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**Editorial: An Introduction to Nordic Research**

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The Nordic countries of Denmark, Norway, Iceland, Finland, and Sweden experience few major crises. Yet, as demonstrated in this special issue, a growing and dynamic set of crisis research has developed and continues to grow among scholars in these countries. This special issue of the *International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters* provides a unique look at some of the current crisis research within some of the Nordic countries.

This journal has a tradition of looking at contributions by disaster scholars from specific geographical regions. For example, a 1985 issue focused on the interdisciplinary disaster research emerging in Japan (Okabe and Hirose 1985). These scholars provided a nice overview of the origins of Japanese research, noting the strong development of socio-behavioral analysis of disaster behavior. But, the authors lamented that the research at that time had failed to connect with practice. Britton (1992) served as a guest editor that looked at emergency management topics in the Pacific Basin. This issue highlighted that this geographical area has extensive cultural diversity coupled with many hazards. As a result, while the Pacific Basin geographically may connect many nations and cultures, their approaches and solutions to hazard issues vary greatly. Aguirre (2002) guest edited a special issue focusing on disaster issues primarily in Australia. The authors of this issue showed that a diverse set of disaster issues faced Australia, and a critical set of researchers have emerged to explore these issues. This present issue on Nordic disaster research, guest-edited by Erna Danielsson and Roine Johansson at the Risk and Crisis Research Centre of Mid Sweden University, and Dave Neal at the Oklahoma State University, continues the journal's effort in providing information on the type of research taking

place in different geographical settings. We hope this special issue further stimulates research in countries within this area.

### **Background**

Looking back about 40 years ago, one may occasionally find crisis related research regarding the Nordic region. For example, Rosengren et al. (1975) described a Swedish radio show that described a nuclear power plant meltdown in Sweden. The event allowed them to replicate Cantril's (1940) "Invasion from Mars" mass panic study. The authors showed that a panic did not occur. Following the nuclear power plant meltdown at Chernobyl in 1986, Nordic researchers explored a wide range of social issues on how the event affected the Nordic region, and have continued to study long-term effects (Boholm 1998; Drottz-Sjöberg and Sjöberg 1990; Enander 2006; Steffenson et al. 1993; Tønnessen et al. 2002).

The first step in formalizing any type of crisis research in the Nordic countries occurred in 1975. Sociologist Jan Trost from Uppsala University (Sweden) created the Disaster Research Group (interestingly, the name was always in English). Uppsala University sociologist Örjan Hultåker assisted Trost with the research center. Funding came from the Swedish government (primarily the military) to focus on issues related to civil defense. Although at the time Sweden was a neutral country, the government feared that Sweden could be caught between a NATO and Warsaw Pact ground war or an exchange of nuclear weapons. Much of the research center's work focused on literature reviews related to specific topics such as panic, warning, evacuation, and organization response (e.g., Hammarström-Tornstam 1977; Hultåker 1976; Trost 1983). The research group also did an extensive empirical study on the 1977 landslide at Tuve, Sweden. Key empirical reports focused on how the event impacted the family (Björklund 1981), community social order and conflict (Edberg and Lustig 1983), and the organizational response to the event (Syrén 1981). Later, a doctoral student from the Disaster Research Center at The Ohio State University used these data as a part of his dissertation to compare Swedish and United States response and initial recovery activities after disaster (Neal 1985). However, by the late 1980's, the Disaster Research Group ceased operations. A combination of lack of government funding coupled with a changing political landscape (e.g., the end of the Cold War) spelled the end of the research group.

The Disaster Research Group also had strong ties to this journal. In 1980, Trost and Hultåker organized a three day conference on "Family and Disaster" at Rosersberg Slott, Sweden. Select papers from this conference served as the first issue of the *International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters* with Trost and Hultåker serving as guest editors. In addition, the first edition's cover had a copy of a woodblock print of the 1702 fire of Uppsala, Sweden. Trost also coedited the journal 1983–1987. During this time, Hultåker also supervised the printing of the journal in Sweden.

Although changing political and social settings caused the end of the Disaster Research group, these changes coupled with new regional and international political

and disaster dynamics resulted in new opportunities. First, primarily political scientists at the National Defense College in Stockholm (at times collaborating with others in Northern Europe) developed their own notion of “crisis” to study such events as political instability, political assassinations, and disasters. This center is called CRISMART. At Lund University, initially engineers focusing on fire, formed the Lund University Centre for Risk Assessment and Management (LUCRAM). They recently expanded their mission to international disasters. Sociologists at Mid Sweden University created the Risk and Crisis Research Centre (RCR), with a focus on interdisciplinary research on social aspects of risks and crises (Neal 2012). Umeå University (Sweden) established a European CBRNE (i.e., Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and Explosive) Centre. Finally, over the last few years the Swedish government has initiated funding for an academic program and research initiatives on international disasters. The Center for Natural Disaster Sciences and the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency helped coordinate these efforts. In short, Sweden has five active research centers (and academic degrees associated with risk and crisis), and scholars at other universities engaged in crisis related research. Although we know of crisis related work taking place throughout the Nordic region, institutions in Sweden have invested in formal academic research centers. These various centers help create and maintain the critical mass of crisis researchers throughout the Nordic region.

### **Crisis and Disaster**

As Quarantelli (1998) has noted, those in this field of disasters, hazards, risks, or other related terms have had difficulty in defining what we study. Clearly, we see this in our Nordic cases. For example, in the Swedish language, we see such words as *kris* (crisis), *risk* (risk), *olycka* (accident), *fara* (hazard) and *katastrof* (catastrophe) used. This vocabulary is similar in the other Nordic countries. Yet, in each of these languages, no equivalent word exists for the notion of “disaster.” The word that is used for disaster is catastrophe. Yet, related academic programs that use English to teach their related degree programs (e.g., Lund and Uppsala Universities), use the word “disaster.” In short, although scholars may draw upon various terms with some overlap in meaning, for the purpose of this special issue, we believe that the notion of “kris” or “crisis” seems best suited. The usage of this terminology also seems clear in most if not all of the articles in this special issue.

This special issue indicates that no specifically “Nordic” perspective exists on crises. Nor, within the Nordic countries, do we see a specific perspective based within one country. Rather, researchers throughout the area draw upon different theories, methodologies, and academic disciplines, and all articles are based in an international framework of crisis, risk, and disaster research.

### **The Articles**

Similar to a regular issue of this journal, all the manuscripts published in this special issue have gone through the same double blind peer review process. In this case the guest co-editors relied upon the reviewers' comments in deciding what papers to publish in this issue. In addition, we wanted to illustrate the diverse nature of Nordic research by ensuring that each country was represented, and that different perspectives were highlighted. Unfortunately, there are only two Scandinavian countries represented, Sweden and Finland, even though the call was widely distributed among risk and crisis research scholars. The articles show a wide spectrum of issues, both regarding method and theory. The object of study comprises a rich variety of risk and crisis research such as challenges to crisis management, risk governance practices, citizens and citizens groups, and learning.

We find some similarities among the different contributions in this issue. First, they all have an international focus basing their research on international findings. Second, we see an ambition to pursue theoretical development. Finally, the authors generally focus on small-scale events rather than larger disasters (even though a couple of more large-scale events, storms, are studied in two of the articles). Nevertheless, as Hobbins and Enander state, small-scale contingencies contain many of the same elements as large-scale disasters, hereby laying the same foundation for learning opportunities. Below, we provide brief descriptions of the articles in the order of appearance in the issue.

Engberg and Wimelius' article gives a brief account of the crisis management system in Sweden, focusing on the county level. The authors raise challenging questions concerning the consequences of public sector reforms on the Swedish crisis management system. The adoption of elements of New Public Management (NPM) has resulted in decentralization, outsourcing, competition, and private ownership of critical infrastructures, potentially affecting crisis preparedness as well as emergency response. Interviewing regional representatives responsible for the coordination of crisis management, the authors investigate potential consequences of these reforms during extraordinary events, where some critical infrastructures are in the hands of private profit-driven interests. They place this discussion in a wider perspective and relate it to a number of challenges for NPM when applied in international settings.

Lidskog and Sjödin's article considers the long-term challenges of decision making after a major emergency, investigating how forest advisors and forest owners handled the risk in the aftermath of two storms, and how a specific risk governance practice developed. Describing the case the authors stress that experience and knowledge among forest owners did not provide sufficient guidance on how to act, but in the situation it still was important decisions to be made. Arguing that time and knowledge are central aspects in handling risk, crisis, and disaster, the authors develop two concepts that explain why particular risk governance practices, "time regime" and "desktop knowledge", evolve. Learning from disasters and crises is a common theme in the literature, and this study reveals implications for the understanding of disasters and crises in relation to knowledge.

Guldåker, Eriksson and Kristofersson's article, using actor-network theory (ANT) and Jürgen Habermas' theory of the lifeworld, system, and communicative action,

contributes to a deeper understanding of risk and disaster management from the perspective of an emergent citizen group. They are studying the continuing work by an emergent citizen group on the prevention of local risk and vulnerability. Conceptualizing the mobilization and stabilization of an emergent citizen group the authors examine critically the various difficulties and situations that a local risk and disaster management network might face. The article builds on work on emergent groups made at DRC of the University of Delaware, and the authors show that vulnerability and contact with authorities clearly is not a unique problem for the local emergency citizen group, but symptomatic of a larger societal issue.

Hobbins and Enander's article explores assumptions about citizens and their behavior in a crisis situation, specifically the municipal crisis managers' views of citizens in relation to contingencies. Communication and cooperation with citizens has become an essential, and also demanding, ingredient in contemporary crisis management. The authors highlight public leaders' awareness of social vulnerability factors and request a more complex image of crisis managers' views of the general public than has generally been depicted. The authors argue that images of citizens as vulnerable and in panic could hamper the planning of efficient emergency response, and lead to further complication in emergency response, depending on whose perspective serves as starting point. The authors' ambition is to develop theoretical abstractions and generalizations, and to contribute to a more nuanced overall picture of how crisis managers and their practices are understood internationally.

Lindholm, Carlsson, Djupsund, Högväg and Strandberg's article deals with citizens' emotional and cognitive responses to focusing events. In a laboratory experiment they investigate in what manner the origin and strength of focusing events affect the emotional and cognitive reactions of citizens. Their interest is in how people react to sudden danger and how that spills over to cognitive reactions which may have policy implications. This study contributes to existing knowledge of affective intelligence (AI) in its focus on a European context where citizens' emotional and cognitive reactions to crises and catastrophes beyond the U.S. context are examined. In contrast to earlier findings the authors show that both emotional and cognitive reactions seem to be contingent mostly on the magnitude of danger in the event and not on who or what caused it.

Berlin and Carlström's article discusses collaboration between emergency organizations, and more specifically it sets out to test a collaboration exercise model in terms of learning and usefulness. The authors argue that the close dependence between rescue organizations at the incident location justifies the need for collaboration exercises to be conducted regularly. However, they contest the usefulness of full-scale exercises. Building on their own theoretical model and on collaboration, the authors created a new organic model termed three level collaboration exercise model (3LC). In contrast to the mechanistic intra-organizational training reported during the collaboration exercises this model is designed to improve flexibility to prepare individuals for actual collaboration at the incident location, and challenge the participants to use different levels of collaboration in action.

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