

2018 International Public Management Network (IPMN) Conference

Call for papers

Organizing for societal security and crisis management. Building governance capacity and legitimacy

**Department of Administration and Organization Theory, University of Bergen and
Uni Research Rokkan Centre**

Conference organizers: Professor Per Læg Reid and Associate professor Lise H. Rykkja

September 20-21

Venue: Scandic Bergen City Hotel, Bergen, Norway

The world is characterized by turbulence, crises and unruly problems, oftentimes increasing a 'fear factor' in citizens. At the same time, threats and crises have always been upon us in one form or another. This makes crisis management and societal security important for political leaders as well as public administration. Dealing with crises is a core responsibility of governments and public sector executives. They often strike at the core of democratic governance and thereby challenge both governance capacity and governance legitimacy. Crises are increasingly transboundary, they are unpredictable, demand rapid response, and often arouse public criticism and debate. Planning and preparing for the unexpected and unknown, dealing with ambiguity and insecurity, responding to urgency and at the same time addressing citizens' expectations is a crucial, but difficult task for the bureaucratic public administration.

Academic research on how to design public administration and evaluate means to protect citizens against crises, transboundary threats and collapse of critical infrastructure is limited. Instead of studying unsettled situations and crises, public administration research has focused more on stable and routine situations. Our conference aims at addressing this gap by examining questions of how to organize for crisis management in the public sector. This means examining the relations between causes of and characteristics of different types of crises, investigating how well prepared 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.

The conference highlights governance capacity and governance legitimacy in societal security and crisis management in the public sector. A core argument is that both organizational capacity and legitimacy is crucial. The conference will address organizational capacity by focusing in particular on the coordination of public resources, as well as regulatory, delivery and analytical capacity. The conference will emphasize legitimacy by exploring the importance of public perceptions, attitudes, support and trust in government arrangements for crisis management. The aim is to examine crisis management across several cases and identify relevant dimensions concerning capacity and legitimacy across different countries.

Societal security and crisis management is a particular "wicked problem" where coordination between actors and organizations with different tasks and perceptions is crucial, but often met by resistance. The problem transcends organizational borders, policy areas and administrative levels, necessitating action as well as coordination at the local, the regional, the national and

the supranational level. 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. The knowledge base is typically uncertain, and goals, priorities and solutions are ambiguous. Public organizations face important capacity constraints in their effort to handle these complexities.

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. Crises typically challenge existing patterns of organization and management, they do not fit easily into established organizational contexts, and are often 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. The politics of crisis management, involving sense-making, decision-making, meaning-making, coordination, accountability, and learning is central. This also means that the relationship between prevention, preparation, response and recovery is essential.

Furthermore, organizing for societal security and crisis management by governments implies possible conflicts between different sets of administrative norms and values. Economy and frugality are important values, but so are also fairness and organizational resilience. Decisions on how to deal with threats and crises in the future have repercussions for the public and for citizens. After the 9/11 World Trade Center attacks, many countries introduced new security measures against terrorism, fueling debates about the balance between democratic and societal values on the one hand and a demand for increased protection on the other. This conference aims to examine these dilemmas and tensions in different settings.

We seek high quality papers examining issues concerning how governments organize for societal security and crisis management, addressing governance capacity and governance legitimacy. Papers can be descriptive or explanatory, should have a clear conceptual and theoretical basis, and meet advanced methodological standards for research. Comparative papers (across countries, types of crises or crisis phases) are particularly welcome, as are papers that address the relationship between capacity and legitimacy in crisis management. Examples from both high and low income countries are welcome, including from fragile and conflict affected states that may be living in nearly a constant state of crisis.

Keynote: Professor Arjen Boin, University of Leiden: *Organizing for transboundary crises*.

Paper proposals: Should be submitted to Professor Per Læg Reid (per.lagreid@uib.no) by February 15. Authors of accepted papers will be notified by February 28. Please be advised that participation is limited.

Financial support: In line with the IPMN practice, we assume responsibility for most on-site costs for incoming conference participants. There is no conference fee. The coverage of the conference organizer will include accommodation for two nights (September 19-21), breakfast and lunch at the conference site and a conference dinner. Participants are expected to cover their own travel expenses.

Conference web site: TBA

