

2.1 INTRODUCTION

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This Working Paper represents the output of the second stage of the VREF Smaller Project on the study of the treatment of risk, uncertainty and complexity (RUC) in planning. It is the second of a series of four Working Papers. It brings together nine commissioned papers from leading academics and practitioners in selected disciplines, professions and sectors that have *routinely* dealt with issues of risk, uncertainty, and complexity in such exercises. The purpose of commissioning these contributions is to explore and review different perceptions of the treatment of RUC in a variety of contexts/areas of specialisation where these concepts have *long-time* been placed at the core of their planning endeavours. We especially explore the parameters of context, and the characteristics of the contexts described and from this, seek to identify both generic and context-specific lessons that may be of value to planning exercises for mega urban transport projects (MUTPs); the focus of the VREF Centre of Excellence research programme conducted by the OMEGA Centre at UCL.

The contributions include papers drawn from: war studies, earthquake engineering, banking, insurance, pest control in agriculture, medicine and public health and knowledge management, supplemented by two more orthogonal topics - trust and organisational competence in the corporate world. This set of papers is a deliberately eclectic mix. The papers are presented in a sequence that can be argued to move from 'hard' perceptions of risk, uncertainty and complexity to 'softer' perceptions. We do not, however, see these contributions in any way as being representative of the field overall. We simply have selected a number of carefully selected papers that dip into the vast subject area of the treatment of RUC in order to be able to offer an insight into the variety of selected approaches and experience that is out there. This Working Paper is then a consciously speculative and exploratory exercise. Our underlying premise in putting the contributions together is that there are generic lessons we can learn from the treatment of RUC by decision makers outside transportation infrastructure planning and spatial planning that can potentially be applied to MUTP planning and policy-making.

In the concluding contribution (Section 2.11) we synthesise the findings of the group of papers to inform Working Paper #4 of what we consider to be generic and context-specific lessons of potential value for future MUTPs. These lessons we anticipate will compliment the conclusions derived from the review of six additional commissioned papers (featured in Section 3.8 of Working Paper #3) relating to the treatment of RUC in the fields of city development, strategic urban and regional planning, transport planning and policy-making, mega project planning, project management and property development.

Both sets of papers reinforce the conclusions of Working Paper #1 which highlighted the critical importance of context in decision-making and the necessity for wide variations of the treatment of RUC by different contexts. If, as we maintain, context is all-important then we might expect to see both similarities and differences across the board, depending on the characteristics of each context. This premise is tested in Working Paper #4.