

Crisis: Conceptual reflections

Research retreat 1/3

Time: 13:30 on Wednesday November 29th to 13:30 on Thursday November 30th 2023

Venue: Liefmannhaus, Goethestrasse 33, 79110 Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany

Perpetual crisis or continual risk?

Theory at the intersection of multiple extremes

With a view to the perpetual nature of 21st century crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic and accelerating extreme weather events, we bring together a group of researchers to explore to what extent existing definitions of 'crisis' and 'risk' hold true.

Hitherto, crisis theory (alongside research on disasters, emergencies, and catastrophes) has developed somewhat isolated from risk theory, with each revolving around fairly separate scholars and approaches. In this workshop, we aim to not only put the existing concepts of crisis and risk to the test, but also deepen the conversation between the different strands. 'Crisis' classically refers to a moment of decision-making under conditions of threat, urgency, and uncertainty. Exceptional in nature, the situation requires 'management' somewhat confined in time and space. Current crises, however, are hallmarked by muddled origins, overlapping and cascading dynamics, pivotal effects, and longevity far beyond the proverbial ripples. 'Risk', as in the uncertain amount of injury to something of human value, transcends from an unpredictable future to a constant present. The exceptional – to the extent of existential harm, is becoming increasingly normal. Terms and concepts formerly seen as mutually exclusive have thereby started to fuse. Are the current conceptions of risk, or crisis, or the difference between them, up for review?

The aim of the research retreat is to inspire further reflections and motivate subsequent publications on this topic. Our theoretical perspective is anchored in sociology and the social sciences. This retreat is the first in a series of three called "Crisis: conceptual reflections", intended to motivate contributions to a special issue of the peer-reviewed European Journal for Security Research (Springer) and initiate proposal ideas with a view to external funding.

The research retreat is structured into the following four sessions:

- Session 1:* ***Taking inventory:*** Theoretical reflections on the hallmarks of 21st century crises – does existing crisis management theory still apply?
Introductory comments by invited participants followed by discussion
Moderator: Kristin S. Scharffscher (UiS/CSS)
- Session 2:* ***Comparing concepts:*** If 21st century crises entail constant uncertainty about the consequences for things that humans value and even humanity itself, how do we theoretically distinguish between risk and crisis?
Introductory comments by invited participants followed by discussion
Moderator: Frederic E. Boudier (UiS)
- Session 3:* ***Deepening conversation:*** Discussion to follow up on yesterday's questions: Where do we as researchers find common ground and where do we have different approaches?

Introductory comments by invited participants followed by discussion
Moderator: Markus Hällgren (USBE)

Session 4: Creating outcome: We make a list of key discussion outcomes (on an online whiteboard) to inspire publications for a special issue of the European Journal for Security Research (Springer), and draft project ideas with a view to attracting external funding.
Moderator: Tjorven Harmsen (CSS)

Programme

Wednesday November 29th

13:30 – 14:00	Arrival and snack buffet
14:00 – 14:30	Welcome and introductions
14:30 – 16:00	<i>Taking inventory</i> - Session 1
16:00 – 16:30	Pause
16:30 – 18:00	<i>Comparing concepts</i> - Session 2
19:00 – 19:30	Glühwein at Christmas market stand 116, Schiffstraße
19:30	Dinner at Zum Deutschen Haus, Schusterstraße 40

Thursday November 30th

09:00 – 10:45	<i>Deepening conversation</i> - Session 3
10:45 – 11:15	Pause
11:15 – 12:45	<i>Creating outcomes</i> - Session 4
12:45 – 13:30	Lunch and farewell

Organisers:

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