PREPARE

Information and participation of local populations in a post-accident situation

A social path for recovery – insights from the PREPARE European Research project

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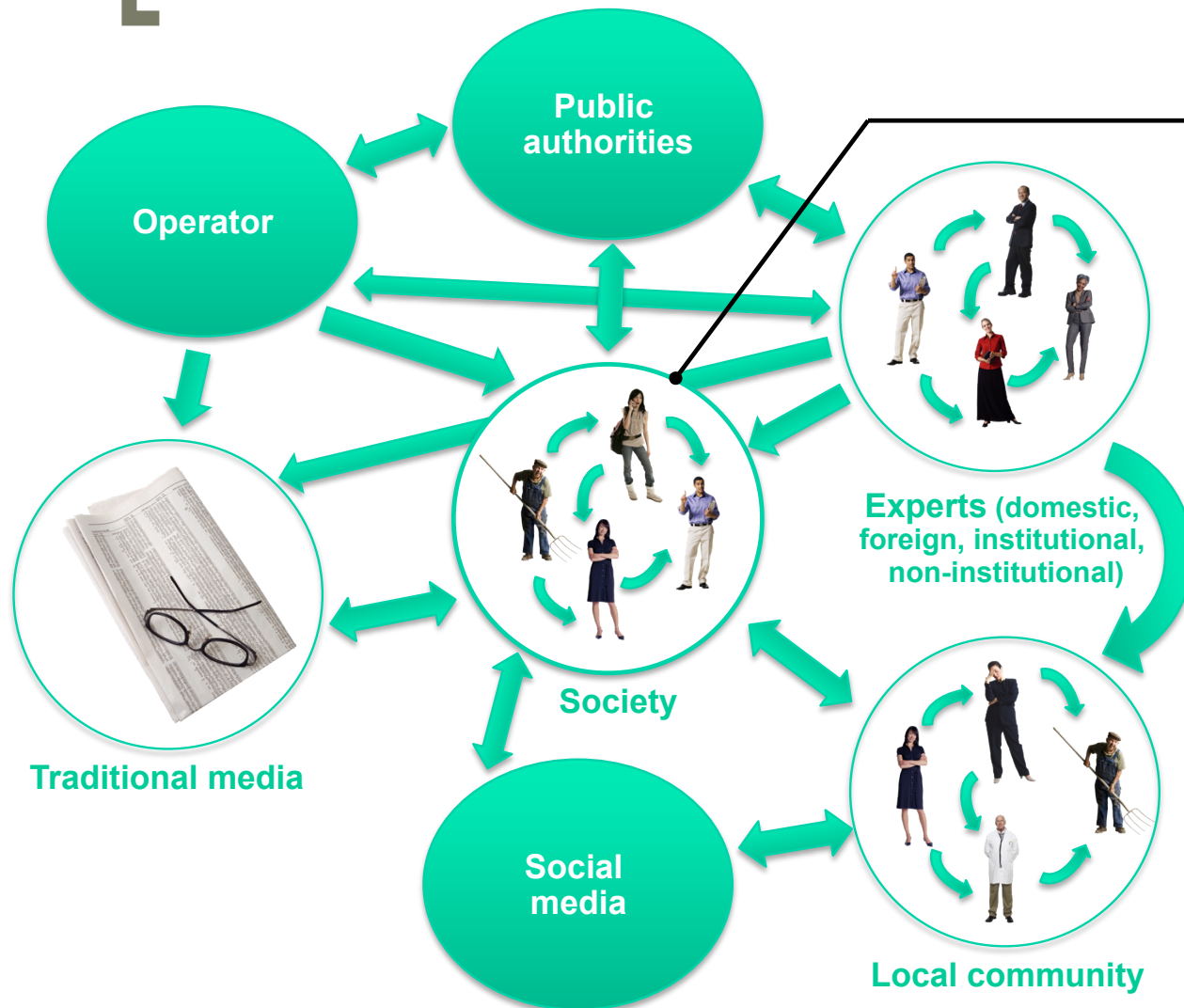
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PREPARE project WP6.2 – information and participation of local populations

- PREPARE WP6 focuses on information and participation of the public

- Within it WP6.2 task (leader: NRPA) focuses on local populations with the objective of Investigating the **conditions for the population to build capacities in order to assess its situation** (practical radiation protection culture) and to **adopt appropriate protective behaviours**.

- A work based on 9 case studies in the post-Fukushima and post-Chernobyl (Norway) contexts with a focus on the post-emergency phase

- 2 other tasks in WP6 addressing expert networks and on traditional and social media

What is pertinent, reliable and trustworthy information in emergency and post-emergency context? – The Aarhus Convention perspective

- Aarhus Convention (art. 5.1. c): 'In the event of any imminent threat to human health or the environment, whether caused by human activities or due to natural causes, **all information which could enable the public to take measures to prevent or mitigate harm arising from the threat**',…'**is disseminated immediately** and without delay to members of the public who may be affected'.

- Information refer to
  - understanding (by the public) of the evolution of the accident (& potential risks) along its management
  - capacity of the population & communities to prevent or mitigate harm arising from the threat, individually & collectively

What is pertinent, reliable and trustworthy information in emergency and post-emergency context? – The Aarhus Convention perspective

Operator

Public authorities

Society

Experts (domestic, foreign, institutional, non-institutional)

Traditional media

Social media

Local community

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Local actors confronted to complexity in a post-accident situation (1/2)

- Local populations face the **maximum level of complexity** as their day-to-day life is disrupted. Post-accident situations also question the future of families and the relationships between generations.

- People and families **face the post-accident situation as a whole**: the different economic, environmental, health, social and family issues that arise are not separable. Post-accident situations also strongly question the future of families and the relationships between generations.

- Upper levels of decisions are expected to bring support, information, expertise and means, but **many decisions and actions stay in the hands of local actors**
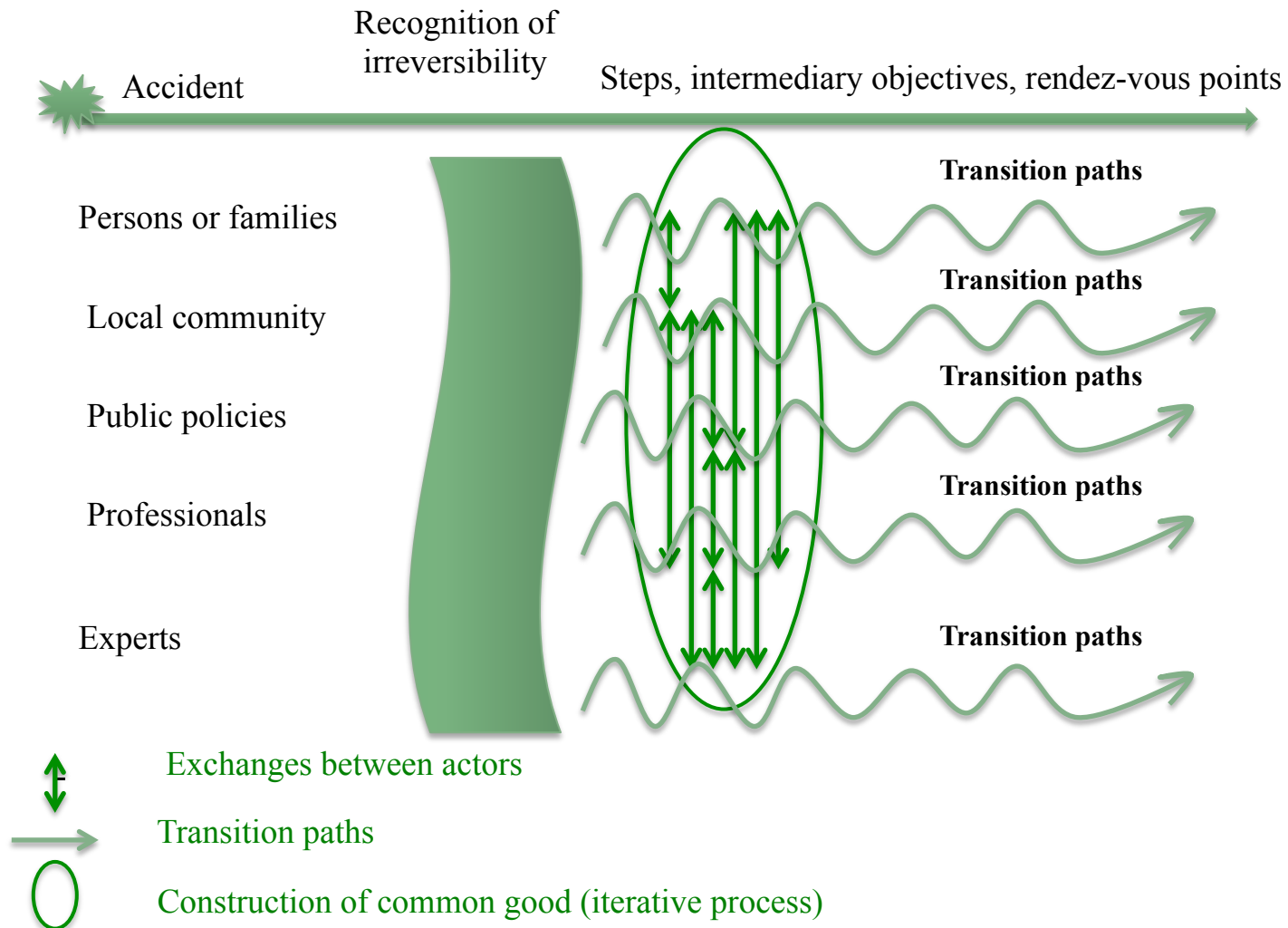
Local actors confronted to complexity in a post-accident situation (2/2)

- In a context in which the spreading of distrust is impeding the emergence of a consistent societal response, local population thus have to recreate the conditions to **access trustworthy and reliable information**, **understand the situation** at the individual and community level and **build relevant action**.

- The **societal dimension** of the local response to a post-accident situation is of key importance. The capacity of local actors to build their response notably depends on their capacity to build new forms of cooperation

- The concept of **project of life** or families and communities is at the core of local concerns. It integrates human and social dimensions beyond the questions of health protection or economical viability, and includes capacities to **regain autonomy and dignity**.

Recovery: a transition process resulting from the interaction of different transition paths (1/3)

- For each actor, and for the whole system of actors, recovery is a **transition process in which individual and social resources for addressing complexity are built**

- The **recovery process is the result of different interacting transition paths** (of each person/family, of the local community, of professional sectors, of local/regional/national/international authorities managing public policies, of experts...)

- These paths are **non-linear** and include an irreducible dimension of experimentation, trial and errors, adaptation…

- In many cases, they include a **phase of recognition of the irreversibility of the situation** and acknowledgement of the necessity to adapt to this situation

Recovery: a transition process resulting from the interaction of different transition paths (2/3)

Recognition of irreversibility

Accident

Steps, intermediary objectives, rendez-vous points

Persons or families

Local community

Public policies

Professionals

Experts

Transition paths

Transition paths

Transition paths

Transition paths

Transition paths

Exchanges between actors

Transition paths

Construction of common good (iterative process)

Recovery: a transition process resulting from the interaction of different transition paths (3/3)

- Transition paths have to be viable (politically, socially, financially, …) at each step

- Transition paths of local actors aim to recreate a global quality of life in which radiation protection is only one dimension among others (e.g. economic, social, cultural dimensions)

Public policies can support or on the contrary hinder the transition paths

- Public policies influence the social cohesion between the concerned actors at different levels (local, national, international)

- The way public policies take into account the values of social cohesion (dignity, truth, honesty, justice, equity, solidarity, democratic culture) impacts the ability of the actors to build individual and collective cohesion paths. For example:
  - Japan: decontamination (authorities) vs. future of the community (local actors)
  - Japan: social damages caused by the evacuation process that divides families and communities and destroys social resources needed for the transition.
  - Norway: a public policy implementing economical solidarity with Sami populations.
  - Norway: Implementation of a double standards system integrating the dignity and meaning issue related to the reindeer herding.

A complex system of information and actions, integrating public policies and emerging processes at different levels

- At the international level:
  - International institutions (IRCP, IAEA, etc.)
  - Foreign public authorities and expertise institutions
  - Foreign non-institutional experts
- At the national level:
  - Authorities prescribing and providing resources
  - Institutional experts (information resources)
  - Non-institutional experts (remote information and interpretation resources)
- At the local level:
  - Individuals and families build their own transition paths
  - Local health and education networks provide information and interpretation resources for individuals and families.
  - Professionals seek viable, dignified & meaningful conditions of production.
  - Local communities can build transition path based on a vision of the future.
  - Authorities decide and can provide resources at the service to transition paths at personal and family levels and also at territorial community level. [11]

A three-step evolution of recovery processes, from managing risks to restoring life

- There is a phasing of post-accident, as the diversity of stakes and the complexity of recovery issues unfold:

  1. Deployment of **public policies aiming to protect the populations**, focussed on health and radiation protection criteria

  2. **Opening of decision-making processes** to citizens & stakeholders engagement to adapt public strategies for rebuilding economically viable, humanly dignified and socially meaningful living conditions

  3. **Transformation of the governance system** in order to take into account the key social nature of he recovery process. Public policies protect citizens but also support citizens & local communities building their own protection & recovery strategies

- A shift of focus **from a concern of reducing risks to a concern of restoring life** (including but not reduced to risk management).

- Recovery process cannot deploy without connection to the issue of **how to avoid being confronted again to similar situation.** 12

How can public policies facilitate societal processes of recovery?

- Public policies based on **standards are not sufficient to address the complexity** of the local situation (in particular social & political issues)

- Public policies should **integrate their impact on social cohesion** (preserve communities and family cohesion in the evacuation process and compensation policy, building solidarity with national community, …)

- Public policy should **prepare the different steps of evolution** from protection of citizens to empowerment of citizens and local communities

- For this, public policies should provide **provide means, material resources, technical capacities, expertise resources, mediation and facilitation capacities** necessary for local recovery processes to develop.

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How can experts facilitate societal processes of recovery?

- Expertise is not unilateral and unique: expertise is at play in a network of experts with a plurality of sources of information and expertise. This **diversity is a resource, not a problem**.

- Through time, the contribution of experts should evolve from providing elements of explanation and recommendations for population protection to a **role of support to local actors building their own choices** in a complex environment

- For local actors and communities, understanding the situation means integrating technical and non-technical issues in their own evaluation. For this, they need **actors in a position of mediation, able to translate, contextualise and give meaning** to technical elements of information in the context of local actors.

- Experts can also support local recovery processes by providing **tools facilitating the visualisation, understanding and discussion of technica**l issues by local groups.