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Civilizing Security in New York:
A view from Europe

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What is “risk”? 

- Risk: a Kantian category of the understanding.

- Risk: effect of subjective and objective interpretation.

- Not all risks are equal, not all risks are interpreted as dangers.
What distinguishes New York and Paris?

(1) Different national rhetoric

French Approach: “enlightened catastrophism” (Jean-Pierre Dupuy)

- Reluctance to overreact and to create “moral panics”.
- Culture of secrecy among high-ranking French bureaucrats.
- French state: pivotal role in the production of social trust and solidarity.
What distinguishes New York and Paris?

(1) Different national rhetoric

American Approach: anxiety without an object (Habermas)

- A discourse of “war”.

- A state of constant citizen alert and anxiety.

- The construction of referents of otherness, the alien, dirty and subversive.
What distinguishes New York and Paris?

(2) Diverging national responses and strategies against terrorism

• Strategies related to space and territories.

• Protection of goods and populations.

• Securing critical infrastructure.

• Pursuit of terrorist networks.
What distinguishes New York and Paris?

(2) Paris:

• Highly centralized command at the top of the internal security pyramid.

• Heavy reliance on human resources.

• In 2004, 88 raids in the Paris metropolitan region: 185 people indicted; radical preachers and followers deported; 1 million euros seized.
What distinguishes New York and Paris?

(2) New York:

• Highly complex relationships between federal, city and regional scales.

• Diversity of actors and overlapping authorities.

• Is the magnitude of the Department of Homeland Security an asset or a liability? Not to mention the role of other agencies…
What distinguishes New York and Paris?

(2) New York: Preoccupied Yet Unprepared

• Most Americans believe the country is not prepared for a terrorist attack; less than a third of families have a plan to evacuate their homes.

• More than 4 out of 5 New Yorkers fear another terrorist attack will occur.

• Only 36% of New Yorkers express confidence that the city's health facilities can adequately respond to a biological, chemical or nuclear attack.

• Only 23% of New Yorkers believe their community has an adequate emergency response plan in place.

• Only 14% of New Yorkers have a household emergency plan in place.

Sources: polls from the New York Times (October 2004) and the Marist Institute for Public Opinion (August 2003)
What is Common to New York and Paris?

(3) Local savoir-faire and trust in the city’s own resources characterize the culture of both Paris and New York.

Terrorists should not be given what they are aiming for:

• changing priorities and life-styles;
• restricting mobility;
• encouraging suspicion and secrecy;
• hindering the movement of tourists and international students;
• disturbing communications and trust.
Civilizing Security

Public Space:

a sense of belonging to a wider political community through “an architecture of sympathy” (R. Sennett).

Security:

a “thick” public good, the most basic instrument to the realization of freedom.
URBAN AGE

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