



The project »Resilient Crisis Management: The Role of Advising in the Development and Utilization of »Opportunities« in Crisis Progressions,« conducted at the Leibniz Institute for Spatial Social Research (IRS), aims to better understand how crises can be managed successfully. It compares three different kinds of crisis: economic, environmental, and political. The project focuses on the role of experts in crisis management, including, for example, scientists who are asked for advice on how to cope with a situation. What do these experts need to know about crises and about their own role in confronting them?

In considering time and space as central factors of their research questions, the researchers can provide insights into how to deal with crises in practice. The links between crisis and spatiality become particularly clear when, for instance, »crisis regions« are mentioned or »risks of infection« within and between sectors or industries are addressed (so-called »spillover effects«). The spatial dimension also comes to the fore in discussions about territorial responsibilities for crisis management. The aim of this research is to illuminate facets of the spatiality of crisis—as networked, topological, territorially related, or scalable—and to highlight their interconnectedness. Once a dramatic crisis is overcome, it is reflected upon and often placed in a linear chronology. In coming to terms with the crisis, one begins to speak, for instance, of warning signals that were recognized too late or ignored for too long. This reconstructed course of the crisis is relevant for making changes after the crisis has passed. However, it allows for only limited conclusions about how to cope with the acute crisis itself, which took the actors involved by surprise. This project is particularly concerned with concrete aspects of crisis management, such as levels of interaction within a crisis team. One outcome of understanding crises as special contexts of action in decision-making is that they lose their horror. Thus, as collected interviews show, people who professionally deal with many crisis situations do not necessarily experience crises as frightening but as an effective »coping structure« that makes sense when decisions must be made quickly to avert the worst.

What characterizes a crisis? Do different crises share similarities? And if so, is it possible to draw conclusions about whether during the unfolding of a crisis opportunities exist for resolving it appropriately and with lasting effect? Crises do not necessarily end in catastrophe. Instead, they mark a critical moment and turning point where quick decisions must be made. Crises cannot be identified objectively. Only the perception of a situation as a crisis defines it as such. Crises are associated with stress because individuals face pressure to defuse a situation perceived as threatening in a timely manner. This stress is aggravated by the fact that no reliable knowledge exists for how to resolve crises, which means that action outside the normal routine must be taken.