

Managing New Media Communication in Risk Society:

A Case Study on China

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The role of modern media, in particular new media, based on digital and network technologies in the diffusion of risk information, is a critical research agenda for the sociology of risk. Risk information transfer can help manage risks, but it can also exacerbate or create new risks. Therefore, there is a question of how to best manage risk information and “information risk”.

From both a macro and micro perspectives, the paper investigates the relationship among the public, government and media in the environment created by the new media. Using data from several cases of crisis in China in recent years, such as the SARS Crisis, Snowstorm, Wenchuan Earthquake, Sanlu Infant Milk Powder Event, the Sichuan Guangyuan Orange Maggots Event, the Weng’an Riot, the paper does content analysis on some specific internet sites, and then concentrates on the challenges and opportunities that new media bring about, and on the check and balance among the public, government and media as well.

Finally, the paper provides concrete suggestions for existing problems in the risk communication in China in order for the public, government and media to reestablish the three-way relationship between these actors. The paper also points out that in the process of the relationship reconstruction, the public and media are not passive and negative, whereas they can improve the reform of government and the transition of social systems.

Key words: risk society, new media, management, public, government

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