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**The genericness of risk: exploring the trans-domain
application of risk assessment**

David Demortain, Centre for Analysis of Risk and Regulation/LSE

Abstract

This paper studies the standardisation of risk assessment. It looks at the apparent “diffusion” of the framework for risk analysis of the US National Research Council (NRC 1983), from the domain of chemical safety and cancer risks, to microbiological and genetically modified food safety. The paper questions whether this should be analysed as a simple re-labelling of existing practices of safety evaluation that existed prior to the model of risk analysis in these different “zones” (Galison 1996 and 1997) or to the actual generalisation of certain practices of risk assessment. It argues that both of these dynamics take place at the same time and engender one another. The model is seized by specialists to re-label and re-legitimise their practices, but also leads to the identification of the limits of these practices. It eventually turns these into the producers of generic risk assessment practices. The paper thus argues that risk assessment is a language that turns zones into “hubs” that evolve together.