"UNITED WE STAND, DIVIDED WE FALL!"

Empowerment and commitment in the local action

A risk communication program on the governance of an urban termite plague in the Azores

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WE COME FROM...
The Problem
TERMITE PEST
Damages by *Cryptotermes brevis*
What we came to know from research developed by risk assessment...

• The situation has **generalised** to other islands, and is even more serious;

• The infestation **cannot be completely eradicated**;

• The two types of wood typically used in building construction (*Cryptomeria japonica* and *Eucalyptus spp.*) are among the species more consumed by the *C. brevis*;
• Some of the more efficient techniques of mitigation are very difficult to implement in Azores, due to its urban characteristics (e.g. fumigation);

• Specific desinfestations' technology in Azores is giving its first steps and is still very incipient;

• More affected areas are located at the historical city centres, whose buildings are old and its inhabitants are aged, and with low socioeconomic and literacy resources.

VULNERABILITY OF THE LOCAL SOCIOECONOMIC SYSTEM
INCREASE THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE IMPACT OF THE PEST
Who has been the “guilty one”?

- City council complains:
  - Low public participation;
  - ‘They don’t ask for help’ (few number of inspections requested);

- Researchers complains and attributions:
  - “They are ignorant and don’t care!”

new research was needed…

“How do citizens see the problem?”

TERMIPAR PROJECT

“Citizen Participation in the Control of Termite Infestation in the Azores”
- Impossible to be eradicated but could and should be controlled;

- “Nobody listens to us”: (government and citizens).

- It’s a private problem and should be controlled by citizens;

- The problem is ‘pushed’ from one entity to the other (i.e. the Government vs. the city government)

RESULTS

RISK CONTROLABILITY AND MANAGEMENT

Uncontrollable due to:
- Powerlessness:
  - Lack of economic resources;
  - Feel abandoned by authorities;
- No assumption of responsibilities from the Government: ‘If they don’t act, why should we?’
Trust on the Risk Governance

- Decision makers: don’t show the political will to manage the problem;
- Citizens: ‘Ignorant, passive, and careless’.

Researchers: Doubtful of the researchers risk ‘scenario’:
- They exaggerate: anticipated worse social impacts than they end up being
- Citizens:
  - Lack of interest and public participation
  - Counting on… a “paternalistic state”

Researchers: trustworthy in risk assessment
- Decision Makers:
  - Are deceptive for promising what they don’t accomplish!
  - Only act when there’s no way out.
arguments for not participating:

**UNCONTROLLABILITY**

**OF THE PEST**

- invisibility: *When you see it, it’s too late!*
- impossible to eradicate according to international experience.

**OF THE MANAGEMENT**

- efficient technical solutions non existent;
- financial support non existent;
- government management non existent;
- misbelieve on the stakeholders joint effort.

Why should I if there’s no worth...
...I cannot do it by myself...
CONFLICT OF INTERESTS AND LACK OF MUTUAL TRUST

Researchers

We must control it now!

Technicians

“Why should I, if... it’s uncontrollable?”

Decision makers

“This is a private problem”

Citizens
The Risk Communication Program

"UNITED WE STAND, DIVIDED WE FALL!"

Priority: Promote a Governance System

Stakeholders engagement on pest control
OUR PRINCIPLES

• There is no quality risk governance without all parts involved

• Risk governance is above all a two-way communication process

• Risk communication, through mediation, intends to empower stakeholders by building progressive authonomy
STRATEGIC GOALS

- Share responsibilities by compromising:
  - City & Regional Governants: Financial and logistic support
  - Researchers: Knowledge expertise
  - Technicians: Technical competence and professional proactive behaviour (on pest identification and peoples’ guidance)
  - Citizens: Practice control measures on their own homes

- Build commum trust

- Consolidate the social consciousness on the pest

- Involve the different stakeholders
COMMUNICATION DEVICES

T8 SUMMIT MEETING

COMICS

SPOT TV + RADIO

MAGNETS & TRAPS

T- SQUAD

OUTDOORS

TRAINING IN PROFISSIONAL CONTEXT

T- PARADE
CONCEPT

- **Content**
  Show how citizens can participate in the control of the pest with a simple but effective action

- **Form**
  Trough direct mail, citizens receive a trap with an instructions’ magnet
T- SQUAD

CONCEPT

- Content
Need help?
You are not alone. You can count on us! (local government)

- Form
Door-to-door counseling by young students on how to do-it-yourself
OUTDOORS

CONCEPT

- Content
  Be ware!
  Protect yourself!
  Together we can do it!

- Form
  Vernacular language by using rimes and proverbs to transmit scientific concepts and concerns
CONCEPT

- **Content**
  Let’s take control of the situation, by implementing an effective risk governance system and rebuild the lost public trust.

- **Form**
  Dialogue between researchers, local government and risk communicators to negotiate commitment
## ONGOING RESEARCH: Regulation & Impacts Assessment

### COMMUNICATIONAL STRATEGIC PLAN

**ANALYSE RESOURCES EFFICACY** (Internal & External) (Before) - Comics; Spots

**IMPACTS EVALUATION** (diagnostic, control & reconstruction)

**COMPARATIVE STUDY ON PARTICIPATION STRATEGIES** – Low/Hight

### OUTCOMES

#### SHORT TIME

- Rememberance
- Atractibility
- Credibility
- Intention to Act
- Critics Review
- Prevalence increase (more people asking for help)
- Participation index in traps monitoring

#### MEDIUM- LONG

- Incidence decrease (less people asking for help)
ACTUAL BALANCE....

• CONQUESTS
  – Change in the local government’s attitude towards the problem (from a private to a public one);
  – First step on the building of a common platform for dialogue;
  – Successfull financial negociation of the Program.

• CRITICAL ISSUES
  – How to reach, select or approach the citizens, if they are not formaly represented?
  – Will we manage to engage stakeholders with a positive strategy of communication, when” the state of the art” tell us not to?

• DEVELOPMENTS
  – Urging need to expand the initiatives of the Program, when faced with the fact of a lack of technical expertise reported by governants.
  – Facilitate, mediate and analyse, from a researcher’s point-a-view the foundation of a formal association of inhabitants, in order for them “to be heard.
  – To design and test the implementation of a termite help pilot cabinet.
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Thank you for your attention