

COPING WITH (UN)EXPECTED DISASTERS IN AN EMERGING ECONOMY

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Context:

- “Colectiv 2015” was one of the worst manmade disasters in the recent Romanian history, by impact, produced as a collateral effect of emerging economy without testing the resilience of Emergency System.
- An accidental fire that lasted 113 seconds, ignited on October 30, 2015, in a rock club triggered a disaster with 64 people dead and over 150 people injured, from 350 people, that led to the massive revolts in the streets of Bucharest, 3 days of national mourning and resignation of the Government.
- Some stakeholders such as government understood it as a normal accident (Perrow, 1999) and recommends a radical change of emergency system while the leaders of Emergency System denied the failure of the whole system and understand it from the perspective of High Reliability Organization Theory (Roberts, 1990). This is a clear fact that we faced a disaster resilience as a complex or wicked problem, with many stakeholders involved and many views about the disaster.
- The ongoing criminal investigation opened three files/grounds with 11 people arrested. Further investigation is underway with many conflicting views and interests that lead to the conclusion that “Colectiv” file is a wicked problem, that needs external analysis.
- The extreme event has been taken into consideration by the Romanian Emergency System in planning, but the impact was a major one. An investigation of Zulean and Prelipcean of perception of leaders regarding the risks and preparedness revealed that natural disasters (earthquakes or large-scale forest fires) were considered the most probable and the Emergency System are the most prepared (Zulean & Prelipcean, 2013) while industrial disaster has a marginal attention.
- A short documentary from Discovery Channel about the disaster: https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=2&v=jLeUuY_zcA8

Aim:

- To describe and explain the wicked problem, one where the planning to address adverse events is difficult or impossible to solve because of incomplete, contradictory, and changing requirements that are often difficult to recognize, an insight and hindsight analysis of “Colectiv 2015”
- To offer an external evaluation on how the emergency system worked (planning, response and recovery), because after three years of investigations and reports and many recovery measures “Colectiv 2015” is still a complex problem
- To plan a foresight exercise to make the Romanian Emergency resilient in coping with the unexpected events.

Design of research:

- A deep understanding of the causes and shortcomings of disaster management and failure of foresight. Amir Hossein Gharehgozli et al (2016) recommended a framework to deal with wicked problems. However, that is not applicable to “Colectiv” case due to the lack of historical records of past disasters to compare with. So, we found out that Barry Turner’s framework applied by Panos Constantinides to explain the failure of foresight in crisis management for the case of Mari disaster (Constantinides, 2013).
- A Delphi based foresight exercise to help the Emergency System in Romania build a disaster resilience mechanism, using the Cross-Impact Analysis (CIA) and the Interpretive Structural Modeling (ISM) to build scenarios as tested by Banuls and Turoff (Banuls and Turoff, 2011) and integrate the results into Knowledge Management System (surprisingly no report mentioned the role of KMS (developed with the World Bank help) in planning and response to this disaster).



Results:

- The final product will be an academic research that fits into the track topics of an actual occurrence of the unexpected by examining the unexpected situation, the human roles and actions they took and the results.
- Presentation of the event from the response to recovery, the results of investigations and lessons learned.
- A methodology to investigate the causes of disaster and the solutions for coping with unexpected
- Integration the results into KMS.

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