

CREATING WINDS OF CHANGE – ADAPTING AND TRANSFORMING THE CRISIS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM USING EXERCISES

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Abstract

During a crisis, crisis management actors need to continuously adapt to the developing situation as well as to each other. However, the crisis management actors also needs to adapt and transform in-between crises in order to be prepared for future events. This type of development is complex as it has to be achieved in a conscious and concerted manner amongst a heterogeneous group of actors, of which some may not even recognize themselves as potential crisis managers.

Exercises are regarded as one tool for such development. If, how and under what circumstances exercises contribute to a conscious and concerted change at an inter-organizational level is not well understood. In this paper, the roles of inter-organizational exercises in the evolution of the collective crisis management ability are discussed, based on a systems theory approach.

This is done by combining the idea of a cyclic approach with a previously developed model for understanding how heterogeneous system-of-systems learn in order to adapt and transform. The result increases the understanding of the role of exercises in the development, underscores the necessity of conscious choices regarding the focus and design of exercises and exercise elements to achieve a structured development, and shows how the interplay between exercises and other sources of knowledge can be understood in such a development.

Keywords: Crisis management, exercises, learning, systems theory, organizational learning

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