

Floods in the Po river basin in the 19th century: a history of land management and risk communication in post-unitary Italy

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The paper deals with the history of water-related disasters in the Italian north-east area, where the major river of the country - the Po - has its delta. It focuses on how the management of the territory was organised in post-unitary Italy, the role of the technicians in this organization, and what was, if any, the communication of related risks to the population. In particular, the paper focuses on some major events in this history, which are the floods that hit the lower basin of the Po in the latter part of the 19th century, and discusses the controversies that developed about the causes of the disaster, the responsibilities of the actors involved in the management of the territory, including technical experts, and the measures to prevent and mitigate future risks for the population. The topic of the paper thus intersects environmental history, the history of natural risks and the history of expertise and scientific communication.