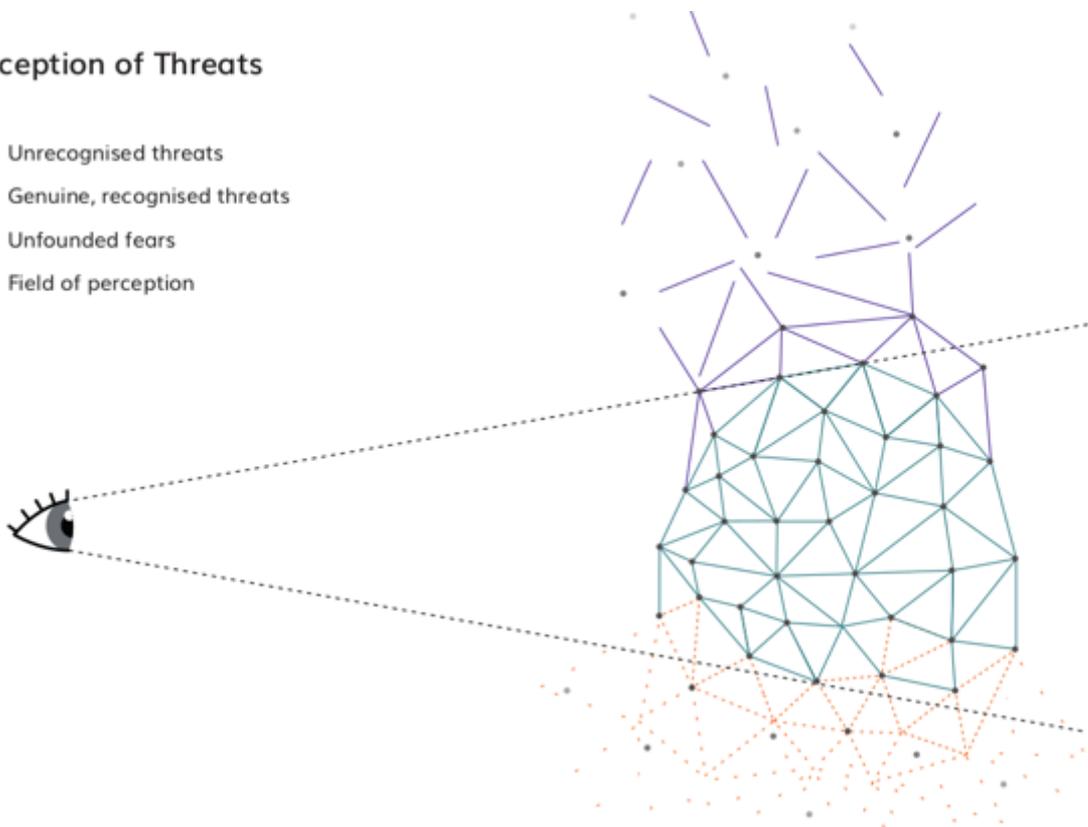




# Risk perception

## Perception of Threats

- △ Unrecognised threats
- △ Genuine, recognised threats
- △ Unfounded fears
- Field of perception





The perceived origin of a risk also influences our assessment.

## Risk acceptability

More acceptable:

- Voluntary
- Common
- Familiar
- Immediate
- Controllable
- Old
- Natural

Less acceptable:

- Involuntary
- Unusual, feared
- Unfamiliar
- Delayed
- Uncontrollable
- New
- Unnatural



## Risk is inherited

Investigating influences other people's risk (i.e. sources, collaborators, subjects of the investigation, bystanders, etc.). At the same time, their risk level also influences our own.

*DO NO HARM*

*Can your investigation create additional harm? For whom?*

→ Be ready not to investigate (?)



## Some thoughts:

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- ⦿ Risk is much more than likelihood vs consequences
- ⦿ Humans are often the weakest link
  - communicate with your team!
- Plan, prepare, question



## Extra: real examples



Many examples of the relationship between investigation and preparedness (or lack thereof).

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# RISK MANAGEMENT



## Risk management

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*Assessment is only the first step.*

Risk management — To reduce the likelihood or consequences of a risk scenario, or mitigate its effects after it has happened.



## Risk management

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### **Reduce likelihood**

- Eliminate the risk
- Modify the risk
- Warning systems
- Etc.

### **Reduce consequences**

- Separate/Isolate the risk
- Training and exercises
- Equip to better handle the risk
- Etc.

### **Fix the damage**

- Response if accident occurs
- Relief and rehabilitation
- Etc.



## Example: Collecting pesticide samples

Threats	Potential Mitigation strategies
Faulty shipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Physically bring the samples to the analysis lab</li><li>- Split the shipment</li></ul>
Confrontation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Avoid confrontation</li><li>- Use de-escalation techniques.</li></ul>
Issue with transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Plan for alternative routes</li></ul>
Getting arrested	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Put a warning system in place</li><li>- Prepare response plan with lawyers</li></ul>
Poisoning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Carry protective equipment</li><li>- Gather more information</li></ul>
Loss or theft of material	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Subscribe to an insurance</li></ul>



## Phasing risk management

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### Using risk levels to investigate

- By changing our actions and behaviour, we can attempt to reduce uncertainty.
- E.g. organise the investigation from low to high-risk activities.

→ Keep in mind:

*The unexpected may still happen, so prepare for it.*



## Risk and collaboration

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⦿ When dealing with risk, collaboration is key

→ By collaborating, we can:

- Increase our knowledge & reduce uncertainty
- Question our risk perception
- Strengthen our plans & prepare better
- Share best practices & learn

# Tactical Tech's resources



## Holistic Security Guide

— <https://holistic-security.tacticaltech.org/index.html>



## Security in-a-box

— <https://securityinabox.org/en/>



## Exposing the Invisible - The Kit

— <https://kit.exposingtheinvisible.org/en/index.html>



## Other resources



Committee to Protect Journalists

—

<https://cpj.org/emergency-response/pre-assignment-preparations/>



Rory Peck Trust

— <https://rorypecktrust.org/freelance-resources/safety-and-risk-assessment/>



## Other resources



Electronic Frontier Foundation  
— <https://www.eff.org/issues/security>



Global Investigative Journalism Network  
— <https://gijn.org/safety-and-security-organizations/>



## Other resources



Front Line Defenders

— <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/programme/risk-analysis-protection-training>



BSAFE, the UN's security awareness training

— <https://training.dss.un.org/thematicarea/category?id=6>



# Thanks!

*Any questions?*

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