Key Points from the Research

This project has organised 3 international conferences and 5 sessions at conferences of other organisations; 3 presentation seminars and 2 methodological workshops to promote the work of the network for academics and for broader communities. It has established new permanent risk research groups as part of the International Sociological Association and European Sociological Association. It also published books and articles designed to draw work together across different disciplinary backgrounds and advance understanding of risk:

- Recent developments in social science approaches to risk provide opportunities for cross-fertilisation. Psychology and social psychology increasingly address the cultural and social factors in understanding risk that were at one time the domain of sociology. At the same time, sociological theorizing has paid more attention to individualist and to some extent realist accounts more typically associated with psychology.

- A rapid growth of interest in the non-rational and pre-rational prerequisites of action among economists, psychologists and sociologists. This has influenced the understanding of risk and risk-responses. While sociology becomes more engaged in questions of how uncertainties can be managed when methods of probabilistic calculation meet their limits, decision-making research in psychology and economics increasingly acknowledges the ‘rationality’ of non-rational aspects of action.

- All these approaches highlight affect and emotion. Trust is widely acknowledged as central to the social management of risks and uncertainties when rational control and knowledge are limited, but the emotional and value-based aspects of trust often receive less attention than the rational aspects. Both rational and the emotional sides of trust are important in understanding public and individual understandings of and responses to risk.

- New research on trust and emotions on both national and international levels:
  - Institutional Trust and Health Care Reform, ESRC, 2007-8, £98,000.
  - Testing the ‘Risk Society’ Hypothesis’ ESRC (with Andreas Cebulla) 2006-7, £84,000.
  - Sustainable Welfare and Sustainable Growth, Anglo-German Foundation, 2006-9, £150,000.
  - Soldiers’ and Veterans’ Management of Risk and Uncertainty, (British Academy, 2007-8, £6465.
  - Emotion and Decision-Making in Finance, (with Jocelyn Pixley, University

Further research continues.


