



**3<sup>rd</sup> International AGORAS Conference**

**23 – 25 October 2019, Cité des Congrès, Nantes**

**CALL FOR PAPERS / APPEL A COMMUNICATIONS**

***Governing risks beyond the “here” and “now”***

***Gouverner les risques par-delà le temps et les frontières***



## CALL FOR PAPERS

The 3rd International AGORAS Conference closes the eponymous research project. Financed for a six-year period by the ANR as part of the RSNR<sup>1</sup> “Investissements d’Avenir” program, AGORAS explores the foundations of nuclear risk governance, in the “Post-Fukushima” context, through a multidisciplinary and dynamic approach that pays close attention to interactions between all stakeholders and to their embeddedness in long-term trajectories embracing past, present and future.

Following the 1<sup>st</sup> 2017 symposium and the 2<sup>nd</sup> international Conference “*Lessons learned: Studying learning devices and processes in relation to technological accidents*” organized in December 2018, this 3<sup>rd</sup> AGORAS Conference is intended above all to be a forum for exchange and dialogue between actors from the academic, industrial, institutional and political worlds, with different disciplines and affiliations, who are interested in risk governance, not limited to nuclear risks. It aims to enrich current reflections and efforts to improve risk governance practices through a hybridization of points of view, essential to provide concrete answers to the complex issues posed by risks and their governance.

Broadly speaking, risk governance can be defined as “both the institutional structure and the policy process that guide and restrain collective activities of a group, society or international community to regulate, reduce or control risk problems.” (Renn et al., 2011: 231) It covers risk prevention processes as

well as crisis and post-accident management, and embraces the entire lifecycle of high-risk organizations or infrastructures (from design to dismantling).

Major contemporary disasters, including Fukushima, served as brutal reminders that the safety of complex socio-technical systems cannot be the preserve of a few actors, nor can it be ensured without creating strong and transparent ties between multiple stakeholders, including operators, citizens, safety authorities, technical support organizations, and government services. Crises call into question the nature and quality of relationships between these multiple stakeholders and challenge governance practices, at the national and international levels. They require the rethinking of the internal and external boundaries of the “safety ecosystem”. This particular movement is similar to the gradual shift described in the literature from a traditional model of risk governance, centralized and organized hierarchically around governmental authorities concentrating power, to a more decentralized, multi-stakeholder approach, in which the political authority for governing and managing risks is distributed among different entities, public or not. This renewed approach to risk governance is characterized by overlapping jurisdictions and new inter-entity alliances, by confrontation with other governance systems, and by the growing role that is claimed or intended to be given to civil society.

Crises underline the extent to which risk governance is played out in a permanent tension between logics of anticipation and preparation on the one hand and management of the unexpected or resilience on the other hand (Journé & Tillement, 2016). Beyond their unpredictable nature, crises transcend all boundaries, whether they are geographic, temporal, institutional or professional. They pose human, socio-organizational,

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<sup>1</sup> Research in Nuclear Safety and Radioprotection

economic or political challenges for tens or even hundreds of years, thus exceeding any “human” time scale.

For this 3rd International conference, we invite original papers, empirical or theoretical, which address and analyze risk governance processes, not limited to nuclear risks. Contributions adopting various perspectives are welcome however this conference aims more particularly at deepening two central issues for governing risks:

- 1. Beyond, around and within which boundaries is risk governance organized?**
- 2. In which temporalities / time horizons is risk governance embedded?**

### **SUB-THEME 1: BOUNDARY WORK FOR GOVERNING RISKS**

The research conducted as part of the AGORAS project, and also the academic and institutional literature, reveal the variety of boundaries that come into play for governing risks. Beyond geographic and temporal boundaries, the distribution of roles, responsibilities, skills, and thus inter-organizational or inter-professional boundaries are challenged. But risk governance also questions more symbolic or political boundaries, between types of risks, between what is acceptable or not, measurable or not, or probable or not.

The term “boundary” was used primarily to define a limit or a clear separation between two sets however research in social sciences, including recent works, analyzes boundaries in a dynamic way. From this perspective, no natural boundaries or limits are fixed once and for all. Boundaries are

viewed as processes of delimitation, classification, even junction, never quite stabilized, always (re-) constructed through negotiations or discussions between actors. The concept of boundary also refers to circulation processes – of actors, information, knowledge, material or abstract resources (Dumez & Jeunemaître, 2010) and to sensemaking. These processes can be equipped through “boundary objects” (Star, 2010), concrete or abstract, which allow under certain conditions “that sense of here and there [to be] confounded” (op.cit.). Thinking of boundaries is also thinking about what binds or connects, that is what supports or hinders articulation work (Strauss, 1992).

If a distinctive feature of crises is to blur boundaries (Dobry, 1986), governing risks requires constant (re)definition of boundaries that determine, for example, the limits of what can be accomplished, or the scope of responsibility of the different actors. Then, how can this necessary definition work be carried out while acknowledging that these boundaries may collapse when a risk event occurs? How can the political work surrounding the definition of these boundaries be apprehended? What circulates in the thickness of these boundaries, and what is excluded?

We invite papers and contributions that renew and propose original analyses of the boundaries of risk governance, whether empirical or theoretical. Potential themes for submissions might include (but are not limited to):

- **What boundaries are produced by risk governance? How are they negotiated?**
- **How should we think about boundaries and their dynamics to understand risk governance?**
- **Is risk governance boundary work? If so, how best should this work be described?**

- **How can, from a methodological point of view, the boundaries of risk governance be understood and described?**

## SUB-THEME 2: TEMPORAL WORK FOR GOVERNING RISKS

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in time as an inseparable dimension of any human or organizational experience (Heidegger, 1962), particularly in the field of organization studies (Hernes, 2014; Orlikowsky & Yates, 2002), but also in political science and sociology (Blanck, 2016). Time becomes an important prism for thinking about practices and processes at the heart of organizations' lives. Two movements, which may at first sight seem contradictory, are receiving increasing attention from both researchers and practitioners. Firstly, scholars highlight an acceleration of time (Rosa, 2010), an increased focus on short-termism and a reinforcement of temporal pressures of all sorts (Perlow et al., 2002). Secondly, research underlines the importance of long-term dynamics and their influence on present and immediate decisions and actions, whether it is the past (for example the "path dependency" phenomena, Mahoney, 2000) or the anticipated future.

Risk prevention is part of a long-term trajectory: whether we consider regulation or risk assessment processes, whether we observe design or operations activities, present actions are influenced by the experiences of the past, but also by the anticipated future. In addition, risk governance, which is increasingly distributed, relies on interactions between multiple actors who each have specific agendas, time constraints and trajectories. Many of these interactions are equipped via relational artifacts (schedules, doctrines, scenarios...), which are often also *temporal artifacts*, and which participate in the framing of the inter-organizational processes of risk governance.

Crises, whatever their nature, require immediate and emergency actions while at the same time imposing the need to consider and equip the much more distant future of post-crisis or post-accident situations. They force organizations to act in very different time horizons and rhythms, and potentially to face conflicts of temporalities.

This sub-theme aims to question and discuss the temporal dimensions of risk governance, and to analyze how the many timeframes and pressures, which can be endogenous or exogenous, may affect it. Potential themes for submissions might include (but are not limited to):

- **How are the conflicts / contradictions between the many time perspectives taken into account and regulated to govern risks? How can they be articulated?**
- **How does the emphasis on short-termism and speed affect the practices and processes of governing risks on the long-term?**
- **How may the processes of learning, remembering and organizational forgetting over time be taken into account in governing risks?**
- **How can risk governance articulate both the immediate time of events, surprises, crises and the long term requirements of regulation, prevention and evaluation processes?**
- **How do the material representations of time or temporal artifacts intervene in governing risks?**
- **What are the empirical / methodological challenges that researchers must face to comprehend the temporal dimensions of risk governance?**



*Papers addressing issues related to one question or the other of these sub-themes, or articulating them, are particularly welcome.*

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## SUBMISSIONS AND SELECTION

The submission deadline for abstracts, in English or French, (up to 500 words) is **May 1<sup>st</sup> 2019**.

Paper acceptance will be notified by the **end of June 2019**.

Full papers are expected by the **15<sup>th</sup> of September 2019**.

Proposals should be sent to: [conference3agoras@imt-atlantique.fr](mailto:conference3agoras@imt-atlantique.fr)

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For more information on the AGORAS project, please visit our website:  
<http://web.imt-atlantique.fr/x-ssg/projetagoras/index.php>

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