

Patrick LAGADEC

THINKING DIFFERENTLY

Forewords

BSPP Conference, June 12th 2018

The customary objective of ANY workshop
on Crisis management
is to have panels sharing their best theoretical knowledge
and most successful operational know-how.
Ready-to-teach academic frameworks.
Ready-to-use tool-boxes.

In other words:
we are all prepared to celebrate
and carve in the solid rock
certified RESPONSES.

The objective of THIS workshop
is radically different.
Our ambition is to explore the unknown,
to reflect upon fast mutating territories
we now have to navigate through.
This is the time to open and share
our sharpest QUESTIONS,
to open and shape
new theoretical and practical pathways
into the future.

Each day
the emergent crises shake up
our conceptual frameworks
and practical know-how.
More:
the gap is not closing,
but opening larger and deeper.

In a recent paper, Todd LaPorte (UC-Berkeley) stated:

*“Even as we strive to know more,
we know less
of what we need to know
this is the challenge of “increasing relative ignorance”.*

Warnings are legion, and well labeled.

9/11 : *“Failure in imagination,*
Katrina : *“Failure of initiative”,*
Numerous others: *“Failure in preparation”*

Craig Fugate, former FEMA Administrator, stated it clearly, and his remarks remain critical
even if we try to do our best every single day:

*“We still plan
for what we are capable of doing.
We still train and exercise
for what we can manage.
We must plan, train, and exercise
even bigger
to fracture the traditional mindset.”*

This is certainly difficult
and even grueling.

When the future is irrupting so violently into the present, Francis Bacon (1605) words are worth considering,
even if they are difficult to hear:

*“The logic now in use
serves rather to fix and give stability
to the errors
which have their foundation in commonly received notions
than to help the search after truth.
So it does more harm than good”.*

But challenges are also inspiring.
In his book on the Great Flu, in 1919,
John Barry shows
how brilliant American scientists and practitioners
addressed the new challenges of public health
in an open world.

*“Shortly before the Great War began,
the men who wanted to transform American medicine succeeded.
They created a system
that could produce people
capable of THINKING in a new way,
capable of challenging the natural order.”*

This is exactly our ambition today.
Preparing ourselves
– academics and practitioners –
to think differently.
In order to act differently
– since the world is increasingly different.

Two panels will be working with you to day.
Nicolas Henin,
who will facilitate both of them,
is going to clarify the rules of these panels
and the innovative way chosen
to secure the best interaction
with all of you.

As for us, General Gallet and myself,
we will have a specific role,

“on the edge”:
to intervene when it appears appropriate,
not to add content,
but to push everyone deeper
into the questioning of the unknown,
and onto the best innovative ways
to shape stimulating futures.