

Risk, Resilience and Reliability (R³)

The first, of what looks to be many, meeting of the Risk, Resilience and Reliability (R³) research seminar, sparked discussion, connections and paradoxes. With a mix of speakers, all focusing on very different subject matters, the idea of resilience, especially mindfulness' role in a resilient organisation seemed to be a key focus of the day. The informal atmosphere of the seminar, which Amy and Mark facilitated skilfully, meant that attendees could voice their opinions, criticisms and praises clearly and in the moment.

David Denyer from Cranfield University was the first speaker, focusing on the paradox of resilience and how often there is a tension between prevention and production. A clear paradox set out is that often organisations create resilience by creating defensive strategies. However, this defensiveness can often stifle growth and innovation, creating further issues. The dualities and paradoxes that organisations often lean on when aiming to increase their resilience were clearly laid out, alongside the broad theoretical groups behind this topic. David talk really set up the event and gave insight into the topic that was a useful starting point and base for the other speakers.

Following on from David was the charismatic Ian Colville, who excellently weaved his nightmare journey into his talk. 'Sensemaking' is the perspective used for how organisations enact their reality. Often sensemaking is retrospective, but increasingly prospective sensemaking is vital and seen in areas such as counter-terrorism and environmental protection. By using the journey from Bath to Birmingham, during the chaotic and routine-altering Cheltenham festival, Ian was able to clearly present his ideas and the complex notion of sensemaking to the audience.

Picking up with the first of the University of Birmingham speakers, Mark Hall started his discussion with the reality behind the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010. Discussing how the number of organisations involved in the management of the rig meant there was a lack of accountability in previous accidents at the rig. From this Mark moved into discussing how projects with multiple organisations/departments/expertise often failed as risk was not managed. Complementing David's presentation, Mark argued that often failures created a tightening of regulation, which gave a false impression of resilience. Resilience was the ability to spot and adjust to trends, rather than bouncing back after a failure. Mark's research had focused on 6 organisations and had identified different kinds of resilience. The organisations focus aligned to which kind of resilience they would adhere to. Mindfulness however was a major focus of successfully resilient organisations.

Finally Amy Fraher spoke of mindfulness within the Navy SEALS unit. After a back and forth of the difference (and who was best!) between the SEALS, SAS and Marine Corps, Amy discussed her research with this branch of the US forces. Arguing that the SEALS preoccupation with failure, helped the SEALS develop a mindfulness which aided them on their missions. Using this example, Amy contends that the 'Hallmarks of Mindfulness' need

to be expanded as the current list, did not include areas where mindfulness could be applied.

After finishing with a discussion on a range of points highlighted throughout the afternoon, topics for a second seminar were discussed, meaning that Risk, Resilience and Reliability had obviously struck a cord and demanded continuing discussion.