An investigator’s introduction to risk management
My background

- Risk and risk perception
- Disaster management
- Societal safety

Disclaimer:
I’ve adapted and simplified the academic literature (a lot).
Before we start

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.
RISK ASSESSMENT
Defining risk

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

Risk is the answer to three questions:
- What can happen?
- How likely is it?
- What will the consequences be?
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?

$S_0$  “Everything goes as planned”

$S_1$  “Something goes wrong”
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Success Scenario (S0)</th>
<th>Transport/Accommodation</th>
<th>Sampling</th>
<th>Testing</th>
<th>Interview</th>
</tr>
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<td>Drive to and from site with a camper van</td>
<td>Collect 50 water samples</td>
<td>Send samples to lab for analysis</td>
<td>Conduct and record interviews</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Potential Risk Scenarios (Sn)

- Driving accident
- Arriving late
- Getting lost
- Other
- Getting arrested
- Acute poisoning
- Other
- Problem with shipment
- Other
- Confrontation
- Loss or theft of equipment
- Other
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?

- 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Potential threat</th>
<th>Likelihood</th>
<th>Consequence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Issues with transport</td>
<td>Likely</td>
<td>Minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting arrested</td>
<td>Unlikely</td>
<td>Serious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pesticide poisoning</td>
<td>Very Unlikely</td>
<td>Catastrophic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confrontation</td>
<td>Likely</td>
<td>Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem with shipment</td>
<td>Very likely</td>
<td>Serious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss or theft of material</td>
<td>Unlikely</td>
<td>Serious</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Risk Matrix

The concept
The reality: not as “squared”
### Example:
**Collecting pesticide samples**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Potential Threat</th>
<th>Likelihood</th>
<th>Consequence</th>
<th>Priority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Problem with shipment</td>
<td>Very likely</td>
<td>Major</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confrontation</td>
<td>Likely</td>
<td>Major</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue with transport</td>
<td>Likely</td>
<td>Minor</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting arrested</td>
<td>Unlikely</td>
<td>Serious</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poisoning</td>
<td>Very Unlikely</td>
<td>Catastrophic</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss or theft of material</td>
<td>Unlikely</td>
<td>Serious</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

→ *Assessing and prioritizing scenarios is very subjective.*
Recap

Identify risk scenarios

Assess their likelihood & consequences

Prioritize them
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:

- Our identity & world view
- Our culture & communities

What we value
Risk perception is affected by:

- Our perception of the world
- Our fears & biases
- Our knowledge & experience
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>More acceptable:</th>
<th>Less acceptable:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary</td>
<td>Involuntary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common</td>
<td>Unusual, feared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familiar</td>
<td>Unfamiliar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immediate</td>
<td>Delayed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controllable</td>
<td>Uncontrollable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old</td>
<td>New</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural</td>
<td>Unnatural</td>
</tr>
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</table>
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:

- Risk is much more than likelihood vs consequences

- Humans are often the weakest link
  — communicate with your team!

→ Plan, prepare, question
Many examples of the relationship between investigation and preparedness (or lack thereof).
RISK MANAGEMENT
Risk management

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Threats</th>
<th>Potential Mitigation strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faulty shipment</td>
<td>- Physically bring the samples to the analysis lab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Split the shipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confrontation</td>
<td>- Avoid confrontation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Use de-escalation techniques.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue with transport</td>
<td>- Plan for alternative routes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting arrested</td>
<td>- Put a warning system in place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Prepare response plan with lawyers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poisoning</td>
<td>- Carry protective equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Gather more information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss or theft of</td>
<td>- Subscribe to an insurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>material</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Phasing risk management

- 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

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
Other resources

Committee to Protect Journalists
—
https://cpj.org/emergency-response/pre-assignment-preparations/

Rory Peck Trust
Other resources

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

Global Investigative Journalism Network
Other resources

Front Line Defenders
—

BSAFE, the UN’s security awareness training
— https://training.dss.un.org/thematicarea/category?id=6
Thanks!

Any questions?

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