



REVIEW OF DIPLOMA THESIS

Review type: Opponent's Review

Author of the diploma thesis: Shahla Babayeva

Title: Crisis Communication Challenges in Türkiye's Centralized Disaster Response: A Case Study of the Kahramanmaraş Earthquakes

Author of the review:

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This thesis analyses the challenges faced by Türkiye in the crisis communication aftermath of the Kahramanmaraş earthquakes. Through a case study approach, this thesis aims to identify the inefficiencies, underlying contributing factors, and resulting impacts. It brings new factual data on crisis management cycle analyzed through the aspect of public policy, set in a broader historical context of the socio-political development in Türkiye, prior the actual crisis took place. By using the actor-centered institutionalism as theoretical approach, this analysis advanced the theoretical studies on the interdependency between different social actors in the political system(s) as a necessary factor for institutionalization of politics and policy-making. It emphasizes the role of different actors, including political parties and media in the way the institutions formalizes their politics and policies, especially in times and emergency, and examines the interplay between formal and informal institutions in shaping crisis communication processes. In this regard, the research findings contribute to a deeper understanding of crisis communication dynamics overall, and not limited only Türkiye as a representative case of this analysis. It also suggest additional research of the importance of clear and transparent pre-planned strategic crisis communication in order for governments to mitigate effectively environmental hazards and to minimize human losses.

The research question is well-framed and well chosen for testing the key hypothesis. Sub-research questions would have increased the quality of the analysis and would have allowed more-in-depth empirical research. Nevertheless, this does not undermine the importance of the research question identified as a literature gap. It asks how the institution faces its limits in managing crisis in a very specific socio-political context of Türkiye and suggests investigating the constraints inherent in such a centralized systems. It identifies the centralized system as a framework for investigating the research questions, and later in unpacks the details in the empirical work. By focusing on the communication related to inefficiencies after the Kahramanmaraş earthquakes, it finds out that variety of technological, organizational and sociological constraints are a serious limitation for mitigating crises with human losses. Moreover, it challenges the views on the socio-political factors for rising polarization in societies, emphasizing the importance of interaction of formal and informal institutions for delivering a policy outcome. This also refers to the factors of the rising corruption as a limitation to functional democracies,



which are delivering on the needs of the citizens. This sort of further analysis should in explored in future.

The analysis examines the link between substantive policy analysis and interaction-oriented policy research. For this purpose, the structural framework offers an overall exploration of the chosen topic, justification of theoretical and methodological choices, an overview of the research problem, analysis on the constellation between involved actors. The conceptual framework is discussed in chapter 4, followed by justification of the methodological approach in chapter 5, and chapters 6 and 7 are discussing the analysis of earthquake(s) and disaster management will be elaborated. The conceptual should have been elaborated more in depth, discussing other important concepts as well, but this does not stress the overall structure of the thesis.

The factual accuracy and argumentation is in place with some limitations due to the small scale of the sample analysis. The process tracing method however, combined with the single case study methods, allows for justified arguments on the historical development of the socio-political context in the selected case, prior an actual crisis took place and triggered a chain of events, and exposing the constellation between different actors. This analysis also makes important arguments on the shortcomings of media freedom, ineffective party politics and institutionalization of politics, as result of long process of backsliding in the policy-making. These arguments however remains somewhat in the background analysis and it gives us assumptions that should be further explored in depth.

The literature gap exists on the crisis communication related inefficiencies especially in the context of Türkiye is well examined, and it contributes to the literature gap on general global disaster management/crisis communication. This thesis focuses on the communication challenges that have appeared during response stage of Kahramanmaras earthquakes, which jeopardized the provision of immediate assistance, minimizing the additional damage and provision of the aid. The above-mentioned quotation is clarified by examining the existing actors' constellations, in a broader hierarchic context. It examines as well the sociological challenges as a cause, but it does not make arguments on which factors should be considered as necessary and/or sufficient conditions for analysis such cases in general context. The arguments made on the challenges classified as technological, sociological and organizational barriers should have been more clear and concise, and it this regard the style and text edition could contribute from raising the quality of writing.

Nevertheless these observations do not stresses the academic contribution of this analysis as well as the importance of the arguments necessary for making evidence-based policies in future, to used by varieties of stakeholders.

For the above reasons, I recommend the diploma thesis for the defense.

My grading is A

Date:

Signature: