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The Welfare Watch Practicing Democracy in Times of Crisis

The Welfare Watch was established by the Government in Iceland in February 2009 in order to monitor the consequences of the serious economic crisis in Iceland, starting in October 2008, on individuals and families in the country. Two experienced Social Workers in the Ministry of Social Affairs were given the responsibility of leading the Project, one as a Chair and the other as her equal Co-Worker. From the start the work was based on ideology of Community Work, Cross-Sectorial Approach, Transparency and Democracy. A Steering Group of 20 people from various fields in society were called upon as delegates of their institutions, being NGO's, Local and State Governments, Social Partners, The National Church, The Equality Council, Human Rights office a.o. In spite of the connection to the Ministry the Welfare Watch was from the beginning an independent observing body making proposals to the Government as well as the Local Authorities. In the work of the steering group great emphasis was placed on equality of its members regarding proposals and responsibility. Various working groups were established on priority matters as those of Children and Families, Vulnerable groups, People Without Work and Household in serious debt. Each group was chaired by a member of the Steering Group who had full responsibility and was free to choose other group members and working methods. The groups delivered reports to the Steering group with proposals. The Steering group had meetings every 14 days at the various members' home bases, and invited experts and welfare workers to contribute to and discuss various important matters in the light of broad co-operation. In making decisions on proposals and recommendations emphasis was placed on gathering point of view and opinion from all members and all proposals had to be taken in consensus. The Welfare Watch had a web site where all its minutes and reports were published. Thus there was a great interest, engagement and broad ownership of the Welfare Watch by its members which resulted in success of the main matter: to protect the Welfare in times of Crisis.

Lára Björnsdóttir

Ingibjörg Broddadóttir, Ministry of Welfare

The organization of the Welfare Watch in Iceland 2009 to 2013 - an evaluation

In February 2009 the Icelandic government established the Welfare watch, a steering committee that monitored the welfare system and the consequences of the economic crisis for people living in Iceland. The Welfare watch also proposed measures that the government should take in order to help families and individuals cope with the effects of the economic recession, both socially and financially.

During the fall of 2014, the Social Science Research Institute of the University of Iceland (SSRI) conducted an evaluation study on this first Welfare watch in Iceland's history. The evaluation placed focus on how the Welfare watch was organized, the activities that were carried out and on its products, or reports written by the steering committee with suggestions for the government and municipalities of ways to react to the economic crisis.

Qualitative interviews were carried out with members of the steering committee and its task forces. Three web surveys were carried out; one among people who participated in the task forces, another among the staff of the organizations that had representatives in the steering committee and the third among members of SSRI's internet panel, selected by a random sample drawn from the Icelandic adult population. Finally, the content of reports from the steering committee and the work groups was analyzed in order to get a grasp of its products. The study revealed that the Welfare watch was active in gathering information on welfare issues and the consequences of the economic crash, especially during the first year of operation. The steering committee met frequently and these meetings were used to inform of ongoing projects in the represented organizations and the task forces. The Welfare watch used a bottom-up approach, meaning that the chairman did not solely decide which issues should be discussed. Instead, the committee's members came up with discussion topics and tasks to be carried out. The group's collaborative effort resulted in many significant products, such as written requests to public officials and organizations, reports for the Ministry of welfare, symposiums and presentations, and the establishment of Iceland's first social indicators, which were intended to reflect changes in the social circumstances and health of the general public in Iceland.

Vala Jónsdóttir, University of Iceland

The importance of the Welfare watch in Iceland in 2009 to 2013: The relation between the Welfare watch and government

In early October 2008 the three largest banks in Iceland went bankrupt in a period of nine days. The bank collapse had a serious impact on Icelandic society, as the national currency fell sharply in value, inflation rose and the unemployment rate increased drastically. In February 2009 the Icelandic government established the Welfare watch, a steering committee that was to monitor the welfare system. One of the main tasks of the Welfare watch was to propose measures that the Icelandic government should take in order to help families and individuals deal with the social and financial consequences of the economic crises.

In the fall of 2014, the Social Science Research Institute of the University of Iceland carried out an evaluation study to gain information on how this first Welfare watch in Iceland's history was organized, what kind of activities were carried out and what resulted from their work. The Welfare watch's products were evaluated by analyzing the content of reports from the steering committee and its task forces. The fate of these proposals were then traced by analyzing the content of official websites that provided information on government run operations that were carried out in the aftermath of the economic crisis. Thus, the evaluation involved mapping which proposals had been adopted by the government. The study also involved qualitative interviews with members of the steering committee and the task forces. In the interviews participants discussed their views on the tasks that were carried out and their opinion on the importance of the Welfare watch for Icelandic society.

The study's findings suggest that the Welfare watch played an important role in Icelandic society after the economic crash. The content analysis revealed that many government operations were in line with what had been proposed by the Welfare watch. Furthermore, interviewed members of the steering committee and the work groups said that the Welfare watch played an important role in promoting welfare issues in Iceland, and that a number of associations and NGO's had carried out tasks that were in line with what the Welfare watch proposed.

Ásdis A. Arnalds, University of Iceland

Navigating the line between participation and tyranny – Lessons learned in using participatory methods to engage community members in pro-environmental behaviours in rural China: The Case of Farm in a Box

Discussions and responses to climate change have predominantly remained at the global and national levels with limited inclusion of people who live in regions that are being heavily impacted by climate change. The implications of climate change at the local level and the possible positive impact of locally driven climate change actions are consistently overlooked within the international community of climate change experts. It is necessary to not only include, but to also work closely with local communities in the discussion of climate change, sustainable development and resilience building as local communities provide a source of local knowledge rooted in cultural traditions as well as a source of community level action. However, navigating between participatory methods and tyranny is an issue that has received attention within participatory research and community engagement literature. Focusing on the case study of Farm in a Box, a nutritious and sustainable food source that addresses the needs of disadvantaged groups, promotes pro-environmental behaviours and education opportunities, we will examine the lessons learned in the process of using participatory methods to engage community members in pro-environmental behaviours in rural China.

Erin Kennedy, Lund University

Susan Evans, Tongji University Design & Innovation

Catching the perspectives of the Public Social Services: reflections on scenario based table top seminars

The aim of this session is to present scenario based table top exercise as a tool to “catch” the perspectives of Public Social Services as well as problematize the tool from a the methodological point of view. Written scenarios, outlining critical events is commonly used within the Swedish contingency system. They are appreciated for the potential to provide a momentum to discuss what a particular scenario would imply for actors affected by the scenario and hereby contribute with a foundation for preparedness planning. Most often are scenarios designed by experts at national level and used at both regional (by County administrative boards) and local (by municipalities) level. This presentation will share experiences of using a particular scenario, infected water (by *Cryptosporidium*, a microscopic parasite that causes the diarrheal disease cryptosporidiosis) resulting in not drinkable water in a municipality. Table top seminars were held in four municipalities with front line staff and first line leaders in the Public Social Services, representing the areas of care of individuals and families (incl. children and youth), the care of disabled individuals and the elderly.

Carin Björngren Cuadra, Malmö University

South-Karelia District Comprehensive Emergency Management Cluster Research Project

The project is co-organized by the South-Karelia Social- and Health Care District with Saimaa University of Applied Sciences.

The aim of the study is to identify the area of preparedness development needs of health and social services. Research knowledge on the basis of the objective is to create a model that can be used generically for the whole of Finland.

The consortium of the project is:

Ministry of Social- and Health Affairs

The South Kymenlaakso University of Applied Science

National Emergency Supply Agency

General Public Administration Activities

Finnish Red Cross and Red Crescent societies

South-Karelia Department of Emergency Services

North-Karelia Department of Emergency Services

The Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities

Mervi Hietanen, Saimaan University of Applied sciences

Best practices of crisis communication in Iceland during the volcanic eruptions in Eyjafjallajökull in 2010 and in Holuhraun 2014 -2015

The ash cloud following the volcanic eruption of Eyjafjallajökull in 2010 cancelled flights all over Europe for six days and thus generated massive information requests from the international media. At the same time local inhabitants in the most affected areas in Iceland were in great need of information as they suffered extensively from concomitant ash fall, glacial-floods and lahars caused by the eruption. The seismic activity of the Bárðarbunga subglacial central volcano since August 2014 and associated volcanic fissure eruption at Holuhraun (August 31, 2014-March 5, 2015) with attendant SO₂ pollution, re-evoked the interest of the mass media, nationally and internationally as well as the needs of local inhabitants for information. With limited financial and human resources of Icelandic authorities it was a significant challenge to meet this sudden and broad need for crisis communication. That challenge is likely to prevail as scientists predict increased volcanic activity in Iceland in the future.

The concept of “best practice” has been widely used to describe methods and routines that have proven to be effective in order to improve organizational performance. “Best practice“-analysis is considered an important tool for improving communication performances of organizations in crisis situations. However, Icelandic “best practices“ for crisis communication, with consideration to Icelandic geological and social conditions, have not been identified.

The objective of the research introduced in this presentation is to identify “best practices” for communication prior to, during and after volcanic eruptions and seismic activity in Iceland. Furthermore to analyze to what extent previously identified “best practices” within the crisis communication literature and in practice as reflected in official crisis communication handbooks and guidelines, are applicable to the Icelandic situation. Finally to investigate whether social media has been used as a crisis communication tool under recent volcanic eruptions and/or seismic activity in Iceland and if so – to what extent it has proven to be useful for that purpose.

Data will be collected with qualitative interviews with experts, spokespersons, information officers and managers amongst others at relevant public organizations responsible for crisis communication and active as such under the Eyjafjallajökull eruption in 2010 and the Bárðarbunga seismic activity/Holuhraun eruption that started in 2014. Journalists working for

Icelandic mass media covering the two events will also be interviewed. The interviews will be semi-structured and the interview data will be analyzed using grounded theory approach.

This project is a part of the Nordic Centre of Excellence on Resilience and Societal Security (Nordress) program.

Bergþóra Njála Guðmundsdóttir, University of Iceland

Guðrún Gísladóttir, University of Iceland

Mats Eriksson, Örebro University Sweden.

Propagating the aftermath: the Cumbrian experience of using a community development approach to build resilience to flooding

Main Issue:

The management of flood events tends to be considered through the 'command and control' lens of the civil protection ('blue light') practice. However, this paper proposes that when the waters recede it is also the community-inherited social protection resources and capabilities that need to be understood (and supported) as facilitating effective recovery and resilience building.

Methodology:

This emBRACE (www.embrace-eu.org) case study adopted qualitative methods and a Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) to investigate the various resources and capacities that influenced a population's experience of the flood events. Using a 'source to sea' perspective, the data collection, which drew participants from farms, villages and the three main towns along the River Derwent's course in Cumbria UK, revealed the complex mix of factors that underpinned resilience at these different locations.

Main Findings:

In the disasters literature, aftermath is used to denote the predominantly negative consequences of a hazard event. Yet in old English the same term is used to describe the green shoots that emerge from a grass field after it is cut. Applying this second, more positive and more resilience-relevant framing to hazard consequences, this paper focuses on a specific finding from the case study's urban areas to illustrate the importance of 'social protectors' in facilitating affected communities' 'green-shoot' aftermath processes.

Following a flood in 2009 Cumbria's Local Resilience Forum (LRF) recognised the vitality of their County Council partner's community-based, social protection focussed, Community Development Teams in offering opportunities for the delivery of aspired civil protection related community resilience outcomes. Deeply embedded in the affected communities, these staff were initially forced into ad hoc Frontline Recovery Work (FLRW). Here their local knowledge proved invaluable in coordinating the identification of, and in directing assistance toward, the most severely affected during the dynamic post-event period. With their community connectedness and brokering skills recognised, they have since worked alongside the LRF partners and local voluntary sector groups and organisations to promote wider community engagement with resilience building. At a crucial time, this team offered emergency managers trusted linkages into grass-roots community networks. With their skill-sets attuned to reducing social vulnerabilities through the enabling of greater community competence, their example

clearly illustrates the need for staff with community-embedded practice to be better integrated into civil-protection institutions.

Hugh Deeming, Maureen Fordham and Belinda Davis
Northumbria University

Disaster waste management: The case of Japan's March 11th, 2011 earthquake and tsunami - Japan and the international response

To be published in Democracy and Disaster Evacuation - Lessons from the Fukushima Catastrophe

Japan, a nation that struggles with waste management and disposal under normal circumstances, is tackling the enormous task of cleaning up after the destructive March 11th earthquake, tsunami and Dai-ichi Nuclear Power Plant explosions, known as the Great East Japan Earthquake, which generated approximately 20 million tons of waste and debris. This chapter will unpack the process of dealing with waste and debris generated by the tsunami and earthquake as experienced by Japan following the Tohoku disaster. Japan's methods of debris clean up and waste management will be explored. The impact of the Great East Japan Earthquake will also be examined from the perspective of the affected international communities that have had to address issues of marine disaster waste management as Japan's floating tsunami debris continues to wash up along Northwest Pacific Coastlines. Learning from Japan's experience and the international impacts associated with the March 11th, 2011 earthquake and tsunami this chapter will discuss the lessons learned and suggest areas that require continued reflection and improvement at both the national and international levels.

Erin Kennedy

Building resilience into the Icelandic hospital network: A conceptual framework

Background: Hospitals play a vital and multidimensional role in disaster times. They are first responders as well as receivers of disaster victims and their unique role in treating illness and injury places them in the centre of any disaster or mass casualty events. However, the onset of extreme events can also threaten their functionality and prevailing literature is inclined to regard hospitals as vulnerable than resilient. Iceland has a small health care system. Thus its hospital network is an opportune case study for identifying its vulnerabilities and determine optimal approaches for building resilience into the system.

Methods: The research approach is a case study and includes the gathering of secondary data and the systematic analysis of this data. In conjunction with use of the Pressure and Release Model by Wisner et al. (2005), this was applied to demonstrate vulnerabilities within the hospital network. Finally, a conceptual model recommending ways to counteract these vulnerabilities was produced.

Findings and key recommendations: The Icelandic hospital network is a centralised, meta-stable system that has been forced to make substantial compromises in the past years. Several factors support the claim of its vulnerability. A conceptual model suggesting ways to increase its resilience was formulated; taking into consideration the importance of leadership and collaboration, funding, strategic and tactical actions, robust emergency planning and validation in creating sustainability within entities and resilience within the network.

Conclusions: A limited amount has been written on matters related to disaster resilience and hospital preparedness in Iceland. Despite its complex nature and lack of accurate measurement methods, increased resilience within the hospital network can in most perspectives be seen as an achievable goal. The concept of resilience, as well as surge capacity and standards of care have emerged with the demand for sophisticated, quality health care and need to be addressed comprehensively. Key findings from this research indicate that a larger scale approach of the subject is needed, in conjunction with further research on critical infrastructure interdependency, a holistic approach to the welfare system and an increased emphasis on training and collaboration. The application of the findings from this research can provide an important base to building a bridge between shortcomings thereof.

Guðrún Lísbet Níelsdóttir, Landspítali University Hospital

Risk Factors for Posttraumatic Stress Symptoms Among Avalanche Survivors: A 16 Year Follow-up

Few natural disaster studies have assessed factors associated with the maintenance of PTSD symptoms beyond a decade post-trauma. Using North's disaster model (2004) as a framework, the aim of this study was to identify individual characteristics, secondary sequelae factors and community factors associated with clinically significant posttraumatic stress symptoms (CS-PTSDS) in avalanche survivors (n = 399) 16 years post-disaster. Completed self-report questionnaires were received from 286 (72%) survivors. CS-PTSDS were assessed with the Posttraumatic Diagnostic Scale (PDS). Predictors of CS-PTSDS in a multivariate analysis were secondary sequelae factors of lack of social support (adj. RR 2.90; 95% CI [1.37-6.13]) and financial hardship in the aftermath of the trauma (adj. RR 2.47; 95% CI [1.16-5.26]). In addition, the community factor of providing assistance in the aftermath of the avalanche (adj. RR 1.95; 95% CI [1.04-3.64]) was inversely associated with CS-PTSDS in a multivariate analysis. Screening for these risk factors may be useful in identifying those most vulnerable to developing chronic PTSD following this unique type of disaster. With the exception of the finding that providing assistance after the disaster is inversely associated with PTSD symptomology, our results are consistent with findings across a wide range of other types of disaster events.

Edda Bjork Thordardottir, Ingunn Hansdottir, Jillian C. Shipherd, Unnur Anna Valdimarsdottir, Heidi Resnick, Ask Elklit, Ragnhildur Guðmundsdóttir, Berglind Gudmundsdottir

The Nordic Welfare Watch - in Response to Crisis

The aim of the project is to investigate how well Nordic welfare systems are prepared for various crises. The welfare state plays an extensive role in crisis and disasters, yet emergency response plans and the organization of civil defence do include the health systems in their planning while the role of social services is rather unclear. Furthermore, the literature shows a need for long-term response plans, which are typically governed by municipalities and social services in cooperation with health care services.

The objective is twofold: 1) Investigate the role of social services in disaster planning in the Nordic countries and evaluate the experience and lessons learned from the Welfare Watch created in Iceland following the bank crisis; and 2) Evaluate the challenges for which Nordic welfare systems should be prepared.

The study is divided into four independent projects:

1. Examine emergency response plans amongst the Nordic countries focusing on the role of welfare services, especially social services;
2. Evaluate the activities of the Icelandic Welfare Watch;
3. Define and map the risk challenges that the Nordic welfare system could face in coming years;
4. Combine the results from the above three projects, as well as the results of other research groups (the reaction to the bank crisis, social and health indicators as well as results from the NordForsk Centres of Excellence on Societal Risks). Based on these results a proposal will be made for a Nordic Welfare Watch based.

Ingibjörg Lilja Ómarsdóttir, University of Iceland