

ASSESSING THE CORRELATION OF CRISIS MANAGEMENT STUDIES AND SMALL STATES STUDIES: A LITERATURE REVIEW OF WEB OF SCIENCE DATABASE

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Abstract The contemporary global area is under constant upheaval also due to the occurring risks and crisis oscillating from natural, economic and humanitarian issues. Within this framework, risk and crisis management require effective solutions, but the scope of the latter is questionable, when it comes to specific questions such as correlation of the crisis management research and the state size. Paper contributes to the crisis management research, with the specific aim to assess the development of small states research within the crisis management research. A literature review of the Web of Science Core Collection database will be used as a source for answering the following research questions: (1) the development of crisis management research, and (2) the correlation of crisis management studies and small states studies. The results will show how small states studies are integrated within crisis management research, and give an insight for future research endeavours.

Keywords:

crisis management,
public
administration,
small states,
literature review.

1 Introduction

Studies of crisis date back to 1980s' and up to this date, they have developed some sort of theory framework that can be used to explain more and more often occurring acute situations. While there is a clear rise of crisis management studies and they do go into phases details and policy making recommendations, we might still be missing the synthesis for some specific country clusters. Our particular interest is whether crisis management is correlated with the state size. Some preliminary researches on the European migration crisis case showed presence of limitations within the crisis management cycle on the national level which lack resources connected to its smallness (Rijavec & Pevcin, 2018), others showed the correlation between the performance of the national bureaucracy and the state size (Jugl, 2018).

Small state studies are advocating that some countries might be more vulnerable to crises on the one hand or have limited capacities for preparing a proper crisis management strategy on the other. Despite the assumptions of entities' equivalence, studies show that small states are more vulnerable when integrating into the global sphere due to the lack of resources and capabilities (Thorhallsson, 2006), which has a clear aftereffect especially in solving the transboundary crises. The smallness can be deeply discussed and is usually agreed upon being a relative concept (Sarapuu, 2010), it can be an advantage or a disadvantage.

Given the possibility of the absence of supportive research, the empirical evolution of small state studies might be lacking some important insights on how to mitigate a crisis with an after effect on decision-making and other crisis management cycle phases. To support our interest a literature review of the Web of Science Core Collection database will be performed with the intention of answering the following research questions: (1) the development of crisis management research, and (2) the relations between crisis management studies and small states studies. The literature review provides comprehensive reviews of existing results and findings related to crisis management topic in the field of public administration and is a novel as it represents the first structured overview of the existing studies combining many sections of crisis management and an elaboration of the correlation with small state studies.

2 Methodology

To support our interest a literature review of the Web of Science Core Collection database will be performed with the intention of answering the above stated two main research questions. We specifically consider only one database, given its international recognition, time span coverage, and by assuming that similar databases actually tend to overlap with the referenced one. The literature review provides comprehensive reviews of existing results and findings related to crisis management topic in the field of public administration and is a novel as it represents the first structured overview of the existing studies combining crisis management and small state studies.

The database collection of Crisis Management studies was further limited with Public Administration category by using Web of Science Categories and chronologically with the timespan from 1990 to 2018. Such scope lead to the sample of 260 articles, out of which only 89 were fully available to us. Such narrow result was the cause of our limited online library access of the University of Ljubljana, limitations of some databases within Web of Sciences database, unavailable conference proceedings and similar. Furthermore, out of 89, this literature review actually considered 40 past contributions. Narrowing was the result of evaluation of existing contributions down to relevant ones with a focus on public governance within crisis management phases. Dominating principles were relatively easy grouped in segments and by synthesising its main study clusters and findings, we will be framing promising venues of the further research. The main starting point of understanding the governments' response to crises are the notion of bureaucratic coordination. It has been suggested by the previous studies, that resilience may provide an appropriate answer to crisis management adaptations, while the central bureaucracy remaining rather inflexible. Consequently, the results and discussion part contains the summarization of the performed literature review which is segmented into six clusters. First, we present the content analysis of relevant papers on the general framework of crisis management. Second, we move towards elaborating how contemporary crisis are becoming more complex and transboundary ones. Based on the it there is a present need of networking and the third section will present some structures on it. Moreover, the following two subsections will focus on possible barriers and the learning process. Lastly, the final

subsection will elaborate literature on capacity and resilience, as it is believed to be a solution to crises.

3 Results

Core public administration studies long haven't included crisis into their consideration. Weber's idea of public administration is still heavily present within Europe, namely giving precedence to structure over process, to bureaucracy over adhocracy, and to change within the system over systematic change. Although the interest in administrative reforms is present with an old tradition, we were lacking the gap coverage of crisis pressure within the field of public administration. The latter is luckily diminishing (Rosenthal, 2003).

Crisis management is an operation of citizens' safety, threats to their main values and societal infrastructures. That being a fundamental governmental function, such operation requires political and administrative leadership (Boin & Smith, 2006).

There are some present confusions of the crisis management definition. Hence as a starting point, it is important to note that crisis management is not equal to emergency management in public sector, it comes unexpected or unanticipated by the stakeholders, organizations or institutions and it is a special type of change management, where there are four changes usually present within the cycle: reengineering, transformation, ad hoc processes and changing the existing organization culture. It is problem solving oriented (Van Wart & Kapucu, 2011) process, of which identity changes over time and it the constant crisis elaboration is crucial. There were cases in the past when a new crisis emerged after the actual crisis. Additionally, the trends of crisis have swift. Due to present globalisation, highly transnational scope, leaning on political terms and gaining high media coverage, the crises emerging are ordinarily large-scaled crisis, where many stakeholders are included in decision-making processes calling for prompt and decisive action (Rosenthal, 2003; Fleischer, 2013). Due to substantial scale of crisis management, we usually group its activities into four phases of crisis management cycle: prevention, preparation, response, recovery (Drennan & McConnell 2007).

Regardless of new unique trends and maxis in crisis, incomparable to any before (Rosenthal, 2003), there are studies advocating that crises are still pretty much going

beyond the specifics of time and place, method and scale or looking specifically to the challenges invoking to the community and decision-makers. Thus, a possible methodology of coping with crisis is examining the past, namely following three mechanisms: (1) modes of examining (intentional or spontaneous), (2) modes of utilising (cognitive or political), and (3) actual effects on policy process outcomes (constraining or enabling) (Brandstrom, Bynander & 't Hart, 2004). Lessons learned and knowledge obtained from past crises examinations can have positive influence on successful contingency planning in the pre-crisis stage, which is a necessity for the authorities for their crisis anticipation and prior allocation of resources, stakeholders, tasks and responsibilities. Even though a successful contingency plan is assumed to maximise the likelihood of successful crisis management outcome, we must distinguish the two. The actual outcome is conditioned with further disturbances that cannot be predicted at the pre-crisis stage, such as nature of the crisis, leadership and stressed decision-making, organizational setting and structure, citizens, volunteers and extra-governmental organizations and external power. Rather than strictly following the contingency plan, the decision-makers must leave room for manoeuvre and shape the crisis management outcome with ad hoc responses (Eriksson & McConnell, 2011).

The complexity of contemporary crises have to be included in this discourse. The crises and their dynamics have changed over the past years and have become much more complex. Their complexity tends to come along with significant number of interactions and consequently unplanned flows of information within unlike governing units (Zahariadis, 2012). Furthermore, contemporary crises are not only complex in a sense of big data (Giest, 2017), they are turning into transboundary ones. Namely, we are facing a parallel threat of numerous vital systems of which the redress rest unclear (Boin, 2009). Although the general direction of crisis solving leads to centralization, which is a clearness and authority giving option on the first sight, but in practice creates weak and delayed processes and often criticism (Zahariadis, 2013). Studies have confirmed that decentralised structures have given more room for new formal policies and structures, while centralised structures rely on individual cognitive structures (Deverell & Olsson, 2009). Transboundary crises require international cooperation and can be seen through the lenses of collective actions of building "international public good" (Rhinar, 2009), steering decision-making structure autonomously beyond state entities. Such metagovernance (Stark, Alastair, 2015) can ensure common crisis management capacities also across national

systems, however, it is a tough and long-lasting process, where leaders should acknowledge the importance of inclusive workflow with the intention of producing transnational public goods. To understand and support such workflow, the traditional explanation of cooperation difficulties is inadequate (Rhinard, 2009).

Instead we need to move towards strategic redesigning the structures and venues of such cooperation. Understanding the model of multi-level governance can support the idea, which explains the changing relationship and involvement of actors at different governing levels, where decision-making processes are moving away from the central level (to supranational and to subnational level) (Nohrstedt, 2018) and should bust equivalent and interdependent network of actors based on a transparent dialogue on which external factors and differences in space generally do not influence. Due to differences in integration of the model, more varieties of model exist, yet, the usage of it can be questionable (Rijavec & Pevcin, 2018). Notwithstanding, number of stakeholders influence the goal attainment (Nohrstedt, 2018) within decentralised, network model that fragmented crisis policy structures are based on and require further studies to build capacity. The European Union is an example of such structure and the shortcomings of it call for lead-agency model elements, which could build a suitable hybrid model for EU (Boin, Busuioic & Groenleer, 2014; Delreux & Keukeleire, 2017; Steinebach & Knill, 2017; Stephenson, 2013).

Furthermore, in addition to the urgency of vertical cooperation, we must acknowledge horizontal one as well. Namely, considering the network coordination across different sectors. Studies have shown that the probability of large public entities taking more active role is high in the cross-sectoral cooperation network. Also, the higher number of included entities the higher the chance of improved network coordination (Nolte, Martin & Boenigk, 2012). Such studies are calling for more inclusive crisis management mechanisms. An important role in such crisis management is given also to public, non-for-profit and volunteering organizations where especially their partnership with governmental actors are vital for the outcome promptness. The dynamics of it is marked with the importance of communication, trust, and experience (Nolte & Boenigk, 2011). Moreover, the system must guarantee the possibility of inclusiveness also on the side of other stakeholders, such as citizens, civil servant, cities (Persson, Parker & Widmalm, 2017; Noordegraaf & Newman, 2011; Nohrstedt, 2018) and others.

Moreover, the literature recognizes the existence of severe barriers¹ to the learning process in all of crisis management phases and at all levels (individual, organizational and institutional), linked with leadership style, knowledge and experience, interactions, managerial culture and tradition, political pressure and similar (Schiffino, Taskin, Donis, et al, 2017). Furthermore, in the later phase, isolating decision-making process from the situational pressures, such as lack of capacity, knowledge and experiences, rigidity escalating from information hygiene and the risk of focus narrowing, time limitations, the urgency of learning and operating beyond the ordinary situations in an interorganizational network, risk of unappropriated transferring old knowledge to new learning. Moreover, due to political games and leaders' opportunism, there might be risks arising from their leadership challenges mentioned in the previous paragraph (Moynihan, 2008). Notwithstanding, clear task division and perception together with coordination of inclusive decision-making and stable interpersonal relations amount to the mechanism for overcoming the barriers (Nohrstedt, 2018).

Regardless acknowledging the barriers, there are still explanatory propositions about crisis-induced institutional learning worth considering. As there are different types of crises, some can lead to higher fear and higher risk of overreactions. A good example are crises scrutinising security frameworks, like terrorist attacks or large-scale natural disasters. Also, new forms of crises that cannot be linked with normal institutional learning from the past, tend to have easier major policy change and when the public and political pressure is lower, the crisis management have more manoeuvre room for reflective policy change ('t Hart, 2013).

In the emergency learning process, we must acknowledge the role of structure and then apply the solutions carefully with the respect to tensions between exploration of new knowledge and exploitation of old one.

Previous studies² suggest solutions such as careful identification of which pre-knowledge is useful to apply within the pre-set inclusive network members with suitable skills, careful identification of required learning processes with respect of those which are better to be left to specialists, develop up-to-date monitoring and

¹ For further elaboration of barriers to effective learning during crisis see the case study and the generalised conclusions of Moynihan (2008).

² See Moynihan (2008).

controlling system, especially for the upgoing learning process (Moynihan, 2008). In such processes, centralization and openness appear to be warmly welcome principles, however, they do bring forward defining new modus operandi, which can generate additional tensions (Schiffino, Taskin, Donis, et al, 2017; Zhang, Welch & Miao, 2018). Sadly, we cannot generate and apply solutions from the past, at least not holistically, as multiple risk of mistaken lessons exists (Moynihan, 2008). We must examine national differences (Baekkeskov, 2016; Christensen, Danielsen, Laegreid, Per, et al., 2016) and turn more to entrepreneurial logic of learning (Schiffino, Taskin, Donis et al, 2017). Increased openness has more impact and is positively associated with organizational adaptation, where risk perception mediates the exposure effect and changed behaviour impact and the institutional capacity can support the whole model of adaptation and impact (Zhang, Welch & Miao, 2018). Highlighted recommendations remain tough nut for public administration. The shift from routine workflow to flexible, open and inclusive one requires an adaptive way of thinking combined with skills and knowledge seeking attitude (Farazmand, 2007; Persson, Parker & Widmalm, 2017; Christensen, Fimreite & Laegreid, 2011).

Given the knowledge of crisis management, the success variation between cases is believed to be in the capacity of absorbing an upgoing crisis with parallel high performance of daily operations. Both require attention and bring tensions to the front. In one hand, the crisis management is used in acute and perhaps rare situations, its operations call for different training, preparation, facilitation, leadership, etc. In the other, daily operations must be highly performed in an interrupted manner (Boin & van Eeten, 2013). Hence crisis management should be adaptable, however, the central bureaucracy tends to remain rather inflexible (Stark, 2014). Furthermore, resilience is considered being an answer to crisis management, where studies show that it demands a distinction between anticipation and attempt-learning for an organization to be resilient (Boin & van Eeten, 2013). Notwithstanding, two pivotal bureaucratic values effect resilience – steering for efficiency and rationality and it is up to the innovation of stakeholders themselves, rather than up to the system, to boost parallel environment of efficiency and flexibility and bring innovative crisis management to the front (Stark, 2014; Stark, 2011). There seem to exist a relation between organizational characteristics, processes and resilience. The latter is conditioned by capacity, which must be structured in a way that various modus operandi coexist. In line with increased risks, discussions on resilience should boost more studies on relation between

organizational characteristics, processes and resilience (Boin & van Eeten, 2013). Nevertheless, throughout the crisis management cycle and designing its robustness (Howlett, Capano & Ramesh, 2018), we need to consider the limitations linked with legislatures (Stark, 2011). In order to evaluate the successfulness of a crisis management there are some framework and metrics suggested (Schulman & Roe, 2011; McConnell, 2011).

4 Conclusion

Throughout years societies were confronted with different risks and crises. The latter were evolutionally changing, due to the shift of systems and globalisation, which were affecting the complexity and demanding a new form of crisis management. Studies of crises differentiate quite a lot in a sense of their focus. This literature review used the Web of Science Core Collection database with the specific intention of answering the following research questions: (1) the development of crisis management research, and (2) the relations between crisis management studies and small states studies.

The first research question gave some optimistic answers. It appears that the literature on crisis management in public administration indeed substantially moved forward, covering the framework crises and different types of them, their complexity, importance of networking, importance of leadership, importance of learning out of crisis and importance of learning at the time of crisis and also covering the importance of capacity building with resilience to the crises. The number of studies have risen considerably during the last years. Past contributions have done evaluations and elaborations on the most critical crises, such as migration crisis, natural disasters, terrorist attacks and similar. In addition, area studies tend to cover the vast majority of the world, thus we easily have an insight and can more easily draw some generalised conclusions. Such insight is especially brought to the front, as the crisis are more and more gaining transnational importance by being transboundary crisis. Despite the obtained knowledge and skills, it is important to acknowledge that there is no simple answer. Unfortunately, in times of crises it is common that things go wrong, hence the process of learning should remain uninterrupted. The fact is that crisis operations will fully remain in the public bureaucracy's hands, pledging the unchanged processes and flexibility for crisis management.

The second research question still has room for delivering contributions. The review of existing studies of crisis management in the field of public administration showed no correlation with the small state studies. There are no studies examining the operations of small states during pressure, thus we are missing on some important perspective of country clusters which accounts for a significant part of the world. Moreover, vulnerability and capacity for acting play an important role and studies show the correlation between the states' size and the national administrative systems. Sarapuu (2010), for example, finds out that states size has an impact on several national sections, as the limited scope of activity, multi-functionalism, reliance on informal structures, constraints on steering and control and higher professionalism.

That being said, we believe there should be an isolation of different study subjects in order to outcome the highest accuracy needed to address crisis. Namely, crisis research should question whether the institutional fabric of the bureaucracy provides solidified guidelines for the achievement of crisis management goals within the cluster of small states. Before doing so, we need to understand the needs of small states in crisis management phases. For so, we suggest further research on examining how specific is public administration functioning of small states, if at all. Once obtaining that knowledge, we should be able to correlate it with the existing knowledge on crisis management in the field of public administration.

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