

Public risk communication: A theoretical proposal for extreme event contexts

Comunicação pública de risco: uma proposição teórica para contextos de eventos extremos

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Abstract: In 2024, the Global Water Monitor recorded more than eight thousand deaths and 40 million displaced people due to disasters and extreme events. Among the aspects that deserve deep reflection in the increasingly intensified global risk scenario is communication and its role in preventing and addressing situations that impact society. Based on an exploratory theoretical study, this research integrates contributions from the Social Sciences to understand the contemporary context and to redefine the meanings of public communication. Drawing on the contributions of Balandier (2019), Bauman and Bordoni (2016), Castells (2018), Beck (2018), and Brazilian authors such as Matos (2011), Duarte (2007), and Oliveira (2004), the study proposes the perspective of Public Risk Communication as an approach focused on meaning-making, strengthening social ties, and mitigating harm in contexts of uncertainty, crisis, and transformation.

Keywords: public communication; risk communication; natural disasters; extreme events; risk society.

Resumo: Em 2024, o Global Water Monitor mapeou um total de mais de oito mil mortes e 40 milhões de pessoas deslocadas em função de desastres e eventos extremos. Entre os aspectos que merecem máxima atenção no cenário de riscos que se intensifica no mundo, está a comunicação bem como seu papel na prevenção e no enfrentamento de situações que impactam a sociedade. A partir de uma pesquisa exploratória teórica, o presente estudo articula os aportes das Ciências Sociais no sentido de compreender o contexto contemporâneo em busca de ressignificar os sentidos da comunicação pública. Com as contribuições de Balandier (2019), Bauman e Bordoni (2016), Castells (2018), Beck (2018) e autores brasileiros como Matos (2011), Duarte (2007) e Oliveira (2004), propõe-se a perspectiva de uma comunicação pública de risco como abordagem voltada à construção de sentido, fortalecimento do laço social e mitigação de danos em contextos de incerteza, crise e transformação.

Palavras-chave: comunicação pública; comunicação de risco; desastres naturais; eventos extremos; sociedade do risco.

1. Initial Considerations

According to the Global Water Monitor (www.globalwater.online) of the National University of Australia, at least 17 places in the world faced extreme events on different continents in 2024, the year in which the average land surface temperature was the highest ever recorded globally in 111 countries. The rise was 1.2°C above the average of 1995-2005. In addition, the frequency of months with record high temperatures was also the greatest since 1979. Climate change is pointed out as a probable cause of the

mapped occurrences. Among the consequences of that are 8,700 deaths, 40 million people displaced, and economic losses of more than US\$550 billion. Among the disasters listed in the Australian report are river floods, flash floods, landslides, droughts, and tropical cyclones, such as the flood that took place in Rio Grande do Sul, a southern state of Brazil, classified as an unprecedented hydrological disaster in the country (Collischonn et al., 2025).

It is estimated that 2 million people were affected by the flood in Rio Grande do Sul, which had its peak in May 2024 (Empresa Brasileira de Comunicação, 2024). During the extreme event, public agencies linked to disaster management¹ were responsible for issuing alerts, both to support protective decision-making and handle the emergency faced by society. This role is provided for in the National Policy for Protection and Civil Defense (*Lei nº 12.608*, 2012) and Ordinance No. 3,027, of December 4, 2020, which defines the procedures for sending alerts to the population about the likelihood of disasters, a regulatory scope in which risk communication falls. In the context of research and knowledge production, the extreme event mentioned raises important questions that require in-depth studies. One of the key points is precisely that of preventive communication, that is, risk communication under the responsibility of public bodies in the context of disasters and extreme events, having two main assumptions:

- (1) Risk communication can represent a significant coping strategy for the threatened/affected population, mitigating damage and preserving lives in extreme events and disasters, and,
- (2) The contemporary context of intensification of these occurrences makes it imperative that risk communication strategies be reframed through studies that recursively impact professional practices in public organizations.

From these two points emerges the need to establish new theoretical foundations that make it possible to analyze the increasingly frequent extreme events, as well as the need for communication associated with them.

This study proposes a conceptual approach called public risk communication, understood as an intersection between the fields of public communication and risk communication, applied to the context of disasters and extreme events. Recognizing the role of public organizations in cri-

1 The terms 'disasters' and 'extreme events' are used in this study as synonyms, since the goal is to discuss risk communication. However, we know there are differences in terminology. Tobin and Montz (1997) define natural disaster as the result of the action of an extreme natural event on a social system, causing damage and losses that exceed the capacity of those affected to live with its impact; this inability is what characterizes disasters for the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction [UNISDR], 2009). The high damage to people, properties, and environment also characterize extreme events for Slovic and Weber (2002), whether they have natural or technological causes, whereas for Marengo (2017), extreme events are major deviations from a climate state.

sis mediation, this proposal aims to understand how communication can contribute to the prevention, social protection, and reconstruction of the community bond in scenarios of increasing risk².

To understand contemporary contexts, we use social sciences and seek to interface authors such as Balandier (2019), Bauman and Bordoni (2016), Castells (2018), and Beck (2018). From the comparison of the theoretical propositions, we created the scenario in which we intend to reach an understanding about public risk communication in contemporary society. It is understood that the proposal for Public Risk Communication could fill a gap in the literature by integrating approaches of the Social Sciences to analyze the role of public institutions in the communicative management of extreme events, going beyond the traditional approach of crisis communication.

2. Theoretical Foundations to Compose the Contemporary Social Scenario

A paradox marks our times: On the one hand, there is a belief in the power of man and science to create solutions to mitigate the impact of the productive system and modern consumption. On the other hand, in opposition to this mechanistic optimism, there is an awakening regarding our lack of control (Balandier, 2019). And it is precisely this awakening to humankind's lack of control over the risks created by modern society that is taking place in an unavoidable way with the occurrence of extreme events, especially those involving nature, technically called natural disasters³.

From this ambiguity between the power of human power-to-do and the impotence produced by the complexity of the phenomena, remains the individual and collective malaise in the face of uncertainties. Thus, for Balandier (2019), contemporary humans suffer a loosening of social bonds, in which the point of rupture means ignoring or rejecting the other. This occurs in a landscape of denaturation of the environment, brutality of inequalities, and advances of exclusion, elements that begin to compose a state of permanent crisis (Bauman & Bordoni, 2016).

The characterization of contemporaneity from crises inspires a pessimistic recommendation by Bauman and Bordoni (2016) that indicates

2 This is only part of a larger effort that integrates the Master's research: *Comunicação Pública do Risco: dimensões comunicacionais estratégicas em evento extremo no Rio Grande do Sul* (Public Risk Communication: Strategic Communicative Dimensions in an Extreme Event in Rio Grande do Sul), which discusses the role of public risk communication in hydrological alerts, considering local public managers and the affected community as interlocutors of the communication process. The research is developed by the student Janis Linda Loureiro Morais under the guidance of Professor Rosângela Florczak de Oliveira, at PPGCOM/PUCRS.

3 It is important to go into details about the term 'natural', which does not mean without human intervention or caused by the action of humans, but events that happen in the natural environment.

that everyone should get used to this state. This is because, according to the authors, when faced with a crisis, initially, a feeling of uncertainty and ignorance about what is to come emerges; then, in a second moment, the intention of intervention is evident, determining measures to be applied. However, with the crisis of modern society, in which the nations lose strength to players of the global market, there is a divorce between power and politics, which results precisely in a serious agency crisis, that is, of instances capable of making decisions and acting in the face of crises. Therefore, in the face of a crisis, the feeling of uncertainty stands out, since it is up to the local authorities to solve global problems. The limited capacity for reaction aggravates the process of weakening ties between the State and citizens, resulting in a society that is without cohesion, liquid, and powerless to react.

This rupture between the fragile nations and society has distrust as its central element (Castells, 2018). Multiple crises – economic, environmental, and cultural – include communication using a very critical approach, since it becomes “dominated by lies, now called post-truth” (Castells, 2018, p. 9). The deepest crisis, for the author, is the rupture of the relationship between those who govern and those who are governed, which results precisely in the inability to handle all these crises. This is not about the divergence between left and right ideological currents; the rupture is profound, both on an emotional and cognitive level, and seriously affects the political model of representation and governance of liberal democracy.

Among the elements criticized by Castells (2018) is politics that combines communication, marketing, and persuasive strategies, without promoting debate and participation, as well as the means of communication that act under the control of money or the state. On the other hand, another possible communication emerges, one linked to the struggle for power in current democratic societies, through the communicative autonomy of citizens. Thus, the construction of reality depends on the media universe, in which the messages that form opinion must be simple and emotional, but such opinion is only confirmed in the continuous debate on social networks. “Mass communication is shaped by mass self-communication through the Internet and the Wi-fi platforms that are ubiquitous in our practice” (Castells, 2018, p. 30).

The evidence brought by Balandier (2019), Bauman and Bordoni (2016), and Castells (2018) can be understood as symptoms of what Beck (2018) names a “metamorphosis of the world”. The metamorphosis was presented by Morin (2010) in a media contribution (Le Monde, 2010) with a text entitled: *The praise of Metamorphosis*. From Morin’s perspective, when a system is unable to cope with its vital problems, it degrades, disintegrates, or else encourages a meta-system capable of dealing with its own problems, when he claims that the system undergoes a metamorphosis.

We live in a world that is not only changing, but metamorphosing,

as Beck points out (2018). The author's starting point is the premise that change impacts some things, while others remain the same. On the other hand, the concept of a world metamorphosis implies a deeper transformation, which causes something totally new to emerge as old certainties disappear. In dealing with climate change, for example, Beck (2018) shifts the attention of society from risk – a concept he proposed in the 1980s – with a focus on denouncing the negative impact, to the possibility of producing common normative horizons, that is, to the positive side effects of the problems. We can say that the author agrees with Baumann and Bordoni (2016) by situating the origin of the side effects of modern society in the laboratories of technology, science, and business, and not only in politics. “The concept of world-risk society can be understood as the sum of the problems for which there is no institutional response” (Beck, 2018, p. 93).

The contribution of interpretations from the social sciences helps us to understand the risks and crises beyond isolated facts, but also of circumstances that can be managed. It is a characteristic of the time lived in cosmopolitanized spaces of action (Beck, 2018), in which all people, in some way, are affected by global risks, while nations lose their central role and begin to orbit around the world at risk. It is precisely the global risks that influence the perception or awareness of metamorphosis, as well as confront us with living conditions, social relations, and the shared destiny of uncertainty in the 21st century. “All institutions are failing, no one and nothing is decisive enough in tackling global climate risk” (Beck, 2018, p. 17).

Just like nations, communication, and especially public communication, needs to undergo a metamorphosis to “find its place in the digital world at risk, where borders have become liquid and flexible” (Beck, 2018, p. 20). In the metamorphosis paradox, in order to communicate the location, one must act, think, and plan in a cosmopolitan way, to “discover oneself as a player in cosmopolitan spaces” (Beck, 2018, p. 25), subject to the logics of metamorphosis and contributing to the process of producing common normative horizons.

3. Public Communication and Risk Communication

In a world marked by continuous crises, uncertainties, and increasingly complex risks, public communication and risk communication emerge as key strategies. Both gain prominence beyond their informational dimension, but as mechanisms of institutional strengthening, promotion of social resilience, and preservation of life in emergencies. Despite its importance, they still seem to occupy a peripheral place in the scientific-academic interest of the field of communication. However, both approaches began to be perceived as emerging due to the context lived in the first decades of the 21st century.

Regarding public communication, Gutã (2023) carried out a literature review recalling fundamental authors such as the French Pierre Zémor, one of the most cited and known worldwide. Public communication, according to Zémor (1995; 2018), consists of the dissemination of information of collective interest in order to preserve and strengthen social ties. In Brazil, the field was consolidated by authors such as Oliveira (2004), Matos (2011), Duarte (2007), and others, who highlight its democratic character and inclusion in public policies. These authors point to the role of public communication as a promoter of social engagement, transparency, and active citizenship – all key elements also in risk contexts. According to Matos (2011), public communication should be aimed at transparency and the active participation of society. According to Duarte (2007), it is a citizen's right and a duty of the State, especially in situations of risk.

Public communication is associated with institutional processes and supports the public sector, says Gutã (2023). The author also considers it to be an academic field that can be consolidated as a scientific discipline and often as an indicator of government orientation or the expression of the State represented by ministers, which can also be seen as the main indicator of democracy, as well as government efficiency.

Theoretically, complex visions coexist with more instrumental perspectives of public communication, such as that of Bessières (2009). For him, it is a set of techniques applied in the institutional context to achieve public goals, which may also have political significance, since it is coordinated by politically legitimate leaders. In the opposite sense, some attribute to communication a very different and wide role, such as Montoya (2006), who considers it an axis for the construction of eminently public assets, intrinsically linked with the need to train citizens and acting as a key nucleus of participatory democracy.

In Brazil, public communication began to be discussed in the 1990s (Liedtke & Curtinovi, 2016). The research of authors such as Heloiza Matos, Jorge Duarte, and Maria José da Costa Oliveira is recognized as significant in the theoretical development of the field in the country. Among the concepts proposed by the authors, the one presented by Oliveira (2004) stands out. The author states that public communication deals with communication carried out in democratized public spaces, with the discussion of issues of public interest, which implies the involvement and active participation of government, companies, the third sector, and society as a whole.

Public communication can therefore be understood as a circulation of meanings that society recognizes and places on its agenda, which can then be translated into social mobilization towards something (Montoya, 2006). It is linked to the engagement of social individuals in the production of a common world (Marques et al., 2017). Faced with a scenario of uncertainty, it has the potential to encompass risk as a constitutive dimension

(Quinteros, 2023) and take on the social role of promoting resilience to disasters (Victor, 2015).

According to Oliveira (2020), based on Wolton (2006; 2010), the starting point is the idea that communication is a process that supports the construction of meaning among subjects that coexist socially from different reasonings and interests and that requires dialogue as a methodology. Such cohabitation, however, always occurs in social, cultural, and historical contexts, which need to be understood and which define the shared meanings.

On the other hand, we have risk communication and its development as a field of study. If it is certain that risk is a latent disaster, and a disaster is a materialized risk (Fontana & Riorda, 2021), risk communication is aimed at modifying a habit in the face of a real or potential risk (Riorda, 2011). The objective of this type of communication is, according to Prior (2020), to change behaviors, reduce threats, and produce a perception and valuation of the risk to change situations that can be avoided.

At present, risk communication takes on a participatory approach that includes the public as a contributing agent. However, as Cozzi (2021) recalls, the effects of risk communication depend on the planning and efficiency of a plan based on informing, protecting, increasing trust in public authorities, and preventing rumors and misinformation. Risk communication was developed as a practical and scientific field focused on mediation between perceived risks, individual decisions, and collective actions. Authors such as Sandman (1993) point out that risk is the sum of real danger and the degree of social indignation. Slovic et al. (2004) shows that the public perception of risk may be higher than the technical risk, requiring communication strategies that are sensitive to context and emotion. Riorda (2011) and Prior (2020) advocate risk communication focused on participation, building trust in institutions, and preventing misinformation.

The understanding of public communication as a structuring axis of relations between the State and society, especially in contexts of extreme events, has gained strength in recent events. In Brazil, for example, the historical flood in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, in May 2024, impacted more than two million people, showing both advances and gaps in public risk communication. Although official warnings had been issued, difficulties such as technical language, lack of capillarity of the media used, and lack of articulation with community networks limited their effectiveness with the most vulnerable population (Empresa Brasil de Comunicação, 2024).

A similar situation was observed in Spain, where, between June and September 2024, different locations were affected by extreme events. In Huesca and Zaragoza, landslides and floods impacted urban and rural areas in early June. In Valencia, in October, heavy rains caused by a DANA resulted in catastrophic floods that caused the death of at least 232 people, according to official data (El País, 2025).

In all these cases, public risk communication proved insufficient to

promote protective actions, especially among populations with less access to digital channels. These examples reinforce the urgency of thinking of public risk communication as a practice that integrates technical, social, and cultural dimensions – overcoming the purely informational model and incorporating participatory, territorialized, and sensitive approaches to the different natures of extreme events, be they hydrological, geological, technological, or others.

4. Methodology

Exploratory research was carried out on theoretical propositions that seek to explain the new social contexts that emerge as a challenge to public organizations: Society in times of metamorphosis and uncertainty, as well as risks and crises.

Initially, the paradigmatic lenses of complexity (Morin, 2015) directed the research to authors of the field of Sociology who present perspectives removed from the functionalist and reductionist dimension, which are open to interdisciplinary dialogue and aimed at contemporary society. The selection of references followed the criteria of academic impact and relevance in the analysis of communicative risk management. Thus, we arrived at Balandier (2019), Bauman and Bordoni (2016), Castells (2018), and Beck (2018). Although the authors present a vast production of scientific value, we focused on the most recent productions in which the focus is on the interpretation of contemporary society.

We scanned their works seeking to find contributions relevant to our research. Thus, the theoretical contributions of each author were categorized and related to the impact on public communication and risk communication (Table 1).

Since the objective falls only on the theoretical dimension of the subject, we understand that it is necessary to include new methodological steps to reach the space of public risk communication practices.

5. Public Risk Communication as a Proposition

In view of what Beck (2018) points out by stating that the old certainties of modern society are disappearing, while something new emerges through a process of metamorphosis, space is created to reinforce the question regarding the role of communication and, more specifically, of public communication. Among these questions, public communication can be fundamental in the reconfiguration of the worldview, which starts to revolve around the risks of disasters and extreme events, especially those caused by climate change, as evidenced in studies such as the one presented by the Global Water Monitor (www.globalwater.online), from the National University of Australia.

Table 1 Elements of Possible Contributions to Public Risk Communication.

Theoretical Proposition	Quotes that Stand Out	Possible Contributions
Social in Times of Uncertainty/ Dispositional Sociology Overmodernity (when one discovers the damage of power, in the forms of technical arrogance and cynical calculation). Reference Author(s): Balandier (2019)	“Under the surface of transformations, it is a matter of finding what remains as a founding element, connecting people, allowing them to communicate and give meaning to their relations”, p. 330. “The world tends to become a kind of megamachine; man and social ties tend to be distanced, almost always to the point of rupture, which means ignorance or rejection of others”, p. 320. “Prevention campaigns should ‘alert without creating drama,’ situate between ‘information and panic,’ provide effectiveness to preventive messages”, p. 326. “The individual is a constructed object. And such construction requires qualified sociology with a recent term: It is dispositional... The image of the plural human reappears”, p. 339.	To understand that in a context of multiplied uncertainties, sociological knowledge is linked to communicational knowledge, in the task of responding to what may constitute a social tie, which corresponds to the acknowledgment of the others. Identifying extreme events as a moment of disorder associated with major transformations. Understanding that human beings are plural. There is no unity and continuity, but multiple contexts that require different dispositions. Thus, public communication needs to consider that individuals are never the same; there is no single formula that determines their behaviors, choices, and decisions.
Permanent Crisis / Sociology of Crisis Liquid Modernity (part of modernity, but a degraded modernity, where everything became unstable, precarious, temporary, and uncertain). It considers postmodernism, a period of transition that has passed. Reference Author(s): Bauman & Bordon (2016)	“We are inhabitants of a changing world, and we call this change a crisis”, p. 133. “Living in a constant state of crisis is not pleasant, but it can have a positive side because it keeps our senses vigilant and alert and prepares us psychologically for the worst”, p. 15. “building a flexible sociological model, which serves more to understand and explain than to criticize”, p. 110. “It is the role of sociology ... not only to observe the facts without judging them, but to get to the bottom of their reasons: To understand and help us understand the present in order to prepare for tomorrow. This is the only way we have left to mitigate uncertainty”, p. 111.	Understanding that the crisis is permanent, but also that it can represent a factor of change towards something better. Realizing that in the current scenario, with the loss of strength of the nations, we are experiencing a divorce between power and politics, which results in the absence of agencies capable of making decisions and acting in the face of crises. Therefore, in the face of a crisis, what is left is the feeling of uncertainty, since it is up to the local authorities to solve global problems. This weakening of the ties between the State and citizens creates a society without cohesion, a liquid society. Understanding that public risk communication is part of this agency crisis in the face of its social role of promoting resilience to crises, extreme events, and natural disasters.
Rupture/ Crisis of Liberal Democracy/ Collective Actions Rooted in Experience Network-Society/Post-Liberal Democracy Reference Author(s): Castells (2018)	“There is an even deeper crisis with devastating consequences on the (in) ability to deal with the multiple crises that poison our lives: The rupture of the relationship between those who govern and those who are governed”, p. 9. “When the economic system comes into crisis, people’s automatic reaction is to turn to paid institutions elected by citizens to defend them”, p. 98.	Understanding the impacts of the rupture of the political and institutional legitimacy of liberal democracy on risk and crisis management, which results in the (in)ability to handle these crises, especially when the habitability of the planet is in question. It is into this global juncture of distrust in institutions, which have lost legitimacy to protect the common interest, that public communication, which has the common interest as an object, needs to venture.
Metamorphosis/ Cosmopolitanization Sociology of Metamorphosis / Cosmopolitan Sociology Second Modernity/ Reflexive Modernity (period of coping with the undesirable side effects of the modernizing dynamics) Reference Author(s): Beck (2018)	“No one can escape the global. This is because the global, that is, the cosmopolitanized reality, is not only outside, but constitutes the strategic reality lived by all”, p. 21. “All institutions are failing, no one and nothing is decisive enough in tackling global climate risk”, p. 17. “This does not mean, however, that nations will dissolve and disappear, but will be metamorphosed. They need to find their place in the digital world at risk, where borders have become liquid and flexible; they need to (re) invent themselves, revolving around the new fixed stars of “world” and “humanity”, p. 20.	Placing public risk communication in the context of a cosmopolitanized space of action, where the global includes all. Realizing that, like nations, communication needs to undergo a metamorphosis to find its place in the digital world at risk, and to contribute to the process of metamorphosis of the production of common normative horizons. Understanding that it is precisely the global risks that influence the perception or awareness of metamorphosis, as well as confront us with the (in)human condition of the 21st century, (trans) forming social relations and creating moments of shared destiny of uncertainty.

SOURCE: prepared by the authors (2024) based on the theoretical references of Balandier (2019), Bauman and Bordon (2016), Castells (2018), and Beck (2018).

When trying to map out the contributions of the social sciences theorists and substantiate the relevance of public communication to the contemporary scenario, we consider that Balandier (2016) presents the imperative of the reconstitution of social ties. The challenge is precisely to reconstruct the context of the conflict that constitutes the rupture of the political and institutional legitimacy of liberal democracy in the face of risks and crises. There is a global atmosphere of distrust in institutions (Castells, 2018), which have lost legitimacy to protect the common interest, which is the focus of public communication.

Based on the survey of key elements of the theoretical propositions of Balandier (2019), Bauman and Bordoni (2016), Castells (2018), and Beck (2018), we have proposed possible contributions to public communication (Table 1).

In the context of cosmopolitanized action, in which risks become part of everyday life and crises are the new normal, public communication can be reframed to interface with multiplied uncertainties, as opposed to a having a linear, progressive, or negationist view, having as its role the task of reconstructing social ties. Based on the proposition of Balandier (2019), which has dispositional sociology as a starting point to propose that humans are plural, and therefore, there is no unity and no continuity, but rather, multiple contexts that require different dispositions. In this sense, communication could be a force of opposition to the reproduction of routine practices, characterized as non-institutional, open to all, and to creative action, with unexpected opportunities. Therefore, we propose the constitution of a theoretical-practical approach to what we call here Public Risk Communication.

At the same time that it produces and is produced by social players, public communication is part of the agency crisis that wears out its social role of promoting the fight against crises, extreme events, natural disasters, etc. and could “help to understand the present in order to prepare for tomorrow. This is the only way we have left to mitigate uncertainty” (Bauman & Bordoni, 2016, p. 111).

Thus, Public Risk Communication needs to consider that individuals are never the same, and that there is no single formula that determines their behaviors, choices, and decisions; that is, communication starts from a relation that is necessary for the recognition of others. In addition, it is necessary to understand extreme events as a moment of disorder associated with great transformations, without closing oneself in circumstantial and reductionist conceptions.

Our object still needs to be understood in the context of multiplied uncertainties, considering the pluralities of provisions in a relational perspective necessary to recognize others in order to fulfill the task of building social ties (Balandier, 2019). In the context of a space of cosmopolitanized action, where the concept of global includes everyone, Public Risk

Communication needs to undergo a metamorphosis to find its place in the digital world at risk and contribute to the process of producing common normative horizons (Beck, 2018).

In short, we propose Public Risk Communication as a theoretical-practical approach that responds to the contemporary challenges of uncertainty, institutional distrust, and social vulnerability. By articulating the principles of public communication with the objectives of risk communication – such as prevention, adaptation, and resilience – this proposal aims to restore the ties between the State and society, ensuring that public information fulfills its forming, protective, and mobilizing role in times of crisis.

The articulation between the two fields takes place at the intersection between the protection of life and the strengthening of citizenship. Public Risk Communication, therefore, is understood as a communication practice of public organizations aimed at reducing vulnerabilities, social mobilization, and promoting collective care in extreme situations.

6. Provisional Considerations

In the context of research on public communication, we identified the need to build a possible theoretical approach to analyze the increasingly frequent extreme events. As part of the task of finding perspectives that can be used to analyze our objective in the contemporary context, we sought to understand – through the lens of Social Sciences theorists – the new social contexts that emerge as a challenge to public communication: Social in times of crisis, risk, metamorphosis, and uncertainty.

By comparing authors that discuss these subjects, we produced a summary of possible contributions to present a proposition of Public Risk Communication, in the context of the agency crisis created by the rupture of political and institutional legitimacy (Bauman & Bordoni, 2019), in the global circumstances of rupture and distrust in institutions (Castells, 2018), in the context of multiplying uncertainties (Balandier, 2019) and in a world undergoing metamorphosis (Beck, 2018).

At the same time, when researching how these authors understand the production of knowledge about society, and consequently, communication, this study identified the propositions of dispositional sociology (Balandier, 2019), crisis sociology (Bauman & Bordoni, 2019), and sociology of metamorphosis (Beck, 2019). Such knowledge gives new meaning to the more traditional approach of public communication and allows the expansion to the lived context.

The proposal of Public Risk Communication emerges as a theoretical and political response to the communicative challenges of contemporary society marked by uncertainties, crises, and extreme events. This perspective combines the right to information with the State duty of protection and care, promoting the acknowledgment of others, the reconstruction of social

ties, and the mobilization for resilience. By incorporating dialogical and participatory communication practices, in tune with vulnerable territories and populations, Public Risk Communication contributes to the collective confrontation of global risks.

Thus, this article presents theoretical contributions that make it possible to understand the relevance of Public Risk Communication in contemporary times. We understand that there are new steps to be developed, looking into the methodological perspectives for the subject and its connection with the practice space, that is, the public organizations that handle disasters and extreme events.

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