

Editorial

di *Luigi Fiorentino** ed *Elisa Pintus***, Editors

Emergency management, between exception and continuity: models and tools of risk management

**State of the art
for an approach to
the management of crisis
situations**

Time is bigger than space. This is a principle that can be of use in defining this editorial's perimeter for reflection¹.

If humankind can be moved towards irreversible ethical progress – of one's own person and of society at large –, this is due more to its ability to generate processes than to that of dominating spaces.

With this editorial, we would like to inspire scholars interested in public man-

* *Office of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers*

** *University Aosta Valley*

1. Cf. Pope Francis's Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html

agement to take up the “great challenge” of studying the role and function of public institution during adverse social or natural events.

The Special Focus, titled *Emergency management, between exception and continuity: models and tools of risk management*, concentrates on the severity and pervasiveness of the epidemiological crisis – a crisis that has stricken the entire world since 2020, radically changing the life of citizens, public institutions, enterprises, and even society itself. It has also and above all changed how, in managing the crisis, the variables of time and space are interpreted.

The pandemic has been – and still is – a stress test of extraordinary range, because it has in any event required guaranteeing the continuity of social, political, and economic life in a dramatically exceptional situation as relates to the ways of determining political, organizational and management decisions, as well as of interrelating with the stakeholder system.

This event, certain to continue its effects for the time to come², has produced – and still produces – reactions and counter-actions channelled into the search for new answers to questions – many of which in part new, and many that are in part structural because, from the start, the health crisis has even further underscored inequalities and critical areas.

There is no doubt that the crisis has spread pervasively. It has placed countries before the challenge of having to build effective tools quickly, while balancing pressing new necessities with the need for the system to hold together generally, and with guaranteeing that actions by public administrations – to the extent of our interest of analysis – are consistent with fundamental principles. Challenges unavoidable today, such as the ability to govern complex systems with a multitude of functions and institutions, can be successfully resolved only if sustainable management models can be abstracted from the traumatic experience that has become deeply embedded in society.

But if we do not want everything taking place because of the Covid-19 pandemic to become a dystopian archetype (Phan & Wood, 2020), we must first and foremost ask ourselves what must be observed, isolated, assessed, and taken as a model.

Disasters may be distinguished into categories. According to one definition, a disaster is a “potentially traumatic event that is experienced collectively, has an acute onset, and is delimited by time; disasters may be attributed to natural, technological or human causes.” And then there is a crisis that is “a low-likelihood, high-impact event that threatens the system’s vitality, and is marked by ambiguous cause, effect, and means of resolution, as well as by a shared conviction that decisions must be

2. Among the highest-likelihood risks of the next ten years are extreme weather, climate action failure and human-led environmental damage; as well as digital power concentration, digital inequality and cybersecurity failure. Among the highest impact risks of the next decade, infectious diseases are in the top spot, followed by climate action failure and other environmental risks, as well as weapons of mass destruction, livelihood crises, debt crises and IT infrastructure breakdown.

taken quickly” (Pearson & Clair, 1998). These adverse events are caused by factors outside the system; they are unforeseen events requiring immediate action. Here is a specific area of reflection to support the relationship between time and space.

There is a difference between risk and uncertainty. A decision-making context is risky when the decision-makers do not know with certainty what result decision-making will bring, but they do know – when the decision is made – the possible results associated with a decision, along with the likelihood that these results will occur. On the other hand, there is uncertainty when, at the time a decision is being made, those responsible for the decisions know neither its possible results nor the likelihood that these results will occur. It may be said that public institutions’ decision-making processes implemented during states of crisis should be the result of a weighted balance between analysing risk and fighting uncertainty; they should make it possible to eliminate the rate of uncertainty – the cause unleashing the adverse effect – and to govern risk by virtue of policy and management choices.

The balance between these two elements is the point of articulation needed to comprehend the necessary relationship between the making of public policy decisions, and the

ability to translate policies into plans, programmes, and projects in times necessarily redefined by states of crisis as they take concrete shape. Again the issue of discernment between time and space is crucial.

Crisis management is an issue that has been studied for a great many years – and with continuity since the 1970s. The post-Cold War world and major environmental disasters³ were among the first areas of privileged observation. But in the 1990s, the models of public institutions dominant until that time began to see widespread criticism. This created a real shock in Western societies and among the elites, allowing post-industrial and post-national crisis management models to evolve also in view of the increased frequency of such extraordinary occurrences as: disasters caused by environmental events, geopolitical turmoil, economic and financial crises, and, not least, the crises linked to viral epidemics. Added to this is a profound inability to manage the imbalances of Western democracies and their political/administrative systems in ever increasing difficulty in their propensity to react, and almost never able to systematize the political, economic, management, and social efforts put into play during the peak or to combat the crisis-triggering event.

The responses to Hurricane Katrina⁴ occurring at the start of the new millen-

3. It was the Bhopal environmental disaster in India in 1984 that created conditions for profound reflection on the ethical issues connected to corporate behaviour, unleashing, starting from the English-speaking countries, an accelerated elaboration of theoretical paradigms linked to corporate social responsibility and green management.

4. In 2005, Hurricane Katrina struck the central and eastern United States on the Gulf of Mexico. Among the most destructive hurricanes ever to strike the United States, it claimed approximately 1,500 victims, in addition to being the most damaging one ever in economic terms

nium were a point of decisive reflection⁵ giving rise to innovative modes of action between scholars, policymakers, and public managers. Today, a broad array of risk categories may be defined, contemplating among other things those connected to environmental, economic, social, geopolitical, and technological risks. These categories are defined through the occurrence of certain risks now considered among the most fearsome: infectious disease, weapons of mass destruction, failure to take action for the climate, biodiversity loss, diminishing natural resources, extreme weather conditions, environmental damage caused by humans, economic/financial crises, collapse of IT infrastructure, digital inequality, IT security failure, collapse of social security systems and of social cohesion, and the alienation of youths from inclusion in educational and productive systems.

Years of analysis on global risks have seen risk types constantly increase in number while growing more and more differentiated⁶.

High-risk events that initially appear to cause isolated, local effects can increase in intensity and create conditions hampering the function of vital infrastructures – first locally, then increasingly often on a global scale.

Adverse events are doubtlessly inevitable, but it is equally clear that there are countries able to bounce back and withstand – or even counter – these shocks better than others. Understanding the role and function of public institutions when dealing with adverse events can contribute towards facing disasters better and, in the final analysis, bring benefits to society as a whole.

The complexity, diversification, and numbers of a portfolio of the potential risks derived from adverse events require risk management systems structured to identify and mitigate the risk itself, with public institutional systems able to absorb shocks and bounce back, by transforming organizational structures and processes so that they may function in the presence of stress, change, and long-term uncertainty. This requires an active understanding of the risk landscape, by analysing where these risks are better managed, strengthening the components of the system that help deal with them, and understanding how the interrelationship of these components influences the function of the public system as a whole.

Although the literature is not yet established, the available data appear to indicate that, aside from the ability to prevent states of crisis, the mechanisms for “anticipating” or preventing states of crisis are

5. The Mayor of New Orleans, the Governor of the State of Louisiana, the Director of FEMA – Federal Emergency Management Agency – Agency of the US Department of Homeland Security, and the President of the United States engaged in mutual finger-pointing over the characteristics of the responses to this exceptional adverse event, emphasizing for observers the lack of a clear institutional, political, and organizational/management interrelationship in these cases.

6. www.weforum.org/reports/the-global-risks-report-2020

consolidated by virtue of processes to plan instruments allowing organizations to define how to deal with the adverse effects, whatever happens. In view of the growing number of adverse events, the consequent states of crises, and the awareness that no crisis has margins of predictability sufficient for it to be effectively managed in its entirety, states of crisis ought to be considered as an “endless process,” and long-lasting, effective, prompt and sustainable models for combating them should be to determined once and for all. There is no doubt that the more we can manage adverse phenomena, the easier it will be to rebound from states of crisis. Once again, it is decisive to choose whether and how to privilege time over space. Once again, it is decisive to choose whether and how to privilege time over space.

The following are some questions for investigating innovative management models of the states of crisis, which may provide an active perimeter for developing our thinking.

What are the trends in today’s crisis management models? How are we to go from an episodic-type crisis management approach to a structural one in order to manage adverse events?

How can institutional arrangements and juridical frameworks suitable for managing and governing the paroxysms created by extraordinary adverse events be constructed? What are the forms and modes for managing the institutions delivering essential public services (key among which is healthcare) in emergency phases, and with an often institutionally decentralized gov-

ernance system? How can the participation of public institutions be ensured at all levels of governance, while balancing the needs for speed and fairness of public decision-making regarding citizens, even in settings that are heterogeneous and raise different problems? What are the contours and limits – but also the opportunities and possibilities – of emergency governance in accordance with juridical tools, and what modifications would be appropriate to make to the existing risk management model, on the basis of the trials induced by the pandemic? What is the role and future of institutions, in an increasingly globalized scenario with problems capable of transcending national borders? How are we to govern uncertainty while offering models of institutional communication with transparent, responsible answers for citizens, families, and enterprises, even when the State itself suffers the same difficulties and uncertainties? What instruments can overcome the “mediatisation” of states of crisis? How can data and information – and sensitive data and information in particular – be managed during the emergency and once it is overcome?

How can we create a pervasive culture of crisis management in public and private institutions as well as in society as a whole, capable of defining a model of the country’s resilience to crisis? How can models be defined to assess the impacts of choices in order to guide their operation in the medium and long term? How are we to determine the consolidation of “infrastructures for crisis states” beyond their use in the throes of the adverse event? How can institutional models suitable for best preventing/managing criticalities when ad-

verse events take place be built? How can institutional relationships be built with enterprises – strategic alliances – in order to overcome states of crisis? Can there be a social “pact,” a new humanism, a new culture of the common good, to relaunch a country after a dramatic moment when political decision-makers have defined an agenda determined, at least in part, by the governance of time as well as by the public interest?

To such crucial questions, we can respond by setting out to define a framework of action, as an ideal model, sequenced as follows: conducting economic/social assessment and analysis – also predictive in nature – of the risk situations; defining the known variables and the wholly unknowable ones, for better decision-making; in political and management decision-making, seeing to the relationship between the governance of time in keeping with the stakeholders’ expectations, and the impact of short-, medium-, and long-term decisions; maintaining coordination – internal and among institutions at the various levels of governance, in order to provide continuity in defining choices; and designing conditions for assessing the continuous experience of combating adverse events, and for preventing risk in the future (Hardy, Maguire, Power & Tsoukas, 2020).

Institutional, political, management, and social approaches to overcoming states of crisis: the Italian case

The outbreak of the pandemic and the subsequent declaration of the state of emergency by the Italian government on 31 January 2020⁷, has brought a set of political, institutional, and management consequences.

From the institutional standpoint, it must be noted that there is no updated pandemic Plan containing an adequate selection of specific actions and activities that every institution, at any level of government, ought to have implemented. A Plan’s importance resides in the need – above all during times of crisis – to leave nothing to improvisation, and to be able to rely on a detailed programming of the organizational model, of the necessary resources, and of the action to be initiated, also in terms of training the involved personnel. Instead, simply proposing again a plan dating to 2006⁸ made it clear that there were no operational modules for coordination from the centre to the periphery – modules that, precisely in their extraordinary nature, were needed to govern institutions and guide their operation at so delicate a juncture (Longo, 2018).

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7. It is to be borne in mind that the first declaration of the state of emergency, of a six-month duration, took place with the decision by the Council of Ministers of 31 January 2020. On 11 March 2020, the World Health Organization, upon assessing the levels of seriousness and the spread of SARS-CoV-2, declared the COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic.
 8. This is “*Piano nazionale di preparazione e risposta ad una pandemia influenzale*” (“national plan for preparation and response to an influenza pandemic”), published by the Ministry of Health in 2006, in accordance with the WHO’s 2005 recommendations, replacing the previous Plan published in 2002. Available at: www.salute.gov.it.

In the absence of a project of this kind, the first phase of the emergency was managed by the Department of Civil Protection, and in particular by the Department Head, tasked with coordinating interventions throughout national territory in continuity with the measures already adopted by the Ministry of Health, and through reliance on a technical/scientific committee established for this purpose⁹. Reference here is essentially to activities of aiding and assisting the population, of strengthening controls, of Italian citizens making re-entry from risk countries, and of repatriating foreign citizens to countries of origin more exposed to infection.

Only with the appointment of the Managing Director of Invitalia¹⁰ as extraordinary Commissioner for the implementation and coordination of the measures to contain and combat the epidemiological emergency did a second phase in the emergency begin, in which needs relating to organization, logistics, and procurement emerged¹¹. It is no accident that, in order to achieve the goals, the Commissioner was authorized to act even by way of derogation from the regulations in force in the matter of procuring

goods and services. From the management standpoint, this provision acknowledges the extraordinary Commissioner's role in accelerating the processes, given his power both to simplify ordinary procedures and to condense the times for executing decisions.

From the political standpoint, in so complex a situation, an aspect to be mentioned relates to the role of government, and in particular the Prime Minister and his relationship with Parliament.

The need to make decisions quickly has led the government to privilege certain regulatory instruments capable of bringing immediate results. Reference is made in particular to the preponderant use of Prime Minister's decrees and legislative decrees¹². The former became the ordinary instrument for ordering measures to contain and combat the virus's spread, and would in some cases even impact rights and freedoms. This led the government to resort to the legislative decree as a primary source for introducing derogations to constitutional provisions in emergency situations¹³. On the other hand, restoration interventions were also granted with ur-

9. Cfr. Decision of the Council of Ministers of January 31, 2020, published in *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, Serie Gen., 1° febbraio 2020, no. 26.

10. Cfr. www.invitalia.it/eng

11. Pursuant to art. 122 of Legislative Decree no. 18 of March 17, 2020, with the Prime Minister's decree of 18 March 2020, D. Arcuri was appointed extraordinary Commissioner for the COVID-19 emergency.

12. This choice has been fully debated in doctrine. See, ex multis, M. Belletti, (2020), La "confusione" nel sistema delle fonti ai tempi della gestione dell'emergenza da Covid-19 mette a dura prova gerarchia e legalità, in *Osservatorio AIC*, 3; Luciani M., (2020), Il sistema delle fonti del diritto alla prova dell'emergenza, in *Rivista AIC*, 2; Azzariti G., Il diritto costituzionale d'eccezione, in *Costituzionalismo.it*, 1/2020; De Nes M., Emergenza Covid-19 e bilanciamento di diritti costituzionali: quale spazio per la legalità sostanziale?, *Biolaw Journal*, March 2020.

13. Cfr. Legislative Decree no. 6 of February 23, 2020, concerning "Urgent measures in the matter of containing and managing the COVID-19 epidemiological emergency." For a review of the acts issued

gent provisions, and the related economic measures were funded using resources made available from what are referred to as “budgetary slippages.”

In fact, the use of urgent legislation has strengthened the Prime Minister’s role, also in comparison with his own Ministers. And this is not only from the formal standpoint as legitimate holder of power, but also due to a strong personalization of the political choices made, emphasized by the widespread communication activity accompanying the adoption of each measure.

Moreover, these legislative choices inevitably also impacted the relationship with Parliament. The set of decisions, both those for containing the pandemic and the economic measures that were introduced, altered the normal mechanism of dialogue between the Executive and the Chambers. This required greater liaison with Parliament, when converting legislative decrees and in the event of disclosures made on issues both delicate and politically sensitive that have already been decided upon by Prime Minister’s decree.

In the second case above all, Parliament’s involvement, more than being a mere procedural act, must be understood as a moment of high political value, featuring dialogue over such issues as, for example, freedom of circulation, opening or closing economic activities, and the ways in which school and transportation services are delivered. This is the place where the individual members of Parliament and political groups can express both a general vision and specific proposals on the emergency underway – a linkage made even more necessary by the need to involve Parliament in important decisions relating to fundamental human rights and the ways that essential public services are delivered¹⁴.

As to the operational and management profile, the government’s decision-making mechanism has quite often involved the Regions and self-governments, both formally at the unified Conference or at the State-Regions and self-governments Conference¹⁵, and informally. This has taken place in shared government settings, as in the case of the health and education sectors, and for decisions relating to how industry, commerce, handicrafts, play/

by the government, concerning the measures in the matter of containing and managing the COVID-19 epidemiological emergency, consult: www.gazzettaufficiale.it/attiAssociati/1.

14. On the central importance of the regulation and principle of the rule of law in the crisis management process, see: Ceccanti S. Verso una regolamentazione degli stati di emergenza per il Parlamento: proposte a regime e possibili anticipazioni immediate, in *biodiritto.org*, 17 marzo 2020; N. Lupo, (2020) L’attività parlamentare in tempi di coronavirus, *Forum di Quaderni Costituzionali*, 2; Biondi F. e Villaschi P., Il funzionamento delle Camere durante l’emergenza sanitaria, in *Federalismi.it*, 18/2020.
15. See: Legislative Decree no. 281/97, which defines its composition, tasks, and modes of organization and operation, and consists of the permanent Conference for relations between the State, Regions, and Autonomous Provinces, and the City-State and self-governments Conference which meets at least twice a month. It takes part in the decision-making processes involving matters under the responsibility of the State and Regions, in order to foster cooperation between state activity and the self-government system, examining the matters and tasks of common interest while also carrying out consultation functions.

recreation, and economic/social activities are exercised. In fact, discussions have for the most part focused on the need to balance the right to health with other rights and interests of constitutional importance, especially in relation to the complex intertwinement between freedom of circulation and of economic initiative, and the right to public education.

In this sense, one need merely considers the function of the healthcare and school systems. As to the former, the complexity is due to several aspects. Health protection is among the matters of competence/competition between the State and Regions and, from the organizational standpoint, the healthcare system is extensive, diffuse, extremely professionalized, and highly sensitive to territory policy. During a serious epidemiological emergency, it was not easy, on a national level, to link local choices to the operative guidelines that had been taken on at a national level. These are complex processes, whose objective is to articulate national guidelines at a local level. There are a great many players that have to dialogue with one another – and that, lately, have to implement operative solutions. This has in fact quite often led to the conversion of many hospital wards into dedicated units, or “Covid structures.”

These are all activities which require management and organizational skills, and above all programming skills, capable of bringing together several profiles that are all individually complex (Tokakis, Polychroniou & Boustras, 2020).

From this standpoint, the vaccine campaign is also to be held as a complex oper-

ation in terms of management and organization. In fact, it is a matter of ensuring vaccination for every citizen, from large cities to small villages. Although the Plan’s preparation is in itself an act that has many forms, its implementation will have to take numerous variables into account: the characteristics of the various vaccines, the continuity of supplies, the location of vaccination centres, the different ways of conserving the doses. The manner of interaction with citizens is also important, especially with reference to how they are summoned; important to this end, is the need for the vaccine campaign to involve private operators, general practitioners, and pharmacies as well.

The school system bears no less organizational and operational complexity. School institutions, with the constraints of autonomy established by the State norms, have a multi-level relationship with the Ministry of Education. The central Administration dialogues with the Regions on the ways in which the service is planned through the regional school offices, while liaising with the Municipalities and Provinces as concerns building issues.

These are diverse players that interact with individual school institutions in different areas. Given the multitude of players involved in management, an organizational design of this kind requires a flexible and inclusive management model in each of the involved Administrations. In fact, if the connection between a multitude of subjects is already difficult in and of itself, it will be more so if the involved operative articulations have no marked managerial profile.

These characteristics have further complicated the activities needed to start the 2020-2021 school year. In fact, to ensure compliance with the social distancing rules prescribed by the technical and scientific committee and at the same time to guarantee all the other virus containment measures, it was necessary to build a complex, above all regulatory mechanism, whose implementation has had to be overseen.

First of all, the Ministry's guidance was converted into guidelines approved by the unified Conference, ensuring the involvement of Regions and local authorities. Once the regulatory phase was concluded, a concrete, operative administrative activity was initiated, marked by the adoption of implementation decrees, by transfers of resources on various levels and, downstream, by the operational choices of the individual school institutions. There was a continuous activity both on a central level with bodies representing the Regions and self-governments, and at the decentralized level, given the numerous points of connection between the individual institutions and the relevant representatives of the territory. The contacts developed on a central and peripheral level with the representative trade union organizations have been equally important within this process.

What emerges is a complex intertwining of sharing and relationships, all necessary and all maintained with a multitude of players, in which it is possible to identify the very essence of the complex processes.¹⁶. The outcome of these synergies is in

fact summed up in data, proposals, and problems.

All this underlies the operative activities and the decisions that are made: in concrete way, they may be exemplified, for example, in public procedures functional for finding on the market the goods and services school institutions need in order to guarantee distancing or improve classrooms. The effects of these choices do not end within the education system. Open schools involve millions of people in addition to teachers and pupils, and this has a direct impact on transportation – another complex system subject to social distancing rules and tasked with ensuring the students' safe return to the classroom.

It is therefore clear that the institutional decision-making mechanism is to be considered a complex process. This complexity concerns the type of decisions to be made; the number of parties involved in the decisions, all of which represent political and institutional interests (including the less widespread ones); and not least, these decisions' field of application. One need only consider that every decision has always had to take into account the opinion of the scientific and technical Committee as regards the epidemiological situation, and in terms of the developments of infections and of the RT index. A similar relationship between science, technology, and politics has constituted a new model for action. Science has given politics a complete framework for the healthcare situation, and this has limited its discretionality, particularly when choosing the most del-

16. See: A. Pirazzoli (2018) *Le relazioni tra istituzioni pubbliche*, in AA.VV., *Management pubblico*.

icate measures restricting personal rights. Decisions, then, while falling within the sphere of action of politics, have been mediated by the active role of science.

In similar situations, it is important to observe the modes of exercise of the function, especially by those representing the government, in terms of leadership (Hughes, 2018; De Clercy, & Ferguson, 2016; Boi, Kuipers, and Overdijk, 2013; AA. VV., 2010). In fact, in these situations it is not the decision alone that counts, but also the way it is communicated. It is important for those making the decisions to be able to instil a sense of security in their citizens, and to be capable of being engaging and not divisive. In this setting, public communication is an essential tool, even only with reference to the daily actions of political decision-makers. A visit to a school, a village, or a hospital, communicates to the citizen that the leader is close at hand, is aware of the problems, and wishes to provide answers.

In the era of social media, account must be taken of the fact that debate often takes place online, with the impact this generates on the daily life of a public figure, as well as on the decisions made on an institutional level. A highly delicate profile for analysing the perimeter of action is that of the political decision-maker's visibility with respect to the actions that the administrative machine and public management must take. It would be advisable to avoid a direct correlation between complaints, debate on social networks and political decisions, because this would expose institutional and administrative activity to random unplanned management. On the

contrary, social media should be a sensor that can support a two-way relationship between political decision-makers and institutions aimed at building organic responses to problems

In a final analysis, with attention to the case of Italy, it may be assumed that the very serious epidemiological situation has severely tested our political, institutional, and administrative system. The political class in general has had to grapple with considerable problems and tragic events. The responses to the problems and needs that have emerged have often been conditioned by the absence of prior experience in managing similar emergencies. In cases like these, it is essential for politics to have both vision and a sense of the concrete, and to be able to outline scenarios of action and act as a point of synthesis for providing real responses (Tokakis, 2018; Kalbassi, 2016; Rosenthal & Boin, 2001).

All institutions – Public Administrations included – have had to readapt their way of acting, also through the use of different tools for organizing work, such as the adoption of generalized remote employment, while lacking an organization for connecting – also technologically – units operating in different places. In certain cases, there has also been a complete absence of a management capable of governing the operating structures in a delocalized way. In addition, from an operational point of view, decisions arose as a result of delicate balancing acts between different but deserving interests and between the various centres of responsibility, which often had different visions of policy direction and, in practice, of final choice.

Operating in so difficult a setting with so many players, characterized by a diffuse power, requires strong governance, whose meaning must be made clear (Hughes, 2018). In particular, of the many definitions, it is believed that the one closest to the setting must consider the multitude of parties intervening in the public arena and in the decision-making mechanisms. We might add to and better define the concept, considering governance as a model with several players – public, private, and non-profit. The complexity of such a model lies in the need for synthesis, in terms of output and result, usually entrusted to the subject in charge of the main function. The synthesis can express a solution to problems which are significant from a number of standpoints, and is an operative model capable also of weighing the point of view of the many social actors involved.

The objective of the proposed Special Focus was to analyse, from different perspectives and with a broad array of instruments – putting together theoretical and technical approaches – the response of public institutions to the Covid-19 health emergency. It aims to give the public and scientific debate a framework of reference and of innovative study attentive to proposing a multitude of keys for interpretation and analysis, with contributions by authors from different scientific disciplines offering ideas, models, and interpretations on the themes being dealt with.

Titled “*Etica e gestione delle emergenze*” (“Ethics and emergency management”), the paper opening the journal’s thematic

section is dedicated to understanding the multitude of ethical principles and values that should guide emergency management. The norms and values, articulated as ethical goals and political/social assets dealt with in the paper, are not general moral imperatives, but ethical coordinates of reference, relating to the reduction of harm, freedom, distributive justice, transparency, honesty, inclusion, and their role in guiding choices, albeit with the necessary quickness and flexibility that times of emergency require. According to the author’s thesis in the essay, emergency management is not only about protecting the population, but is also a matter of the concrete ways of overcoming the negative event, through responses aimed at building or rebuilding the civic community, and strengthening it after the calamitous event. Therefore, an effective planning of the interventions to deal with the emergency must rely on civic responsibility and on the sense of justice and concern over those need, but must also present an opportunity to promote new prospects for society’s growth and improvement.

The second paper is dedicated to school institutions, the symbolic locus of the health emergency. In fact, the pandemic has placed the school back at the centre of the debate in public opinion, allowing the focus to concentrate on reopening schools safely. However, attention to the quality of teaching and of school programs with a medium- and long-term perspective must be equally important. The title “*Scuola e sviluppo, il capitale umano al centro: la lezione del Covid-19*” (“School and development, with human capital at the centre: the lesson of Covid-19”) is emblematic of the text’s ob-

jective: to analyse the relationship between education and development, and therefore the bond between the modes of organization for redefining educational structures and the development of the economy as a whole. In fact, the author points out that for a long time it was believed that Italy was endowed with a high level of human capital due to natural aptitudes, or widespread knowledge, or because of the presence of individual excellences. Today, however, it seems increasingly necessary to focus on the quality of human capital, because this is the pillar of that increase in productivity needed to get out of the trap of low growth and to make the country compete in a global context full of new challenges, such as the technological one - and not only - which require new skills and professional figures.

The third essay, entitled “*La gestione delle infrastrutture critiche durante la crisi Covid*” (“Managing critical infrastructures during the Covid crisis”), after overviewing what is meant by the term “critical infrastructures,” aims to illustrate the main actions implemented by sectoral operators during the pandemic, and the related initiatives put into play by the public authorities of reference. The author’s analysis is aimed at demonstrating the effectiveness of these actions, in order to guarantee continuity in delivering “*essential services*.” According to the author’s thesis, this was made possible thanks to the widespread culture of safety that existed beforehand among the operators of national “critical infrastructures”. Personnel was suitably prepared personnel, aware of the critical nature of the service they were delivering and of their role, and therefore also willing to

operate in critical situations in order to guarantee effective service continuity. The experience of the pandemic crisis and the case of critical infrastructures have shown how necessary it is to arrange appropriate emergency management planning, by seeing to the resources and actions for dealing with the crisis, not only in the specific sector examined in the essay.

The pandemic has placed another issue at the centre of the public debate: remote employment and its various articulations and implications. Two contributions to this issue are dedicated to remote work – one titled “*Smart working ed emergenza sanitaria: lettura prospettica a partire da Invalsi*” (“Remote employment and healthcare emergency: a reading of prospects starting from Invalsi”) and another titled “*Il lavoro agile: un’occasione da non perdere*” (“Remote employment: a can’t-miss opportunity”).

The first paper takes as its model for analysis the national institute for the evaluation of the education and training system (Istituto nazionale per la valutazione del sistema educativo di istruzione e di formazione – Invalsi), where remote employment was introduced on a trial basis beginning in 2018. During the emergency phase, the Institute accelerated the process of defining and signing projects for the remote employment of its employees that had not already begun this mode of work. Invalsi, even during the pandemic, therefore maintained the same remote working methods already implemented in the experimental phase, extending them to all personnel (researchers, technologists and technical-administrative staff). Starting from the concept of crisis management

as an integrated organisational learning model for crisis management, the essay analyses which changes produced by remote working in the emergency phase can last even after the health crisis and thus become part of the organisational culture of companies and administrations.

Implementing remote employment systematically even after the pandemic phase will, for public administrations, be a “moment of truth” for the possibility of reinventing new management and work models. In keeping with this perspective, the paper “*Il lavoro agile: un’occasione da non perdere*” offers an interpretative framework relating to remote employment. In particular, the remote employment value chain is presented, and new, alternative conceptual and applicative models are proposed, highlighting the various purposes and the degree of application of remote employment to the public sector. Therefore, according to the paper’s thesis, the more public organizations rely on this mode of working in order to transition from a traditional bureaucratic model to the paradigm of flexible organization, the more they will be able to improve their performance. In fact, remote employment may also present a major opportunity to abandon traditional organizational models and introduce more flexible logic that can truly improve internal efficiency and the quality of the delivered services, professional growth, and employee motivation and commitment. Therefore, in the perspective offered by the authors, remote employment requires a deeper reflection on how to redesign the organizational model, while also rethinking the role of public managers.

The journal’s dialogues section includes the essay entitled “*Invecchiamento demografico e sostenibilità della spesa pensionistica*” (“An aging population and sustainability of pension spending”), which aims to illustrate the reasons underlying Italian policy decisions in pension matters, describing the European institutional framework in which they developed and analysing the effects these reforms have had on our country’s public spending, with an international comparison. According to the authors, if Italy were to undertake a significant path of economic growth, it would be possible to considerably attenuate the aging population’s negative effects on pension spending, which is the most substantial item in public spending.

Lastly, the Close-Up section includes two papers on case histories. The article “*Una misurazione condivisa della performance organizzativa: l’esperienza degli indicatori comuni per le funzioni di supporto*” (“A shared measurement of organizational performance: the experience of common indicators for support functions”) analyses the model measuring the performance of the Department of public function. The Department identified a set of indicators to measure the administrative support functions common to all public organizations, with the final objective being to promote the measurement of performance and to guarantee performance benchmarks. The essay “*Indagine sull’amministrazione difensiva*” (“Investigation on defensive administration”) examines the issue of defensive administration for the purposes both of ensuring its quantification in the Italian setting and of proposing solutions to limit the potential distortions that this phenomenon might cause

with regard to the public administration's proper function.

The contributions, in their plurality of visions, all indicate a propositional function on innovation as a stimulus to be used in the management of crisis. Innovation can readdress the "privileging" of time over space. It is necessary to bring about a break between the old ways of thinking and the present ones. At the same time,

it is necessary to think of the growth of knowledge and the transitions from one paradigm or one scientific theory to another as non-linear processes but which occur in leaps (Kuhn & Boyd 1983). Perhaps the time has come to overcome the theory of resilience in public institutions in favor of theoretical models that enhance "leaps forward", also agent of experiential content, but capable of defining, modeling and regulating change.

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