

Thomas MESZAROS, Clément, MORIER, “Crisis management lessons from modelling”, in Nathalie SCHIFFINO, Laurent TASKIN, Céline DONIS, Julien RAONE (eds.), *Organizing after Crisis The Challenge of Learning*, Peter Lang, Public Action vol. 13, 2015, p.75-106.

Summary of Thomas MESZAROS and Clément MORIER contribution:

Stock market crashes, air disasters, trains derailing, cruise ships and tankers sinking, terrorist attacks, communication network sabotage, floods, pandemics, pollution, tsunamis and nuclear accidents are all situations considered, sometimes a little too quickly, to be “crises”, whether economic, financial, environmental, humanitarian, political, security or military. The multiple meanings of this word do not give us much information about its substance. Its overuse does, however, show that we are living in a new (reflexive) modernity in which risk is constantly present (Beck, 2001). This new factor can be explained by the transformation in our lifestyle, and means of communication and production which have turned our societies into “risk producers” (Beck, 2001, p.11). As our global environment becomes more and more complex, our societies are confronted with growing uncertainty and are becoming increasingly vulnerable (Boin, Hart, 2008). Handling these critical emergency situations is now a priority for both public and private decision-makers, who, faced with worldwide media coverage of events, are often left feeling helpless, because they do not have the tools they need to manage them. How can this need be met? How can we learn from previous crises, train decision-makers and predict the adaptive capability of organizations placed in these crisis situations? It is the hypothesis of this paper that crisis models are one of the most effective tools available for training decision-makers. They make it possible to understand and even explain crisis dynamics. There are two main tendencies in crisis modeling. The first is based on a “discontinuity hypothesis” (Brecher, Wilkenfeld, 2000; Dufour, 2004). This is the standard approach to crises which breaks them down into different phases, based on external observations made a posteriori (I). Conversely, the second is based on a “continuity hypothesis” (Dobry, 1986, Thom, 1974; Viret, 1994). This less common approach is much more interested in what is happening inside the crisis (II). These different modeling options - standard, sociological or morphological – are not necessarily mutually exclusive. They allow recommendations to be made and lessons to be learnt which help to develop training to improve crisis management methods and techniques. Such initiatives are necessary. They meet a strong demand and as they have gradually started to emerge, they are having more and more influence on public policy.

Summary of the book :

How do actors organize after crisis? Do they «simply» return to normal? The post-crisis phase is anything but a linear process. Actors and their practices may be transformed by learning from crises and by implementing the lessons. In this volume, 19 contributors from 7 countries analyse how learning happens after crisis in a dynamic political environment where framings, strategies, discourses, interests and resources interact. Exploring various policy sectors, they ask whether and in what ways organizations in charge of crisis management perform well. Where political responsibility is located? What changes do lessons trigger at political, organizational and individual levels? The book answers these questions by addressing issues like blame and

responsibility but also the influence of communication, social dynamics and the institutional environment.

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