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CONFRONTING DISASTERS & EMERGENCIES**

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"GROWING (in) SAFETY" PROGRAM

**MUNICIPAL CIVIL PROTECTION SERVICE OF LISBON
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"GROWING (In) SAFETY" PROGRAM

FOREWORD

Many are the unforeseen and dramatic circumstances derived from serious accidents, catastrophes or calamities, we unhappily have been experiencing in our time. Oftentimes they destroy lives, property and the collective wealth. There is a succession of natural or human-caused disasters in unison with the progress responsible for modern societies, which bring about destruction and pain, in many cases with irreparable consequences.

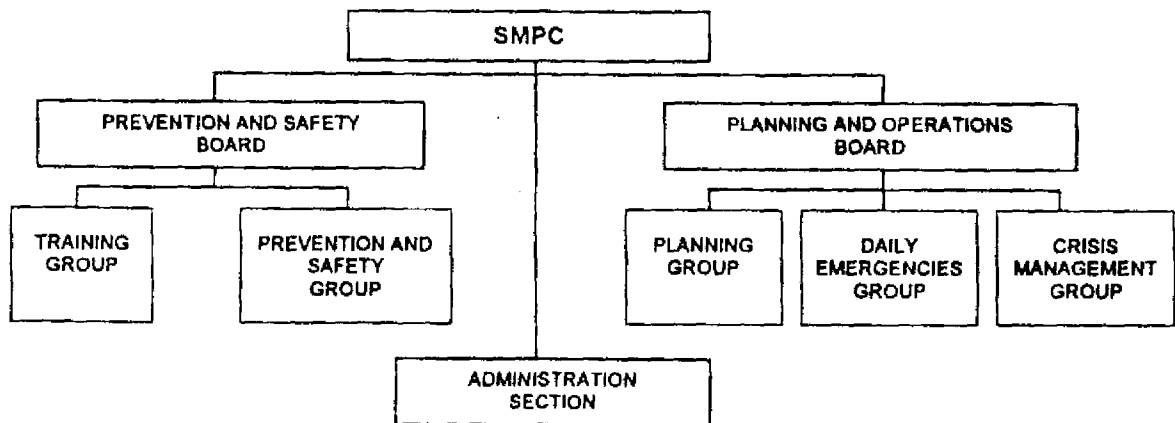
Lisbon, as any other urban center, is subject to several types of vulnerabilities, which oftentimes weaken it, increasing the risks not only of natural or technological causes but also of its social geography, of the concentration of people, property, infrastructure and means of production and services.

Facing this reality, reinforced by the new and constant demands upon the city, on the social agents and the citizenry itself, fortunately ever more aware of the dangers to which they are subject. Considering also that, above all, the protection of lives and the physical well being of the residents and their property must be ensured, the Municipality of Lisbon has created the Municipal Civil Protection Service of Lisbon (SMPC) through which it has focused its municipal safety program in the area of civil protection.

THE MUNICIPAL CIVIL PROTECTION SERVICE OF LISBON

The SMPC is integrated, jointly with the Fire Department and the Municipal Police, into the Department of Safety, operating in an articulated fashion.

It consists of two divisions, which in addition to the specific missions assigned to them, act interactively the functions of prevention, planning and rescue are indivisible.



I would now like to approach, in a summary form, the main areas of action that grant global and practical reason to this municipal structure.

The prevention level has the responsibility for the thorough identification of the risks as well as the integral analysis of its characteristics and its geographical location.

The planning area has the primary tasks of preparing the Municipal Emergency Plan and the Sectorial Plans, attempting to create an efficient coordination and intervention system among all the participants (Organizations and Services that take part in the Civil Protection) taking advantage of the available resources in relation to the adequate priorities.

The operational component constitutes one of the crucial points for the objectives of Civil Protection, since it is through it that we can confirm true response capabilities in an emergency.

As dictated by law, all of the organization and intervening forces are represented by delegates to the Municipal Operations Center for Civil Protection Emergencies (CMOEPC).

The SMPC has a Central Communications and Broadcasting center that operates 24 hours a day, and who is entrusted with the responsibility of activating and coordinating the resources and rescue efforts and to maintain the crews supplied with the necessary means and resources.

However, the responsibility of the SMPC is not limited to this immediate task. It is endowed with an analytical and reflexive attitude that will attempt to have a direct influence on the agents, social organizations and the general population.

In short, we pretend to:

At the institutional level, a preventive action, attempting to implant levels of safety that minimize or eliminate the impact of potential risks, balancing technological development with quality of life.

At the level of the individual, intervene in a change of mentality, as we consider that the population has a fundamental role, both individually as well as collectively, in the prevention of risk and in minimizing the effects of possible accidents.

It is precisely in this area where I intent to focus my presentation, showing you one of the programs developed by the SMPC of Lisbon and which I consider corresponds to one of the topics subject of debate in this Forum: Social Involvement in Disasters.

In fact, we are attempting to "develop strategies that will transform the populations from passive subjects to active participants in the response before an emergency, in the prevention and reduction of vulnerabilities".

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The preparation for an emergency, understood from the perspective of "knowing how to act" is a valid concept. Not only for whomever is directly involved in the management of risk, but also for the citizen, as recipient, because of his right to know about the dangers he faces and about the proper actions to face them, and at the same time, as a participant co-responsible of everyone's safety. Any action that does not take into consideration this truth, a "sine qua non" condition for success in the area of Civil Protection is doomed to failure.

The "Growing (in) Safety" Program" is within the framework of this strategy and it has chosen the Elementary Schools as the subject of their priority involvement. The selection of a younger-aged group is based in their total receptivity to assimilate new attitudes and preventive behaviors.

Each child is still a privileged interlocutor for the transmission of messages to the adults, becoming then active participants of change.

By operating in its own space, developed for this purpose, this initiative has, as basic objectives, to warn about the different dangers which could be a cause for accidents, that is, that each child know the true risks that he or she is exposed to during his or her day to day activities and to make them aware of the most adequate rules to follow in each situation.

The topics covered include the potential risks and focus on safety on the streets and public spaces, safety at home, attitudes regarding earth tremors and fire prevention.

The activities are under the responsibility of monitors with specific training provided by SMPC.

The acting methodology promotes the active and creative involvement of the children, through direct and indirect observation techniques, experiences provided by means of games, drills, and simulations.

Transport is assured by the SMPC with the collaboration of the Municipal Police. The three characters (pets) of the program: "Bruno", "Tinoni" and "Aviso" invite the children, divided in two groups, to visit the different rooms.

In this Sector, which reproduces a public area, different situations are shown: traffic signs, road selection, dangerous jokes and environmental protection. The methodology consists on the use of a comparative method by showing correct and incorrect situations and their respective identification.

The simulation of a railway is one of the proposals, as well as a telephone booth through which the child learns to dial the national number of an SOS call.

This room reproduces a miniature house including the different areas in it. Here, the proposal is that children, after watching a movie about hazards at home, could identify them in the place. This is a game where the child deductively has the chance to express his observation ability. Helped by red mushrooms, the children proceed to identify: toxic substances, cutting objects, hazards of electricity, misuse of fire in the kitchen, toys left on the floor and the faulty wiring of the bed lamp among others.

In the room of the earthquakes, the screen shows a brief explanation about this phenomenon, because what frightens the most is an unknown and not understandable hazard.

Through the slide displays the child learns about the earthquake behavior at home, particularly, and what he should do before, during and after an earthquake, as for instance, which places are safer.

In this space aimed at the learning of situations that can produce fires, the child finds the equipment used by the firefighters; he learns their history and discovers what he should do, for example, if his clothes set on fire.

Finally, children are invited to the playroom. "Learn how to protect yourself". This is a game of great dimensions, played in teams that seeks to establish prevention behaviors and attitudes.

The head of the team tosses a giant dice and according to the number of points he moves forward in the squares where there are situations of a child's daily life. If his attitude is correct he moves forward, if not he moves backward.

As a complement of this action and with the aim to better facilitate the reproduction and assimilation of the messages, each child receives a game to use at home with his parents and brothers, a painting book and a participation certificate in the activity, signed by the responsible councillor of the Municipality of Lisbon and the Tinóni pet.

At the end of the school course, a contest with the works made by the children is held. These works are displayed openly to the public. On the last day of the display, there is a party that begins with a parade with children riding fire-fighter trucks and finishes with the award by Tinóni, something that always constitutes the main attraction of the day.

After 6 years of performing the "Growing (in) Security" Program which has been visited by more than fifty thousand children, we can say that it has been a successful initiative.

In the following table there are some data related to the participation by year and the different institutions that have already participated in this program.

**Summary of participation data in the "Growing (in) Security" Program
1992-1997**

PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Primary Schools- Lisbon	5399	1996	3482	4072	5007	6500	26456
IPSS and Official Establishments	247	567	673	1863	1661	1450	6461
Schools	—	846	750	1835	1200	1170	5801
Secondary Schools- Lisbon	—	—	142	201	100	50	493
Schools and Establishments out of the Municipality	30	—	568	1216	1090	900	3804
Resort Areas	—	—	990	1300	1350	800	440
TOTAL	5676	3409	6605	10487	10408	10870	47455

In order to finish, we could say that once being assumed as an educational agent the Civil Protection has developed a program which, from the daily life (concretely the hazards it has) intends to join it to the school knowledge, in a close relation between practice and theory.

The strategy used, that includes some innovation, together with studying a fitting of the individual behaviours from the prospective of prevention and self-protection, intends to be a mean for transmitting of values, as for instance the sense of responsibility and solidarity.

Key Factors in the analysis of Crisis Response

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Introduction

What is it about a crisis that makes those who are involved experience it as such? What are the basic elements – or combinations of elements – which define the crisis experience and which allow the involved actors to agree that it is, indeed, a crisis?

In Sweden this is not simply a question for civil emergency planning authorities, but also concerns the Swedish Defence Forces. According to the Defence Decision of 1996, the Swedish Total Defence System, in addition to having responsibility for national defence in case of traditional armed aggression, must also be able to respond to peacetime situations of severe societal stress – characterized as “extraordinary events in society” Such situations can range from severe infrastructure disruptions (including computer systems), nuclear accidents and other technological disasters, to natural disasters such as earthquakes and floods, large population migrations, epidemics and terrorism.

The Total Defence System is to be organized to help mitigate and manage such situations in peacetime as well as fulfilling the conditions for wartime preparedness under present security policy assessments. The ability of the military and civilian defence sectors to cooperate and coordinate activities has been developed with reference to the joint tasks to be carried out within the framework of available resources.

Sweden has been fortunate in that, since the beginning of the 19th century, it has neither been subject to military aggression nor has been afflicted by serious technological or natural disasters. (Two events in the recent past were the nuclear fallout from the Chernobyl accident in 1986 and a large scale disaster at sea in 1994, the Estonia accident.) Although no one wishes for such disasters, this relative lack of experience in national crisis response is a clear disadvantage when it comes to building up competence in this area, especially as concerns designing exercises and training programs for national crisis management.

1 A representative for NATO's Civil Emergency Planning Directorate stated bluntly “When we collectively agree that there is a crisis, then there is one.” (Personal communication)

2 The term “extraordinary events in society” is synonymous with the term “societal crisis”

Background

Point of departure for crisis studies

Every crisis is unique. The literally infinite variety of different possible situations must be dealt with by taking into consideration a great many variables and characteristics. Thus, in turn, demands coordinated decision-making and high quality operational integration.

Only in exceptional cases are crises limited to a single geographical or administrative area, or to a single operative level. Ideally, in order to better facilitate decision-making and overall coordination, there should be a clear understanding of the sphere of responsibility for every actor and level of crisis management, and for every conceivable type of crisis. One way to achieve this would be to develop procedures which serve as models or archetypes by which different types of crises can be managed – regardless of their immediate cause or origin. The ability to identify common characteristics of different types of crises would be of unquestionable value for actors in all sectors and at all levels of society.

Methods for crisis studies

Aside from scenario and gaming techniques, the usual way to study crisis situations is to conduct case studies *in situ*. This is most useful when investigators want to come into direct contact with the crisis – environment and learn first hand about crisis management structure and procedures. However, when investigating crisis management procedures outside one's own native country, we must take into consideration institutional and administrative cultures-i.e. specific "rules of the game" and cultural expectations – which may differ radically from our own. Such differences can affect the reliability of observations and, in turn, influence the interpretation of both the course of the crisis and the crisis management procedures themselves.

In order to gain greater insight into crisis management thinking in different national and organizational settings, the interviewer/observer must have access to appropriate "tools" which will minimise the errors which can arise when observations are made by single individuals or small groups of individuals during a limited time period. Furthermore, studies of single, specific cases limit the prospects for generalization.

Identifying the "common denominators" of crises: a conceptual framework

There is common agreement that many societal crises can be managed in like manner, regardless of their cause or origin. If this be the case, then we need to be able to identify common or similar attributes among crises processes, in order to manage them successfully.

The question is, then: Is it possible to identify variables or combinations of variables which are common to many crisis processes? Can common denominators for crisis management be identified by observing how such variables are dealt with in a number of unrelated case studies? If so, what types of "tools" would be needed in order to accomplish this.

In order to answer these questions, we need a conceptual framework for identifying variables and, based on this, a concrete procedure by which relevant information can be compiled in an effective way, *in situ*, during an acute crisis. A preliminary conceptual framework for this purpose is described below.

Factors of decisive importance in successful crisis response

According to t'Hart (1996), operative and strategic command and coordination, communication, information processing and working with the media are decisive factors for successful crisis management. T'Hart and his associates at Leiden University in the Netherlands have collected and analyzed a number of situations which are characterized as "extraordinary events in society". Out of this they have developed a conceptual framework based on the discovery that societal crises tend to be dealt with differently depending upon the predominant disposition. t'Heart has found that these two different dispositions clearly affect the decisive factors cited above.

A functional-operative disposition is primarily directed towards the technical-functional aspects of command, coordination and information. This can be interpreted as the "world of the operative manual" – a necessary but hardly sufficient aspect of crisis management. Often, in order to avoid political fiasco, the socio-political disposition of the crisis manager must also express itself. According to t'Hart, this can be achieved by making the political and symbolic aspects of command and coordination explicit and distinct. Crisis managers must display responsible, confident roles in their dealings with the media and other stake holders.

All crisis management must be seen from this dual perspective, says t'Hart. The disposition of the actors including how they experience the crisis situation as such, is a crucial factor in the study of crisis management.

Purpose of the study

This initial investigative study, which is presented below, aims at examining how the key factors of operative and strategic crisis management, coordination/communication, information processing and working with the media expressed both in functional and socio-political contexts, can affect crisis response at different levels of society, in national as well as in international settings. This will be done in the basis of a number of independent case studies.

This investigation can result in the identification of variables or combinations of variables which can be seen as "common denominators of crisis management". This will be based on how the cited "key factors" have been dealt with in actual, documented crisis situations. The prospect of identifying patterns in crisis response variables means that we may be able to draw more general conclusions concerning crisis management processes, regardless of their cause or origin.

Method

In order to carry out such a study, a practical, flexible and relatively easily employed tool must be developed which can be employed by observers while studying crisis response structures and processes during the acute phase of actual crises. Such a tool has been developed in the form of a protocol, designed as a diagnostic questionnaire and including guidelines for observation. The questionnaire and guidelines were derived from international publications (see References) documenting different kinds of "extraordinary events" in society. The publications include both empirical and theoretical studies of crisis response. In this context it is important to emphasise the broad nature of the literature studied. The protocol must be able to be employed in a broad spectrum of situations -i.e. for many types of crisis, from acute situations involving technological disasters to more slowly developing crises and crises with political overtones.

Construction of the protocol as a diagnostic instrument

The protocol is in the form of an inventory of general questions and guidelines. Depending on the selected object of study, the observer can choose from the inventory all, or a limited number, of questions to be put to representatives at different levels of crisis response. The selection of questions and guidelines provides the observer with a tool for studying the impact of either the total range of key factors on the course of risks response, or of particular key factors, which in a specific situation are thought to be decisive for the outcome of the response.

The questions and guidelines are divided up into four sections (3). The sections dealing with Command (1), Coordination (2) and Information (3) are further divided into two aspects: *Form and Content*. *Form* concerns organization as such, while *Content* concerns what the organizational form is intended to support. For instance, the general concept of Command can be broken down into "organizational structure of command" (*Form*) and "leadership" (*Content*).

Section 4 deals with the media. The categories of Form and Content are not employed here. Instead, the material is categorized into three aspects: Media and (Government) Agencies; Media and Sources; and Media and Media Consumers.

All of the categories are further broken down into sub-categories of Form and Content are not employed here. These codes have been employed in order to better facilitate the systematic compilation of information. The categories are listed in Appendix 1.

Field of Application

The protocol is designed to help bring to light less accessible or subtle traits in the crisis management processes. On such dynamic process concerns up-scaling, and down-scaling, e.g. the shift in emphasis between operative and strategic (administrative) levels.

The mechanisms which induce higher organization on levels to intervene in the crisis management process have been the object of a number of earlier studies. Such studies have indicated that higher organizational intervention tends to occur when decision-makers lack alternatives in controlling the course of events (t'Hart et al, 1993). Other studies, however, have described crisis situations in which just the opposite seems to be the case: i.e. the "paradox of up-scaling", a term coined in the aftermath of the floods in the Netherlands 1993 and 1995. Here, higher administrative levels hesitated to intervene in order not to give the impression of directing mistrust towards local actors and authorities (Bezeuyn, 1996).

There are even cases in which operative levels have spontaneously taken control of the crisis management process or, alternative, have been formally delegated the responsibility from a higher administrative level. The mechanisms lying behind such processes are assumed to be associated with organizational form (t'Hart, 1991).

3 The protocol consists of 76 items. It is only in Swedish at the present time, but will be available in English translation in early 1999. It can be ordered through the author at. FOA, S- 17290 Stockholm, Sweden; or by e-mail: kercas sto.foa.se.

A pilot study concerning organizational role and responsibility in dealing with societal crisis in a number of different European countries (Svensson, Castenfors et. al., 1997) has shown that one of the most common reasons for a shift from a more local to a more central level is the lack of technical and other material resources. A number of assumptions, concerning how factors such as crisis command, coordination and information dissemination influence crisis response, were tested in this study. The results point to the fact that the scope of the crisis, as well as the prospect of being able to control the situation with given resources, is probably the crucial factor in determining whether a crisis is treated (primarily) from an operative-functional or socio-political disposition. The study also shows that certain situations, which are characterized as threats to national security, will tend to be dealt with from the highest political level, e.g. cases involving terrorism or mass migration.

In the cited literature (t'Hart, 1991); t'Hart et. al., 1993; Bezeuyn, 1996), it has not been clearly demonstrated to what extent up-scaling and down-scaling processes are associated with the lack technical and other material resources. Nor have other reasons been given for why crisis response can shift from local to central authorities – and vice versa. This could be one field of application for the cited protocol. Other possible themes could be:

- Crucial changes in the course of events decisive to the dimensioning of resources
- Successive changes in roles and domains of responsibility (agencies, politicians, media and the public)
- The robustness of pre-crisis decision-making structures in the face of actual crisis events.

What is essential for successful crisis management?

Obviously, critical factors for successful crisis response include both how information is managed during the initial stages of the crisis (Cahill, 1996), and how the continuing course of events is presented to public and press (van Oostveen, 1996). There is generally agreement among investigators that success or failure in crisis management is crucially dependent upon the behavior of the authorities involved. It is therefore of the utmost

importance that responsible authorities are made aware of the consequences which their actions can have during crisis situations.

Major crises create new and immediate demands on society and government which can only be met by extraordinary measures. In the face of major technological accidents, for instance, the public demands better guarantees for collective security and protection, as well as demanding that authorities and rescue services display proper concern for public needs. This has created a social climate in which government authorities are constantly reminded of their judicial and ethical obligations to protect the citizenry and provide society with effective emergency preparedness.

On this basis, there are good reasons to maintain that those authorities which are responsible for crisis response, besides organizing effective response measures per se, also present themselves to the public in a way that builds confidence and credibility. Great importance must be attached to the capacity to perform symbolic actions – that is, actions which express empathy and sensitivity, which broad sections of the public may be in great need of during disasters and other crisis situations.

Crisis Management Today and Tomorrow

In what areas research can a diagnostic instrument of the type described here, be applied in the future? Today, crisis transgress national boundaries, and crisis response is not longer simply a matter of national concern. In order to better facilitate decision-making and co-ordination, it will be necessary to develop explicit and mutually agreed upon areas of responsibility for all levels of society. Crucial question which must be addressed in this context include: how to develop appropriate functions for command and co-ordination; how the division of responsibility is expressed for different sectors and levels of society, in both operative and strategic contexts; and how political leaderships should be exercised.

It is also of interest to emphasize the importance of specific administrative structures and cultures for international co-operation, and for the co-ordination of civil and military resources. The reason for this lies in the fact that several of the types of crisis situations, which the Swedish Total Defense. However systems for responding to such crisis situations- may be handled in quite different ways depending on how they are influenced by different administrative culture.

That natural disaster tend not to respect national boundaries is a noted phenomenon. The order was not only the origin of the disaster, but also marked out the national boundary between Germany and Poland, where each nation attempted to manage the situation separately within its own territory. The only operative co-ordination to take place between the inflicted nations was the exchange of information (4).

In the future, many disasters technical as well as natural will be international. This means that both national structures for crisis management and the conditions for international co-ordination will become all the more important areas of study. It is hoped that the diagnostic instrument, presented in this paper, will help to contribute to this development

4 "Separated by Order river the inflicted nations executed hardly no boarder crossing support besides exchange of information" (Lutzow, R-J. The Order floods of 1997)