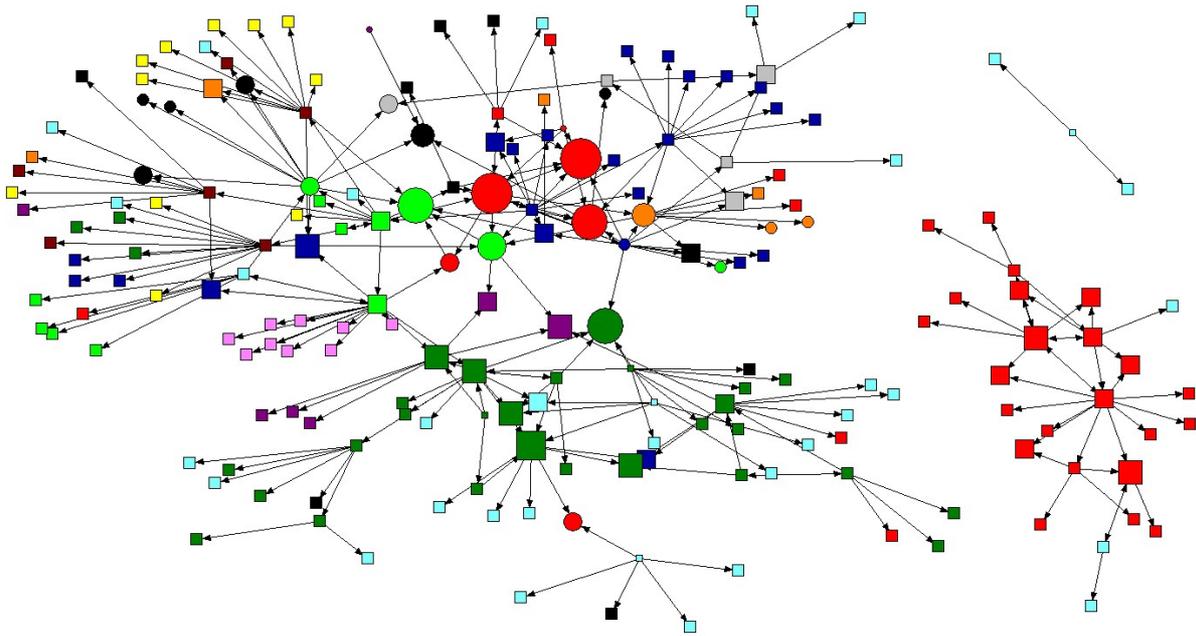


Is there room for order in the response to a flood event?

Your life, property and belongings are at stake in case a flood hits the place where you live. And even though there are some things you can do to protect yourself, your safety ultimately depends on the work of the people managing the flood. We have described the actual collaboration between the flood managers when dealing with a flood striking England, and in this case – Suffolk, in 2013. Was the work of the people active in the flood response anything like the plans they had set up for themselves? Keep reading to find out.



Social network graph showing the flow of communication in the 2013 flood.

When finding out whether the management of the 2013 flood in Suffolk was successful or not, we have described what the response to the 2013 flood looked like in practice, which we refer to as the “actual response”. We have also been looking at *flood/emergency plans* which we here refer to as the “intended response”. Many agencies and authorities have plans which describe how they should deal with different risks. The plans that were important for us to look at, were flood plans and emergency plans in general.

The figure above is called a “Social network graph” and shows the communication flow among the people that were active in the 2013 flood response. Despite looking messy, it can actually tell us a few things about the flood response to the flood that struck in 2013. For example, we found out that the actual response corresponded quite well with the response plans in terms of hierarchal structure. Evidence of a hierarchal structure was especially seen for members in a group called the Strategic Coordination Group. This group stand for the main decisions taken in the event of a crisis. These people are represented as circles in the figure above. One can see that they more or less are positioned in the centre of the figure, which means they supposedly had a central role during the actual event as well.

However, there were also some differences when comparing the actual response and the intended response. During the course of the work, the people that were active during the event were asked questions about whether they found their response similar to the intended response. Some actors expressed that there was a lack of communication between the regional and local organisations and/or authorities. Some, further, stated that the plans they had was poor or non-existent which led to an impulsive response.

But why all this talk about the different actors' responses to the flood, is this really that important? The answer to this question is: YES! Now, maybe, more than ever. The risk of flooding is constantly increasing due to climate changes combined with the fact that cities grow and become more packed with vulnerable things such as: people, schools, hospitals, buildings and, so on. To keep so many important things protected, there is a need for good management of floods.

Our work is as said focusing on the immediate response to a flood, and not the prevention or recovery of it. This is because of the fact that that response measures many times are forgotten since they are costlier to focus on, in relation to for example, measures of prevention. However, it is certain that floods will continue to strike Europe and pose a threat to the people living here. Therefore, we cannot afford not to focus on response measures such as improving the collaboration between people working with keeping residents safe and protected during the incident of a flood.

Finally, we hope that our work has resulted in a report that will provide valuable input to further research and to people that are interested in, or working with, emergency response.