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Administrative Resilience

CALL-FOR-PAPERS



Administrative Resilience of Public Organizations Against Terrorism

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Current events over the past few years reveal an important paradigm shift within the doctrines and practices of terrorists. These changes are undermining our traditional modes of organization. Once the effect of surprise is over, a time of countless questions and actions aiming to initiate the resilience capacities of our public institutions succeeds. As such, if we were to characterize these new modes of operation used by terrorism, we could call them protean and reflexive. The list of major metropolitan areas affected is growing (e.g Brussels, Paris, Nice, Marseille, London, Barcelona, Berlin, Munich, Istanbul, Baghdad, Boston, New York, Columbus ...). Medium size cities (e.g. Würzburg in Germany, Saint Cloud in Minnesota,...) and even small towns (e.g. Saint-Etienne-du-Rouvray in France) are not spared. In this confrontation, which is by nature asymmetrical, terrorism unlike an enemy army has fuzzy characteristics. Therefore, our public institutions are notoriously disrupted in their political, military, societal and financial dimensions.

The frequency of the terrorist attacks in many countries, coupled with unprecedented forms of action, make urgent to address the issue of administrative resilience. Indeed, the structuring of many intelligence and counter-terrorism administrations is still in many ways inherited from Cold War models and/or the fight against terrorist threats from previous decades. Under these conditions, public management is without a clear conceptual basis or at odds with current challenges, while practical, societal and symbolic challenges require rapid action. Administrative resilience to terrorism must become an object of research on the agenda of public administration researchers. It is to this challenge that this track wishes to contribute.

Organizational resilience is now an important research object in management with a solid conceptual field. We adopt the definition of Hollnagel (2006:16) of resilience as *"the intrinsic ability of an organization (system) to maintain or regain a dynamically stable state, which allows it to continue operations after a major mishap and/or in the presence of a continuous stress"*. Resilience is the ability to cope with *"irregular variations, disruptions and degradation of expected working conditions"* (Hollnagel, Leveson & Woods, 2006:347), which essentially characterizes terrorist attacks. To this extent, the theories and practices of high reliability organizations (HROs) are of great interest in inspiring administrative resilience to terrorism because resilience is one of the HRO's primary qualities (Weick and Sutcliffe, 2001). The issue then arises of the adaptation of bureaucratic organizations that still characterize our public organizations to the resilient capacities that require flexibility and adaptability (Hollnagel and Woods, 2006). As such, the notion of "flexible bureaucracy" introduced by Bigley and Roberts in 2001 is particularly evocative of the tension between control and listening to achieve high reliability (Vidal et al., 2010). Taking note of this tension that has to be managed, this track envisages resilience in a process perspective and not as a simple result, insofar as it is constantly being questioned.

On the research side, terrorism *"is mired by epistemological, methodological and political-normative problems"* (Gunnin, 2007). In particular, according to Jackson (2010), terrorism is a *"social fact rather than a brute fact"*, that is to say, it is constituted by *"symbolic labelling, social agreement and a range of inter-subjective practices"* derived from constitutive discursive practices. International and institutional comparison of the construction of the object of "terrorism" proves to be both difficult and enriching for the study of the mechanisms of administrative resilience, since terrorism *"...does not exist outside of the definitions and practices which seek to enclose it"*. In the introduction to the 10-year special issue of *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, Jackson et al. (2017) reiterate the findings of the journal's inaugural article (Breen Smyth et al., 2008): terrorism is a "growth industry" that has an important impact on many fields of social and political activity, while at the same time the gap between the threat posed and the level of investment and activity is enormous.

In order to guide the productions of this workshop, we propose the following general question: **what forms of administrative resilience are deployed in countries facing the terrorist threat?**

This general question can be address through different inquiries (non-exhaustive list):

- What are the elements (doctrine, management practices, structure, etc.) involved in administrative resilience?

- On the basis of an international comparison, what are the good practices that can be identified? How can we explain the differences in response and adaptation to the threat?
- How institutional structures have evolved?
- What is the role of coordination and/or governance in building resilience? According to different geographical (local, national, international) and temporal dimensions (before, during, after)?
- How can actions linked to resilience be assessed?
- How is handled the tension between expected transparency and necessary opacity of the measures taken?
- How can civil society participate in the co-production of administrative resilience in the case of terrorism?
- What are the applicable epistemologies and methodologies? What renewal of the theoretical tools does this imply?

To absorb these questions and open the discussion, the workshop is open to theoretical, empirical or practitioner narratives.

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28 February 2018	Abstract submission deadline	Date limite pour l’envoi des résumés	28 février 2018
7 March 2018	Authors’ notification	Notification aux auteurs	7 mars 2018
13 May 2018	Papers deadline	Date limite pour la soumission des contributions	13 mai 2018