

ÅRE RISK EVENT 12–14 MARCH 2013

Book of Abstracts

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Risk and safety in the mind of the military leader

During the last decades extensive research has been conducted within the field of risk psychology. However, this area seems to be somewhat neglected when it comes to research with military applications. This is remarkable, since military activities put demands on military personnel, especially leaders, to handle a broad spectrum of risk and threat situations. Today's complex and uncertain military challenges include elements of risk taking in combination with a need for safety awareness. Hence, leaders facing these challenges need the ability to balance safety-oriented and risk-promoting behaviors in order to handle these situations and influence their personnel effectively. This ability is important also for many civil leaders, not least since international conflicts today increasingly involve civil-military cooperation.

In this presentation I will focus on what seems to be a less explored research area, namely how military leaders themselves perceive risk and safety issues and what kinds of dilemmas they might face in trying to balance these issues both during military training and international missions. The results are based on interviews with 17 officers with experiences from international missions.

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Justifying plural policing – a qualitative study

Frequently, problems with trust in the police are associated with political reforms intended to cut costs and introduce new plural modes of community policing, neighborhood policing, policing through “the police extended family” etc. This study, analyses how the police justify a plural approach that is practiced through what has been described as a network of dispersed circuits, replacing centralized responsibility for security and crime prevention. It is analyzed how the police conduct and define the inclusion of other actors in their policing practices. Main research question is how do they define the value of plural policing and how does it affects the way the police look up on their opportunities to justify themselves as a public authority. The article is based on a qualitative analysis of interviews and documentation from three different cases of cooperation between the police and Swedish municipalities that are part of a wider policing practice. The results show how a plural approach to policing affect the way the police perceive their opportunities to proof their professional authority. They end up using a set of valuation logic promoting both mobile and locally embedded policing, and that sometimes emerge as strained.

Keywords: Valuation logic, plural policing, justification, reforms

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The concepts of vulnerability and resilience institutionalized within the Swedish crisis management system

My conference paper focuses on how the concepts of vulnerability and resilience have been institutionalized within the Swedish crisis management system, in particular the public sector.

The paper begins by shortly introducing the Hyogo Framework for Action and the UNISDR campaign for making cities resilient. The theoretical framework of this study draws upon three theories: the social construction of risk, vulnerability and so called “natural” disasters, and resilience. A description of each theory is presented and then a short discussion is provided explaining how the theories relate to one other in order to provide a theoretical framework for analyzing the data.

The data focuses on Sweden’s national platform and how Sweden is addressing the strategic goals and priority actions as stated in the Hyogo Framework for Action. The concepts of vulnerability and resilience are systematically analyzed in order to determine if and how these principles have shaped Sweden’s crisis management policy. This study concludes with some reflections of the findings and future challenges and research needs.

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The Municipal Leader, a Crisis Leader?

In Sweden the responsibility for crisis management is decentralized to the municipal level. Municipal leaders need to plan, be prepared for and be able to handle any crisis that may arise. As a consequence, municipal leaders shall handle the crisis itself but also the effects as well as reactions to the crisis. Moreover, they need to act at leaders in relation to personnel, colleagues from other organizations as well as the affected community.

Previous research on crisis management at the local level has mainly focused on formal principles and organisational aspects. There is however a knowledge gap. Studies of how local leaders perceive and experience the role as crisis managers are lacking today.

This paper will illustrate how demands (legally) and expectations (e.g. media, the public) on leaders in crisis situations are perceived by municipal leaders. Based on empirical data I will discuss: i) how leaders perceive that they can meet these demands and expectations, and ii) the influence of crisis experience on perceived capability.

A further theme will discuss whether municipal leaders, being primarily administrative officials, have the ability needed to handle crises and how this might be improved.

The findings are a part of a forthcoming thesis.

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Networking for risk planning – the Swedish River Groups

The aim of this study is to analyze the differences in focus, and work with risk planning between the Swedish River Groups in the Northern part of Sweden. The river groups was formed during the mid-1990:ies in order to solve the problems with coordination of information, risk planning and rescue operations at flood and high flows in the rivers in northern Sweden. The instructions for the river groups were, however, brief and did not in detail rule the mandate or the internal work in the river groups. This has shown to have a significant impact for the internal work and the focus of the different river groups. The results of this study of the river groups shows that the brief instructions has had effects on both the internal work and focus and the groups as well as the composition of the groups themselves. This also have impacts on the scope and structure of the meetings within the different groups and on the work with risk planning in order to identify potential problems with flooding and high flows as well as taking measures in order to prevent this.

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Organizational Crisis Preparedness in Heterogeneous Societies: The OCPH Model

The populations of European societies are heterogeneous and a crucial part of effective crisis preparedness is to customize contingency planning and crisis communication to these populations. The aim of this study is therefore to develop a theoretically based model of organizations' crisis preparedness in heterogeneous societies. Through theoretical and empirical analyses the model for 'Organizational Crisis Preparedness in Heterogeneous societies', the OCPH model, is developed. The model provides a theoretical foundation for the understanding of organizational crisis preparedness and also has practical implications: It offers a tool with which to develop organizational contingency planning further. For authorities that supervise municipalities or other local authorities, the OCPH model can be used to analyse and evaluate organizations.

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Public reactions in crisis – representations and realities?

People flee, are helpless and dependent on authorities, hurry to public shelters to be taken care of, plunder, and act in an antisocial manner. Is this picture of public reactions and need of support in crisis situations consistent with reality? Myths and incorrect assumptions on the way people act in difficult situations are tenacious and might have serious consequences for effective crisis management. This presentation summarizes findings from a literature study on how public reactions and needs are represented in crisis situations.

Data comprising previous research, official and media reports were analyzed using thematic method.

Results show how the public is framed according to a number of parameters; proximity/distance, time, geography, and symbolism with regard to the crisis situation. Public behaviors and reactions are reproduced as being either individual or collective and active or inactive. Behaviors and reactions might be a consequence of the crisis event or are directed toward the system handling the crisis. These parameters can be combined in various ways to describe public reactions, behaviors, and needs. It seems problematic that the combinations that are evaluated as favorable or unfavorable appear to differ from one crisis to another.

The presentation will discuss some practical implications for crisis management.

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Boundary Practices at the Incident Site: Obstacles and opportunities for collaboration between emergency personnel and the public

The need for collaboration between emergency organizations and the public in times of emergencies and crisis has been emphasized by practitioners as well as researchers. It is argued that such collaboration would make the emergency response more effective, and that the public could make a great contribution when the resources of emergency organizations are scarce. However, the relationship between emergency personnel and the public is a highly complex one, where the public is regarded as being a “mixed blessing”. In this paper we will take a closer look at the interaction between emergency personnel and the public at traffic accidents. We will show how this interaction is an issue of boundary practices, where the presence of the public is managed through practices of occupational jurisdictions. As the emergency personnel construct their place of work and working practice at the incident site they engage in boundary practices in order to claim organizational authority and legitimacy. Practices that either include or exclude first responders and hence shape the possibilities for collaboration to take place.

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The hurricane Sandy – The geographic nature of data

The recent hurricane Sandy affected large urban areas for an extended period of time; power, water and transport infrastructure was widely rendered unusable. For some people mobile phone/Internet connectivity was the only means of communication with people outside their building. The American Federal Emergency Management Agency even recommended social media as the means to receive their updates and communicate with loved ones. Relevant and well presented timely information is critical for effective leadership and management of the response to disaster events. If agencies are going to continue encouraging social networks as the medium for such information's distribution, we need to understand its nature and potential.

Over an 8-day period around the hurricane, we collected related tweets (mentioning #Sandy or #FEMA) and ones originating from the impacted area (longitude -77 to -73, latitude 38 to 42). The before, during and after the peak of the storm on the area can be seen in the dataset. While giving insight into the progress of the storm, the data also reveals people's fears, how/when they prepared or were affected and what resources were available to them. The geographic nature of the data allows the modelling of people's movements under the impact of the storm.

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Use of Geographical data in Emergency management and response

As well as in military operations Risk and Crises management is depending on a common operational picture to reach a common operational understanding. Such understanding of what is dangerous and where the opportunities are is widely supported in Geographical Information Systems that allow the fusion of many different points of view in a risk or crises situation. A risk can be defined as a set of factors that one by one or together form a system collapse that threaten lives, environment, properties or activities. By analyzing the different factors in a geographical area that can lead to a risk in advance, a better understanding can be obtained for *planning for safety* and rescue work. Several studies how to capture, fusion and analyze information when the crisis already is there show the necessity to build up an information infrastructure in advance. Such information is necessary in most societies as to protect natural resources like water and land and manage public facilities, roads, transports, population etc. This infrastructure is further necessary as to make use of social media for collection of information and gather volunteers and resources from the public and then inform about the situation to different players.

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Maps for emergencies: Available when you need them?

Geographic information technology (GIT) allows emergency managers to keep track of available resources and their locations, enables identification of people and facilities threatened by a hazard, and facilitates planning and coordination of emergency measures.

The Swedish-Norwegian project Cross-Border Collaboration for Safety (GSS), in partnership with Grenseredningsrådet (Cross-Border Rescue Council), has organized emergency exercises for Swedish and Norwegian emergency authorities. During exercises, participants' use of digital maps has been documented and communication between participants monitored. In addition, the project conducted surveys of exercise experience among the participants. This presentation conveys findings regarding the use of GIT and digital maps during exercises and results from the surveys. Findings include that among those respondents who reported need for access to digital maps during emergency events, roughly half had access to such maps.

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The Organizing of Inter-Organizational Collaboration

This study focuses on temporary organizational units intended to serve as a support for management and operational personnel, organizational units often referred to as "staffs". These intra-organizational temporary units are activated at major events, where several organizations are involved in crisis management. It is the organizing process of the inter-organizational collaboration in a newly established joint inter-organizational staff that is studied in this article. This kind of collaboration between organizations is unusual, and the parties involved did not have access to any organizational prototype that could serve as a model. The methods used in the study are observations during meetings, interviews with personnel from fire and rescue services and police, and documents in the form of minutes from meetings. In total, the collected data comprise 177 data units. The result show that time and place is significant in all phases. Time set limits for both when it is possible to start collaborating and for the organizing of collaboration. Place is significant as well, in the sense that organizations at "home ground" were more advantageous, since their premises and their resources were closer to the collaboration room than those of the "away ground" organizations were.

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Crisis management as a design activity

Current models for crisis management has its main origin in successively refined military models. These models often cause problems related to an introvert and rigid perspective on practice. New concepts of management that moves beyond management of the internal practice and strives for organizing over organizational boundaries are becoming a necessity. We argue for a new design perspective where management and collaboration in crisis and emergency events are viewed as design activities. A design perspective is motivated by the similarities between emergency events and design processes where “wicked problems” are managed. Problems or situation can be considered wicked since the prerequisites cannot be fully known, each event is unique in the details, there is no single optimal solution, and only specific aspects of the final solution can be reused in future events. An important aspect of the design perspective is also to foster reflective practitioners whom from participation develops their readiness to act when facing new challenges.

A design perspective where management and collaboration are viewed as design activities develops scientifically grounded practice related knowledge in the areas of: more effective command and coordination practices, inclusive multi-dimensional collaboration and coordination, methods of acting on diverging and conflicting perspectives, hypothesis driven practices, crisis communication design with the publics as an active participant, and information environments which extends the internal organization.

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Tell it all and do it fast: Citizens' views on crisis communication

In the past few years, the supply of drinking water in Sweden has suffered severe crises, including two big outbreaks of cryptosporidium, infecting approximately 27 000 people in Östersund and 20 000 in Skellefteå. Since this type of crisis affects many people for a long time, effective communication is essential to limit its impact. This study aimed to investigate citizens' experiences of crisis communication during the cryptosporidium outbreaks in these two cities.

We conducted five focus groups and a survey, involving in total around 700 citizens, aged 18-74, from Östersund and Skellefteå. Results suggest that relatively few citizens perceived a lack of information during the crisis. However, those who had been infected with the parasite were more inclined to feel they had insufficient information. Trust in the municipality was also lower among the infected citizens. The most important and trusted sources of information were local newspapers and the municipalities' websites. Quality of information was generally perceived as high. However, the need for information changed during different phases of the crisis, with practical information and facts being the most important at the immediate outbreak. Some suspicion remained that the municipality initially had withheld information, and many rumors occurred.