

## **Public Concerns and Decision Process in Brazil**

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After 70's, concepts as sustainable development, environmental equity, and quality of life become essential in public policies. Nowadays, more information about hazards have been required by the public and the acceptance of risks associated with new technologies and substances have declined. The way people perceive and judge different hazards engender reactions that may not be understood just by the analyses of technical characteristics of the hazard. Even minor accidents involving technologies or activities with high risk perception give rise to strong reactions from the public, and consequently, to serious socioeconomic impacts.

The environmental management process has being forced to incorporate public values together with economic and scientific dimensions. Today, there is agreement among those committed with risk management that public participation in decision process is essential to the success of a new project. However, different countries have developed different ways to permit and facilitate public participation: stimulating the creation of communities groups or institutions, such as foundations, that discuss and suggest solutions to local problems, promoting public debates about controversial projects, and providing technical and political information about the subjects of public concern. In Brazil, some of these solutions have being implemented with partial success. This paper discuss briefly the Brazilian experience on public participation in decision process.

Results of risk perception research performed in Brazil are presented and the possibility of defining risk indicators based on public perception and acceptance of risks is discussed. Finally, the contribution of the public opinion to the environmental decision process in our country is examined.