

GOVERNING AND ORGANIZING FOR CRISIS MANAGEMENT AND CIVIL PROTECTION: ADVANCING AN IMPORTANT BUT NEGLECTED RESEARCH FIELD

Per Læg Reid and Lise H. Rykkja

INTRODUCTION

The world is characterized by turbulence, crises and unruly problems, oftentimes increasing citizens' fear and sense of insecurity. At the same time, threats and crises have always been upon us in one form or another. Dealing with crises is a core responsibility of governments and public sector executives. Thus, crisis management and societal security is essential for political leaders as well as for public administration.

Crises regularly strike at the core of democratic governance. They are increasingly transboundary, crossing organizational borders, administrative levels, policy areas, sectors and countries, thus activating experts, administrators and politicians. Crises are typically unpredictable, difficult to handle, demand rapid response, and often spark public criticism and debate. Crisis management can be defined as the sum of activities aimed to minimize the impact of a crises (Boin et al. 2013) and it puts responsible actors in a difficult position. Planning and preparing for the unexpected and unknown, dealing with ambiguity and uncertainty, responding to urgency and at the same time addressing citizens' expectations is a crucial, but difficult task. It tests the limits of what public bureaucracies is designed to manage. Successful organizing for societal security and crisis management requires both governance capacity and governance legitimacy, two essential characteristics that do not always go hand in hand (Boin and Lodge 2016, Christensen et al. 2016a, Lodge and Wegrich 2014, Læg Reid and Rykkja 2018).

Academic research on how to design public administration, how to manage an organization, and evaluate means to protect citizens against crises, transboundary threats, wicked problems, or the collapse of critical infrastructure, is growing, but still limited (Læg Reid and Rykkja 2017). Public administration and public management research within this area is still incomplete, and therefore also wanted (Boin and Lodge 2016). Within political science, issues of societal security have traditionally been linked to international relations, implying a military perspective, a focus on national security and defense policy, and on the relations between states. Over the past decades there has been a change from a military focus to a stronger civilian focus, with an increasing emphasis on organizing for internal security and crisis management. At the same time, mainstream public administration research has, instead of studying governance and bureaucratic preparedness or behavior in unsettled situations and crises, mainly focused on stable and routine situations. Hence, the base for evidence-based policy making within this policy area has been weak.

This special issue addresses this void by presenting a selection of articles that examines questions related to the organization of crisis management and civil protection in the public sector. They examine the relations between causes and characteristics of different types of crises, investigating how well prepared different public organizations are, how they handle certain crises, what the main lessons learned from such crises are, and how crises affect accountability issues, citizens' trust in government, and the legitimacy of crisis management organizations.

In simple, routine-like crises that are easy to predict and to handle, anticipation, rational planning and emergency preparedness can be useful strategies. In more turbulent times, when a crisis is unexpected, difficult to handle, wicked and unruly, more improvisation, quick response, flexibility and resilient arrangements are needed (Ansell, Trondal and Øgård 2016). There is, however, no one best way of organizing for internal security and crisis management (Christensen et al. 2016b, Læg Reid and Rykkja 2018). Context, such as national administrative culture and polity, and type of crisis, matters.

There seems to be a rather strong agreement on what the problems are, when organizing for internal security and crisis management. Lack of coordination, collaboration and communication, plans operating as 'fantasy documents' in real crises, as well as unclear responsibility and accountability relations are frequent challenges. Regarding solutions, there is a lot more disagreement. Some point to centralization, others to decentralization. Some address structural changes, while others argue for cultural changes or to a strengthened connection between structural and cultural features. Ultimately, there are also trade-offs and dilemmas between calls for stronger integration or more fragmentation, between effectiveness and transparency, more specialization and better coordination, between hierarchical or network solutions, and between efforts focusing on the strategic or the operational level.

The articles in this special issue represent an important step forward in the study of crises and their characteristics, aiming to advance our knowledge of how well prepared the government authorities and responsible organizations are for such situations, how certain crises are handled and what the consequences are for citizens, public authorities and for the society in general.

Cognition or sense making, communication or meaning making, coordination or decision making, and control, are crucial organizational processes and leadership tasks in crisis management (Blondine and Boin 2018, Comfort 2007, Wolbers and Boersma 2019). Cognition is about recognizing and detecting emerging crises. Communication is about developing a shared understanding of the crisis and communicate it to the public.

Copyright: © 2019 Læg Reid and Rykkja. Copyright for this article is retained by the authors, with first publication rights granted to the International Public Management Review (IPMR). All journal content, except where otherwise noted, is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License. By virtue of their appearance in this open-access journal, articles are free to use, with proper attribution, in educational and other non-commercial settings.

Corresponding Author: lise.rykkja@uib.no

Coordination concerns linking together different organizations to accomplish a collective set of tasks, and control is about the capacity to keep ongoing actions focused on a shared goal. All these processes and tasks become more challenging when the crisis is transboundary and organizations are facing dilemmas and tensions regarding how to handle them, as illustrated by the articles in this issue.

Organizing to ensure adequate societal security, civil protection and crisis management can be seen as a particular “wicked problem” where coordination between actors and organizations with different tasks and perceptions is crucial, but often difficult to achieve. Wicked problems are typically complex, involving multi-level and multi-sectoral actors, and create challenges as well as opportunities for political actors and public servants. As in a crisis, the knowledge base is typically uncertain, and goals, priorities and solutions are ambiguous. Crises also increasingly transcend organizational borders, policy areas and administrative levels, necessitating action as well as coordination at the local, the regional, the national and the supranational level. Public organizations face important capacity constraints in their effort to handle these complexities. These are some of the topics the authors in this special issue deal with.

Crisis management policies are often framed within specific institutional, political and organizational settings or contexts. Thus, the organizational layout of the societal security and crisis management field matters. Furthermore, crises often challenge existing patterns of organization and management. They do not fit easily into established organizational contexts and are framed and reframed. Decisions on how to organize, regulate, prepare and respond to crises ultimately concern values and are therefore inherently political and not merely technical issues. Highlighting this is important in order to understand the challenges that policy makers and administrative leaders in this policy area face. The politics of crisis management is central, and the relationship between prevention, preparation, response and recovery is essential.

The articles in this special issue are based on papers presented at the International Public Management Network (IPMN) conference on ‘Organizing for Societal Security and Crisis Management. Governance Capacity and Legitimacy’ in Bergen, Norway 20-21 September 2018, where these issues were discussed. The conference was organized together with the research project «*Organizing for Societal Security and Crisis Management. Building Governance Capacity and Legitimacy*», funded by the Norwegian Research Councils program for Societal Security (SAMRISK II).

Inspired by the IPMN conference, the issue highlights governance capacity and legitimacy in societal security, civil protection and crisis management in the public sector. The conference addressed organizational capacity by focusing in particular on the coordination of public resources, as well as regulatory, delivery and analytical capacity. It furthermore emphasized legitimacy by inviting papers exploring the importance of public perceptions, attitudes, support and trust in government arrangements for crisis management. The aim was to examine crisis management across several cases and identify relevant dimensions concerning capacity and legitimacy across different countries.

A central topic, in the conference and the research project both, was to examine the conditions needed for a well-functioning crisis management system. This is also a core topic in this special issue. A common overarching theme revolves around organizing for societal security and crisis management. The empirical focus in the different articles varies, however, and they are dominated by qualitative case studies. Examples from both high- and low-income countries are covered, including fragile and conflict affected states that may be living in nearly a constant state of crisis. Also, the articles cover different types of crises, both fast running crises such as hurricanes or earth crakes and slow burning crises such as global warming. The articles are furthermore characterized by theoretical pluralism, including both instrumental, institutional and organizational approaches.

The first article by Tora Aasland and Geir Sverre Braut examines organized cooperation in the Norwegian Search and Rescue Services, focusing on the specific Norwegian notion “Samvirke” and the participation of voluntary organizations. The authors find that earned authority, mutual respect, trust and confidence, together with experience of cooperation in real crisis situations as well as craftsmanship, are important for such cooperation and for the participation of voluntary organizations in joint efforts with public authorities in search and rescue services.

The second article by Simon Neby looks into governance capacity for climate adaptation and preparedness in Norway, focusing on the local level, and discusses the notion of (small-scale) wicked problems. He finds that public actors themselves, through social interaction and the organizational choices and decisions they make, influence the degree to which climate adaptation and preparedness comes across as “wicked”, and that they thereby also may pose problems for governance capacity. This suggests, however, that the wickedness of such problems also may be reduced and governance capacity increased, if awareness of this is reached.

The third article by Jorge Culebro Moreno, Benjamin Mendez Bahena and Pablo Cruz Hernandez addresses coordination and regulation in crises management by examining the response of the health sector to the 2017 earthquake in Mexico City. The analysis assumes that the political and administrative infrastructure and characteristics of health care organizations have an effect on crisis management. A main finding is that types of coordination and regulation associated with different communities, as well as the availability of formal protocols and instruments for crisis management, operated in fragmented and complex system. A main lesson is that the coordination instruments have plenty of room for improvement and that citizen support and the private sector played an important role.

In the fourth article, Monica Naime looks into the crisis of disappeared persons in Mexico and the introduction of a new law to regulate this. She uses this case to highlight processes of policy transfer, and to analyze the impact of guidelines established by international organizations on national crisis management. By examining how the Mexican Congress transferred the definition of disappearances of persons from the international to the national sphere, she shows that informational structures, and the degree of uncertainty

and ambiguity, affects both the type of heuristics and the degree of transfer of ideas from the international to the national level. The conclusion is that this also had an important impact on decision-making behavior at the national level.

The fifth article by Ebinezer Florano focuses on the responsiveness of bureaucratic norms of governmental disaster response systems by looking at how the Philippines government agencies prepared for the Super Typhoon Yolanda/Haiyan in 2013. Florano discusses how the bureaucracy may facilitate but also hinder optimal crisis and disaster management and concludes that public service continuity planning may work as a tool for providing continuous service in the aftermath of disasters.

Scholars in Public Administration and Public Management study conditions for governance, related to structures and processes that affect how challenges that the society and the authorities are handled. The articles in this special issue give important knowledge about such relations when facing unsettled situations and crises. Our hope is that it inspires to more public management research on how crises are handled and their consequences for public administration and democratic governance.

REFERENCES

- Ansell, C., J. Trondal and M. Øgård, eds. (2016). *Governance in Turbulent Times*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Blondin , D. and A. Boin (2018). “Managing Crises in Europe: A Public Management Perspective”. In E. Ongaro and S. van Thiel, eds. *The Palgrave Handbook of Public Administration and Management in Europe*. Oslo: PalgraveMacmillan.
- Boin, A.,S. Kuipers and W. Overdijk (2013). “Leadership in time of crises: A framework for assessment”. *International Review of Public Administration*, 18: 79-91.
- Boin, A. and M. Lodge (2016). “Designing resilient institutions for transboundary crisis management: A Time for Public Administration”. *Public Administration*, 94 (2): 289-298.
- Christensen, T., P. Lægheid and L.H. Rykkja (2016a). “Organizing for Crisis Management: Building Governance Capacity and Legitimacy” *Public Administration Review*, 76 (6): 887-897.
- Christensen, T., O.A. Danielsen, P. Lægheid and L.H. Rykkja (2016b). “Comparing Coordination Structures for Crisis Management in Six Countries”. *Public Administration*, 94 (2): 316-332.
- Comfort, L.K. (2007). “Crises management in hindsight: Cognition, communication, coordination and control”, *Public Administration Review* 67 (1): 189-197.
- Fimreite, A.L., P. Lango, P. Lægheid and L.H. Rykkja (eds.) (2014). *Organisering for samfunnsikkerhet og krisehåndtering (Organizing for societal security and crisis management)* . 2nd ed. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Lodge, M. and K. Wegrich (eds.) (2014). *The Problem Solving Capacity of the Modern State*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Lægreid, P. and L.H. Rykkja (2015). "Organizing for 'Wicked Problems'. Analyzing Coordination Arrangements in two Policy Areas: Internal Security and the Welfare Administration" *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, 28 (6): 475-493.
- Lægreid, P. and L.H. Rykkja (2017). "Samfunstryggleik og krisehandtering – eit viktig, men forsømt forskingsfelt" (Societal security and crisis management – an important but neglected research field). *Norsk Statsvitenskapelig Tidsskrift*, 33 (1): 5-9
- Lægreid, P. and L.H. Rykkja, eds. (2018). *Societal Security and Crisis Management. Governance Capacity and Legitimacy*. London: PalgraveMacmillan.
- Wolbers, J. and K. Boersma (2019). "Key challenges in crises management". In R.P. Gephart, C.C. Miller and K. S. Helgesson, eds. *The Routledge Companion to Risk, Crises and Emergency Management*. London: Routledge.

About IPMR

IPMR The International Public Management Review (IPMR) is the electronic journal of the International Public Management Network (IPMN). All work published in IPMR is double blind reviewed according to standard academic journal procedures.

The purpose of the International Public Management Review is to publish manuscripts reporting original, creative research in the field of public management. Theoretical, empirical and applied work including case studies of individual nations and governments, and comparative studies are given equal weight for publication consideration.

IPMN The mission of the International Public Management Network is to provide a forum for sharing ideas, concepts and results of research and practice in the field of public management, and to stimulate critical thinking about alternative approaches to problem solving and decision making in the public sector.

IPMN includes over 1300 members representing about one hundred different countries, both practitioners and scholars, working in all aspects of public management. IPMN is a voluntary non-profit network and membership is free.

ISSN 1662-1387

