

EWIS Workshop, Amsterdam, 2023

Workshop title

Life in a Permanent State of Crisis: Interpreting our World through the Crisis Management Lens.

Workshop convenor

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Abstract

In a world that has become “uncertain”, governments and experts urge populations to be prepared and "resilient" in order to "live with risk". Over the last three decades we have experienced a financial crisis, a security crisis marked by terrorist attacks, “natural” disasters and the return of war in Europe, a health crisis shaped by the COVID-19 pandemic, and a climate crisis whose mismanagement has been highlighted by IPCC reports. How is it that we came to think of our world as being in a permanent state of crisis, liable to be governed by requesting citizens to be responsible, prepared and resilient? On what basis do emergency management experts, authorities and politicians demand populations to be in a permanent state of awareness and preparedness? Why is this permanent state of awareness and preparedness said to reduce vulnerability to multiple hazards and threats?

This workshop takes its distance from institutional discourses, which accept crises without questioning the social dynamics of their production. It focuses instead on the “crisis framing” of different social conflicts which are not of the same “nature” but which are deemed as "crises". To this end, this workshop examines how “crisis framing” promotes participation and self-reliance as key elements of how to manage life in a permanent state of upheaval. With this in mind, each author is invited to analyse how different “crisis framing” strategies, underlying specific “solutions” and “norms”, lead to the creation of the illusion of controlling uncertainty. Thereupon, the illusion of control is not examined as the result of a top-down dynamic where experts, authorities or politicians impose new “solutions” and “norms” on specific populations. It is rather studied as a jointly developed process leading to the responsabilization of citizens and a State which mutates towards a technical role.

We argue that four main lines of inquiry can provide fruitful avenues of reflection on how the interpretation of social conflicts through the lens of "crisis", an event supposed to break with the ordinary experience of time as a simple renewal of the past, came to be normalized: the "Crisis Management" agents; instruments and knowledge in "Crisis Management"; "Crisis Management" temporalities and spaces; the circulation of "Crisis Management" agents and devices.

Themes

We particularly welcome papers about the following themes:

- Security and surveillance.
- Technologies of governance.
- Disaster politics.
- Migration and borders.
- Terrorism and counterterrorism.
- Warfare and negotiation.
- Social mobilizations.
- Environmental challenges.
- Politics of emergency.
- Education and community-level interventions.