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ETHICAL DIMENSION OF CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Summary. In today's society there are a huge amount of real risks threatening not only the economic interests of society but also the social life of individuals. These security risks should be seen as an inseparable part of all social processes. The main aim of crisis management is to establish a functional strategy on how to manage both risks and crises. The goal of this paper is to clarify the implementation and application of ethical principles for both crisis management levels. It is necessary to realize that "*crisis ethics*" is not just a specific form of normative social ethics. The ethical dimension of crisis management also includes the professional ethics of crisis managers.

Key words: crisis management, risk, responsibility, solidarity.

ETYCZNY WYMIAR ZARZĄDZANIA KRYZYSOWEGO

Streszczenie. W dzisiejszym społeczeństwie istnieje ogromna ilość realnych niebezpieczeństw, które zagrażają nie tylko interesom ekonomicznym społeczeństwa, ale również życiu społecznemu jednostek. Przedstawione zagrożenia powinny być postrzegane jako integralna część wszystkich procesów społecznych. Głównym celem zarządzania kryzysowego jest stworzenie funkcjonalnych strategii prezentujących, w jaki sposób zarządzać zagrożeniami oraz kryzysami. Celem niniejszego opracowania jest wyjaśnienie wdrażania i stosowania zasad etycznych dla obu poziomów zarządzania kryzysowego. Konieczne jest, aby pamiętać, że "etyka kryzysu" nie jest tylko szczególną formą normatywnej etyki społecznej. Etyczny wymiar zarządzania kryzysowego obejmuje również profesjonalnego menedżera etyki w sytuacji kryzysowej.

Słowa kluczowe: zarządzanie kryzysowe, ryzyko, odpowiedzialność, solidarność.

The history of mankind is marked with various negative situations caused mainly by natural phenomena. These negative situations influenced not only our past but they still have

some impact on the future of our society. Their destructiveness is associated with accidents and crisis symptoms caused by human factors. Increasing human knowledge opens up new dimensions for society. Unfortunately, this knowledge creates parallel risks that are threatening the existence of society. Security then becomes very important. In crisis management security means the state in which “the peace is maintained and sovereignty, territorial integrity, frontiers and democratic order of a country, fundamental rights and freedoms of the inhabitants guaranteed by constitution, economic stability are not threatened, and people's lives and health, property and environment are protected”¹. The maintenance of both social security and the security of each individual is the priority of crisis management. From this point of view this paper is concerned with the ethical starting points of crisis management, which have a very important role for society.

The character of security is based on a subject-object relationship. This is due to the fact that it would be pointless to think about security without thinking about a human as an active subject searching for knowledge.

The human's ability to recognise some impulses of environment as potentially risky is a crucial factor in respect of the determination of subjective or objective rate of risk. According to crisis management² risk means the potential possibility “of system security breach, object or process breach. It is the probability of crisis symptom establishment and its consequence”³. It is a type of quantitative and qualitative threat. Our perception of reality and impulses as risky enables us to eliminate their influence on our security effectively or to keep them at an acceptable rate⁴.

There are many terms in the crisis management terminological glossary which characterise events in our society. The most frequent terms are the terms ‘crisis’ and ‘crisis symptom’ which can have an emergency characteristic⁵. In some cases they can cause a crisis. Crisis symptoms cause “the quality changes of system elements and also changes of relationship quality and linkages between them. The system then adapts to new conditions which are changed internally or in its actual environment. The mentioned changes very often have a degradation characteristic and therefore are undesirable. Exceptionally, they can

¹ Novák L.: Plánovanie zdrojov na riešenie krízových situácií. crr.sk s.r.o., Bratislava 2010, p. 9.

² Crisis management means “all activities of competent institutions intended for the analysis of security risks and threats, monitoring of risk determinants, for prevention of establishment of crisis situations and for planning, organizing, realisation and checking of all activities intended for establishment of conditions that would serve by solving the crisis situations” (Šimák, 2005, p. 19).

³ Šimák L.: Terminologický slovník krízového riadenia. FŠI ŽU v Žiline, Žilina 2005, p. 31, dostupné <http://fsi.uniza.sk/kkm/files/publikacie/tskr.pdf>.

⁴ Acceptable risk is “fixed to value from 10^{-5} to 10^{-7} from experiences and technical resources, i.e. negative phenomenon can occur only once from 100.000 to 10.000.000 cases, or once in mentioned number of time units” (Šimák, 2015, p. 41).

⁵ Emergency is “an event which is serious and it is difficult to foresee it timely and to limit it to its territory. It is caused by the influence of natural disaster, technical or technological accident, failure in operation or intentional human act, it causes a disruption of system stability or processes and activities in progress, it threatens the lives and health of people, material and cultural possessions or environment” (Šimák, 2005, p. 21).

involve some elements of development and tendencies”⁶. In our society we repeatedly encounter not only economic but also social crises. The mission of crisis management is to have the ability to foresee the crisis or to regulate a crisis in progress.

In general, business ethics has a double function. The first one includes a normative orientation in the relationship between a manager and other subjects and the second one offers some self-regulation instructions for a manager's behaviour and his self-control.⁷ Crisis management establishes a specific space for the implementation of ethics. We can consider “*crisis ethics*” as a special form of normative social ethics. It is concerned with the implementation and application of ethical codes into both dimensions of crisis management⁸. From this point of view we consider three areas of ethics application. These are the ethics of risk management, the ethics of crisis management and the professional ethics of crisis managers.⁹

Both the crisis manager and crisis management have an important position in the business environment which puts pressure on effectiveness, profit optimization and competition. The obligations relating to the job performance of crisis manager arise from “responsibility [...] for the organisation’s position in economic environment, to the owner of organisation and of course for the security of his employees and his family”¹⁰. It is necessary to be aware of the fact that risks and crises are an inseparable part of both the business environment and society. Broadly speaking, we can consider “*crisis ethics*” as a part of ethics management or business ethics. We should not forget some specific social risks, risks of demographic development or risks caused by growth of criminality and risks of ethnic, racial, religious, ideological and cultural intolerance.¹¹ Crisis management applied in public administration seems to be more effective for the general public. Prevention against crisis symptoms together with crisis planning is important for life in any society to prevent crises and to eliminate damages and losses if crisis situations are becoming apparent. The way in which a society applies these measures and regulations in practice may cause some limits for its members. In this context we have to think about the ethical dimensions of crisis management because a crisis manager must be responsible both to society and for the whole society.

The security of the population and the society is the priority, all egoistic interests of individuals must be kept in check. For this reason, crisis management and particularly its preparation phase, crisis planning is based on solidarity. In some cases this solidarity can be imposed¹² by the state. Such a directive approach of the state or possible sanctions against

⁶ Šimák L.: Krízový manažment vo verejnej správe. Žilinská univerzita v Žiline, FBI, Žilina 2015, s. 45.

⁷ Navrátilová D.: Manažérska etika. Fakulty výrobných technológií Technickej univerzity, Prešov 2004.

⁸ I.e. risk management and crisis management.

⁹ Antušák E.: Krízový management. Hrozby, krize, príležitosti. WoltersKluwer ČR, Praha 2009.

¹⁰ Bláha J. - Dytrt Z.: Manažérska etika. Management Press, Praha 2003, p. 39.

¹¹ Šimák L.: Krízový manažment vo verejnej správe. Žilinská univerzita v Žiline, FBI, Žilina 2015.

¹² From the legal point of view such imposed solidarity is covered by the various laws such as the Act of the NR SR(National Council of Slovak Republic) No. 319/2002 Coll. about defence of SR, the Act of the NR SR No 320/2002 Coll. about defence obligation or the Act of the NR SR No. 179/2011 Coll. About economic

individual align with social security. However, members of the society may consider this as a threat to their economic interests and freedoms. If there is a possibility of threats to humans and health during crisis situations and emergencies, the economic interests of individuals must be a lower priority. A common determinant of all these measures is the minimisation of risks of a threat to life, health, state property, environment and cultural treasures. On this basis, the laws regulating behaviour of natural and legal persons during crisis situations and emergencies reflect some general ethical principles presented in society.

One of the goals of crisis management is to solve crisis symptoms, and maintain the security of human life, health and property. If we need to select particular ethical concepts adequately explaining the motivation of human actions during emergencies we could definitely select Weber's concept of "*ethics in thinking*" and "*ethics of responsibility*"¹³. Inevitably, there must be cooperation between the crisis manager and the rest of the society during emergencies. Each member of society has some possibility and also some obligation to act and to give aid. The decision to act is embedded in the ethics of thinking. Obligation to act for the good is rooted in every individual from their early years and it is strengthened during the educational process. Individuals understand the particular norms and orders as general obligations¹⁴ and accept them "they must be obeyed, no matter what the consequences are. [...] if an intention is right, logically its results are right too. If it is not like this, no actor is guilty but external circumstances are"¹⁵. On the basis of the 'right intention of action' interpretation, the principles of civil protection are functional¹⁶. These principles are an important part of the security of individuals and society as a whole.

Over the past three decades the idea of sustainable development has been discussed at large¹⁷. This idea makes us hold down the selfish interests of the contemporary generation and change our behaviour taking into account the future generations. Of course, the crisis management plays an important role in the attainment of this objective. Global events are not only influenced by human behaviour which may be judged based on the responsibility for what has actually happened. The threats of disasters which call for different approach to

mobilisation and the Act of the NR SR No. 42/1994 Coll. about civil protection. These acts modify and adjust behaviour of individuals in crisis situations and during emergencies. They speak about working obligations of or in-kind payment of legal and natural persons.

¹³ Striving to better understand the inner structure of responsibility, we may turn to the Karl-Otto Apel's concept of three levels within the structure of responsibility. The first one is the subject of responsibility (carrier), the responsible individual who is able to adjust his/her own goals taking into consideration the actual interests of the community that the individual is a part of, and taking into consideration direct and indirect consequences of his/her behaviour. The second level comprises the object of responsibility, i.e. the thing which the subject is responsible for. The third, and last, level of responsibility gives rise to the criterion of what responsible behaviour is and who we actually report to. The formulation of the criterion of responsible behaviour and its definition is a matter of mutual understanding, since man's responsible behaviour is only meaningful in the context of collective choice (Machalová, 2008, p. 697-698).

¹⁴ For more information see (Machalová, 2008)

¹⁵ Machalová T.: *Etika zodpovednosti*. Max Weber. In Remišová A. (ed.) *Dejiny etického myslenia*. KALLIGRAM, Bratislava 2008, p. 682.

¹⁶ The Act about civil protection of population No. 47/2012 Coll.

¹⁷ This concept is defined in the Act No. 17/1992 Coll. on the Environment.

responsible behaviour affect global events to a significant extent as well. We have to realise that the nature itself is vulnerable and the efforts aimed at its preservation should be reflected in human behaviour. Man is inevitably interconnected with nature. Therefore, all our behaviour finally impacts the environment, even though this impact is often indirect¹⁸. The impulse which stood behind the formation of a real responsible approach to the environment was the disaster which took place in 1976 in Seveso in Northern Italy. The explosion of the chemical plant led to dioxin leak and subsequent intoxication of citizens, contamination of soil and animal deaths. This tragic event drove the competent authorities to start considering a change which would lead to the protection of society and the environment¹⁹. It is this event which makes us realise that nature as such "is not the object of will and desire of individuals"²⁰, but the essential precondition for the being of man, "it is a part of our liability, obligation"²¹. Some of the crisis management measures lead to the fulfilment of our moral duty to nature. It is the concept of sustainable development of society which keeps the option to "satisfy [...] the basic human needs preserving thereby the natural diversity and the natural functions of ecosystems"²² open for the contemporary and future generations and sets out the limits of human behaviour in relation to the environment. Be it industrial or natural disasters, we always have to think of possible consequences and try to prevent them. It is a matter of fact that wilfulness of the contemporary generation may be devastative for the entire future population.

Crisis management cannot be reduced to norms and orders only, but is a set of all the activities created by by these norms and orders on the basis of risk analysis. It is then necessary that crisis management or a particular crisis manager is a competent actor "of action to take a stand and to be responsible for (predictable) consequences of his action"²³. Crisis management is responsible for decisions made during and after emergencies and also for human lives and property. If we consider that the concept of 'responsibility of managing workers' belongs to central categories of modern business ethics, it depicts a moral obligation of the subject to think about some consequences of their action with respect to all parties, which can be influenced by the action"²⁴. The most crucial requirement which must be fulfilled by a crisis manager is the responsibility to consider all the advantages and disadvantages of their actions. In this respect we can replace this ability with an attitude

¹⁸ Whether natural or social.

¹⁹ This amendment adopts several measures to regulate human behaviour in relation to the environmental protection. These measures have been last amended in the SEVESO III Directive which was transposed into the Slovak Act No. 128/2015 Coll. on the Prevention of Major Industrial Accidents.

²⁰ Machalová T.: *Etika zodpovednosti*. Max Weber. In Remišová, A. (ed.) *Dejiny etického myslenia*. KALLIGRAM, Bratislava 2008, p. 687.

²¹ *Ibidem*.

²² *Národná Stratégia Trvalo Udržateľného Rozvoja*, p. 1.

²³ Machalová T.: *Etika zodpovednosti*. Max Weber. In Remišová, A. (ed.) *Dejiny etického myslenia*. KALLIGRAM, Bratislava 2008, p. 682.

²⁴ Remišová A.: *Etika a ekonomika*. KALLIGRAM, Bratislava 2011, p. 157.

towards life and morality, which is “received through a human’s life experience”²⁵. The moral value of virtue lies in its usefulness. Virtue is beneficial both to its carrier and to other people in general.

Besides responsibility, the usefulness of our behaviour in relation to other subjects constitutes the essential factor which influences the crisis manager's decision-making process. Altruistic and socially beneficial behaviour may seem advantageous, because it receives mostly positive feedback from the mainstream society. However, the crisis manager may also count on the eventual positive response to his/her own behaviour in the protection of human lives, health and property. There's no place for personal benefit in the solution of crisis situations. In this context, we may use David Hume's idea of moral sentiment. Hume's "[m]oral sentiment is a special kind of motivation of pleasure free of selfishness. Moral perfection of man is then realised through man's ability to do what is good and useful for others. Such an ability characteristic of the mankind can be noted in the social virtue - justice which the society itself promotes through rearing and education"²⁶. And it is rearing and education which, as Hume believes, cultivates that which is natural for each individual. This means that sympathy to other people comes from the natural feeling which is typical of every single man²⁷. This sympathy to the members of the society can be taken as the motivation in drafting process and observance of social rules of justice. The selfish interest of an individual is replaced with usefulness. The reason for that is the fact that the efforts to maximise personal benefit represent the individual interest of the subject. In the end, the unlimited personal well-being of an individual could lead to the destruction of the society as such and basically to the end of existence as we know it. However, the very existence of an individual needs presence of another subject and it is this reciprocity of usefulness which makes us hold back our personal benefit to some extent.

Whereas the public participates in the attainment of the objective set to resolve crisis phenomena as well, Hume's moral sentiment needs to be present in full in every individual. Sympathy to the members of the society and the altruism stemming from the sympathy is a crucial precondition for the crisis management measures. Therefore, also the crisis manager who is a member of the society must necessarily arrive at the conviction that his/her steps are correct. Without this, it is not possible to implement the principles of risk management and crisis management into practice. This is why the workers of crisis management have to take into consideration the utilitarian principle of impartiality and the criterion of usefulness when trying to decide whether or not their behaviour is correct. They add two more parameters to the responsibility and usefulness they should remember when attaining their work objectives.

²⁵ Klopfer M.: *Etika podnikania*. SNP, Bratislava 1995, p. 11..

²⁶ Bilasová V.: *Etika zodpovednosti*. Max Weber. In Remišová, A. (ed.) *Dejiny etického myslenia*. KALLIGRAM, Bratislava 2008, p. 269.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 268).

However, there is no such thing as a single manual warranting that their behaviour in crisis situations and extraordinary events is always right and moral. This uncertainty is caused by the plurality of ethical theories in our society and the complexity, uniqueness of the situations in which the crisis managers have to make their decisions. But careful revision of the ideas and thoughts of the above mentioned authors or searching further sources for inspiration would be of great help in the development of a code of conduct for crisis management. Today the crisis manager can be guided by ethical codes intended for managers in general, which have a role to guide the action of individuals, mainly in a business environment. Unfortunately, nowadays no specific document or code for crisis managers exists. However, its creation could be considered essential because it would support the decisions of crisis management in situations which can influence the lives of all members of society.

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Omówienie:

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