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Urban Governance of Disaster Response Capacity: Institutional Models of Local Scalability

https://doi.org/10.1515/jhsem-2022-0005
Received February 2, 2022; accepted October 24, 2023

Abstract: Increasingly confronted with the acute risk of large-scale disaster, local governments across the globe are searching for effective and efficient strategies for scaling their disaster response capacity. Emergency management research has examined such strategies in various urban settings, but still suffers from the lack of proper theoretical frameworks for studying how institutionalized modes of governance condition local scalability in different national contexts. Building on the research tradition of urban governance, this article develops a conceptual framework for conducting institutional analysis of overarching values, norms and practices that shape the local scaling of disaster response capacity. It demonstrates the analytical value of the framework by applying it in an illustrative case study of disaster response systems in the three Scandinavian countries of Sweden, Denmark, and Norway. The framework proves useful for systematizing and discussing nuances within and across institutional contexts.

Keywords: urban governance; emergency management; disaster response; institutional theory; public administration; Scandinavia

1 Introduction

Large-scale disasters pose a particularly perilous problem for urban governments. They are acute, complex and turbulent problems that no single actor can handle alone and that requires the collective capacity to scale up the response capacity swiftly (Ansell, Sørensen, and Torfing 2021, 2023; Crosby and Bryson 2005; Krogh and Lo 2023; Rittel and

We presented an early version of this article at the Jon Pierre Retirement Event “What Have We Learned About Governance? What Else Do We Need to Know?”, May 12–13 2022, Gothenburg University, Sweden.

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Webber 1973). In order to prevent, prepare and respond effectively without being overwhelmed by the escalating resource demand to the situation, urban governments must engage in interactive governance processes in which they plan, collaborate and coordinate their actions with other public and private actors (Ansell and Gash 2008; Boin and ‘t Hart 2010; ‘t Hart et al. 1993; Manning 2020; Torfing et al. 2012).

A number of studies have examined different urban governance strategies of multi-actor scalability and shown how the specific institutionalization of exchanges between the public sector, market and civil society varies significantly across locales. Some urban governments are highly dependent upon volunteers and third sector organizations in disaster response (Brudney and Gazley 2009; Jung and Ha 2021; Kapucu 2006; Krogh and Lo 2023; Wu, Shang, and Collins 2015). Others rely on outsourcing to private contractors and public-private partnerships with local businesses (British Medical Association 2020; Gotham 2016; Rademacher 2011). Yet others are largely dependent on the central government and its state institutions to provide specialized personnel and equipment for managing disasters (Kamel and Loukaitou-Sideris 2004; Kamel 2012; McEntire 2007).

Since managing disasters effectively requires extensive governance systems that span multiple sectors and levels of government (Nowell and Steelman 2018), urban governance of disaster in all modern societies is embedded in larger institutional frameworks that define the relations, roles and responsibilities of public and private actors and delineate the local scope of action. However, the burgeoning disaster risk reduction and emergency management literature awards surprisingly little attention to the impact of national governance institutions on the objectives, participants, goals and outcomes of local disaster response (Staupe-Delgado, Abdel-Fattah, and Pursiainen 2022; for notable exceptions, see Andrew, Jung, and Li 2015; Jung, Song, and Feiock 2019). Therefore, there is a shortage of theoretical frameworks and conceptual tools for conducting institutional analysis of overarching values, norms and practices of disaster response, which limits our empirical understanding of various institutionalized modes of governance and how they condition the scaling of local response capacity in different national contexts.

In order to fill this gap and thus contribute to the emergency management literature, we set out to develop a conceptual framework suitable for the analysis of how governance institutions shape strategies for scaling-up local disaster response capacity. In doing so, we build on urban governance theory and adapt the generic urban governance models developed by Pierre (1999; 2011) to fit the field of disaster response. Specifically, we proceed in four steps. First, we explain the theoretical perspective of urban governance. Then, we develop the conceptual framework of four urban governance models for scaling local disaster response capacity. Next, we demonstrate the analytical value of the framework by applying it in an illustrative case study of the scaling of local disaster response capacity in the three Scandinavian
countries of Sweden, Denmark, and Norway. Finally, we briefly summarize the argument and draw implications for future emergency management research and practice.

2 Governance, Regimes and Institutions

As a theoretically anchored research field, urban governance draws on several well-established research traditions. It builds on early research on inter-organizational relations in public policy making (Heclo 1978; Hanf and Sharpf 1978); on the role of local clusters of public and private actors in public policy implementation (Hjern and Porter 1981; Hjern and Hull 1982); and on network governance and management (Marin and Mayntz 1991; Marsh and Rhodes 1992; Kickert, Klijn, and Koppenjan 1997; Kooiman 1993; Scharpf 1994). More specifically, it has evolved from the mid-/late-1990's public governance research on the so-called shift ‘from government to governance’, which entailed a shift in focus from local government to urban governance (Pierre 1999). Based in notions of ‘governing without government’ and the gradual ‘hollowing out of the state’ (Rhodes 1994; 1996; 1997), the overarching governance perspective is concerned with multi-actor processes that involve non-state actors in the local, national, and supranational governance of societies. The shift in focus away from the state as the sole governor and towards conglomerates of public and private actors in the governing of societies prompted the integration of related theoretical fields such as urban regime theory (Stone 1993) and neo-institutionalist theory, focusing on how formal and informal rules, structures, values, norms and objectives influence governance processes (March and Olsen 1989). The urban governance perspective thus highlights how institutions shape and constrain political behavior and condition urban policy choices (Pierre 1999).

More recently, public administration scholars have taken interest in the tectonic movements between a bureaucratic public policy and implementation regime of Old Public Administration (OPA); a market-oriented management regime of New Public Management (NPM); and, more recently, a participatory and interactive design and delivery regime of New Public Governance (NPG) (Osborne 2010). Theoretically, the three governance regimes are often advanced as conceptual ideal types or distilled governance paradigms (Torfing and Triantafillou 2013). The OPA regime, which relies on the governance capacity of the unitary state, creates and implements policy within a closed political-administrative system, allocates resources through hierarchy, and coordinates actions by means of rules and regulations. The NPM regime, on the other hand, increases public sector efficiency through intensified competition, contracting out of public services, and performance management. Finally, the NPG regime mobilizes resources through cross-sector collaborations, partnerships and
networks in order to develop effective, innovative and legitimate solutions to intractable problems. Scholars have shown increasing analytical interest in using the paradigmatic regimes as conceptual tools for analyzing hybrid governance regimes where multiple modes of governance co-exist (Denis, Ferlie, and van Gestel 2015; Koppenjan, Karré, and Termeer 2019; Krogh 2022; Torfing et al. 2020). The budding governance hybridity research relies on the theoretical assumption that governance is not an unequivocal, coherent and frictionless enterprise, but a multi-layered, inconsistent and complex system of interlocking processes. It has shown the analytical value and relevance of the conceptualized regime approach for dissecting governance mixes in different policy areas within and across polities.

Urban governance scholars have argued that the governance perspective is particularly suitable for analysis of local governance processes since the interplay between political, social and economic conditions is especially tangible at the local level (Pierre 2011; Røiseland 2011). At the same time, the regime theoretical lens emphasizes how urban governance arrangements are embedded in wider national institutional frameworks that define their scope of action and provide opportunity structures for urban political action (Pierre 2014). These frameworks involve constitutional arrangements and other types of legal definitions of the responsibilities of public organizations as well as prevailing norms, traditions, values, and ideas of governance more broadly, thus constituting the institutions of urban governance (Pierre 1999). The combination of governance theory, regime theory and neo-institutional theory makes the urban governance perspective apt for understanding how larger formal and informal systems of rules, values, traditions, norms, beliefs and practices produce different outcomes at the local level of governance.

3 Urban Governance Models for the Scaling of Local Disaster Response Capacity

Emergency management is one of many functions of local governments, and the urban governance perspective allows us to explore emergency management in a broader governance context. While the particularities of governance vary across functions and policy fields in any single locality, there is likely a certain pattern in each trope of nation-states, each single country and each single city (Pierre 2011). Not among the daily routine functions of a local government, disaster response is unlikely to define the type of governance characterizing a whole city or locale. The delivery of welfare services is more likely the defining function in this regard. Following this line of thought, the type of governance found in disaster and
emergency management is prone to echo the governance of service delivery and the different ways in which local governments interact with public and private actors on a broader scale (Wollebæk, Ibsen, and Siisiäinen 2010).

Yet, different government functions and policy fields constitute significantly different settings for urban governance (cf. Pierre 1999, 377). To make generic models of urban governance relevant as conceptual tools for the analysis of how local governments scale their disaster response capacity, we must therefore adapt them to the field-specific characteristics of the emergency management sector. Handling crises and emergencies is one of the oldest collective action problems found in local communities. Long before the institutionalization of local communities as cities and municipalities with their own professional systems of governance, some forms of community-based emergency management were in place (Bullock, Haddow, and Coppola 2017). To some extent, these historical roots affect the contemporary organization of emergency management. To this day, many local governments depend on the active participation of local communities when managing risks and threats to public safety and health such as climate-related incidents, pandemics, and terrorist attacks (Ruijters et al. 2015; MacManus and Caruson 2011). Their professionalized emergency management organizations must mobilize, coordinate and collaborate with citizens, local businesses, voluntary organizations and other public actors in order to respond to situational crises and catastrophes effectively (Boin and ‘t Hart 2010; ‘t Hart et al. 1993; Krogh and Lo 2023).

Yet, large-scale crises and disasters have become an increasing concern for central governments and state institutions. As the modern (nation-)states were established from the 17th century and onwards, police and military forces became central actors in the governance of security threats and potentially destabilizing events. Since then, the modern state has increased its crisis management capacity with central coordination centres, national emergency management agencies, etc., which has altered the division of roles and responsibilities in large-scale disaster response. Instead of relying on, and actively developing, local self-sufficiency, local government increasingly depends upon central government to provide the necessary disaster response capacity. These historical developments shape present-day governance and, more specifically, restrict and enable different ways of scaling the local response capacity in the face of large-scale disasters.

Adapting a generic urban governance typology developed by Pierre (1999) to these specific domain conditions, we suggest four theoretical governance models of disaster response that provide different institutional conditions for scaling up local disaster response capacity. Based in various organizational logics and constituencies, the four models differ in terms of their key participants, coordination mechanisms, instruments, and underpinning values, which shape and define the role of local government in relation to the local civil society and the state. As a result, they each
have their particular strengths and weaknesses with respect to scaling of local response capacity. Table 1 summarizes the four governance models of disaster response, each of which we explain further in the following subsections.

### 3.1 Professional Governance of Disaster Response

The professional model institutionalizes disaster response as a specialized function within public emergency management organizations with highly skilled and experienced professionals. The overarching aim of the professional model is to achieve the same extent of specialization and professionalism in the local disaster capacity
reserve of part-time and on-call employees as in daily emergency management. Institutionalizing emergency management in single-purpose organizations, agencies and departments with trained personnel, the professional governance model relies on formal planning procedures and vertical coordination in hierarchical chains of command. The underpinning values are dedication and expertise and local government plays a key role in the governance of disaster response. In such a system, there is less room for amateurs and volunteers.

The professional model allows for local political control and values detailed planning covering any thinkable future scenario (‘t Hart et al. 1993). While it enables prompt decisions in the top of the organizational hierarchy, it suffers from the fact that the developed set of competencies and expertise does not necessarily fit future crises and unknown risks. In this sense, the professional model lacks flexibility. Moreover, its reliance on vertical coordination may produce silos and self-centered public organizations that fail to engage in horizontal cooperation and coordination, hampering the effectiveness and limiting the available resources for the local scaling of disaster response capacity (cf. Christensen and Lægreid 2007).

3.2 Contract-Based Governance of Disaster Response

Based in the philosophy of New Public Management, the contract-based model builds on a firm belief in private enterprise and competition among different providers of urban services as means for enhancing efficiency and increasing output performance (Pierre 1999, 378). It thus emphasizes efficient disaster response by private businesses who operate on a market and produce and deliver services based in contracts and public-private partnerships with local government. The model builds on the idea that emergency management is not only about saving lives and protecting property; it is also an opportunity to boost the local economy and create extra value for local businesses. For example, local governments can engage in public-private partnerships with local businesses in order to facilitate business development of special expertise in certain areas (Boin et al. 2014, 9; Rademacher 2011). Similarly, they can promote business clusters around emergency management technologies (Gotham 2016). In contract-based governance of emergencies, the public-private cooperation rests on shared interests in economic growth between city hall and the local business elite who are the key participants (Pierre 1999, 384).

According to economic theory, contracting-out will increase cost-efficiency and may even spur innovations in the field of disaster response. In addition, there will be valuable side effects of this model, like creating economic growth, jobs and business opportunities in the local community. These are obvious strengths of the contract-based model. However, there are also challenges at both local and national level. The involvement of private businesses in disaster management comes with potential
accountability issues in case of failed actions and the loss of life, etc. In addition, only a few localities will likely have an opportunity to link disaster management to business development. From the national perspective, the irregular opportunity structure creates unequal coverage, whereby some localities become significantly less safe than others.

3.3 Civic Governance of Disaster Response

The main objective in the civic model is to mobilize civil society resources that can be exploited in emergency management. This can be done either by direct links between public sector and individual citizens/volunteers or through inter-organizational networks of public and voluntary organizations such as the Red Cross (Krogh and Lo 2023). Especially in the latter case, civic leaders become key participants. It values processes of deliberation, participation and co-production, which engage citizens and other civil society actors in resilient and robust disaster response. In the most advanced forms of civic governance, interest organizations enjoy delegated public authority and responsibility for public service delivery. This is especially the case in Northern Europe where large public sectors co-exist with strong civil societies with voluntary associations that control vast human and financial resources (Pierre 1999, 380ff). Resting on high levels of collective participation, it primarily sees local government as an instrument or an arena for co-creation and concerted public-private action (Torfing, Sørensen, and Røiseland 2019).

In a perfect world, an endless reservoir of civic resources would be available in case of larger incidents. In the real world, however, the decline in voluntary organizational life increasingly challenges the model. As such, volunteers are to some extent an unreliable, unstable and thus risky resource to count on for scaling of disaster response capacity. In addition, efficient and effective coordination between multiple public actors and volunteers requires extensive organizational resources and managerial competencies (ibid.). Especially when volunteers become involved through their organizations, the coordination costs rise.

3.4 State-Reliant Governance of Disaster Response

The three models discussed so far rest on the assumption that urban governments constitute a distinct level of governance. However, most countries rely on some form of multi-level governance, where different tiers of government are integrated
(Bache and Flinders 2004). In the case of emergency management, this becomes particularly relevant when cities are unable to muster the needed emergency management resources to deal with larger incidents and disasters. In the state-reliant governance model, cities draw on the centralized capacity to mobilize vital resources such as trained personnel and machinery instead of building up local emergency management capacity. Once initiated, the model is self-reinforcing to the extent that local authorities have few incentives to start funding and developing local capacity whereby they quickly become addicted to the state-based fix (Pierre 1999, 387).

The model emphasises equal and nationwide capacity of emergency management. An obvious strength of this model is the national coverage, and the possibility to put together all available resources under one umbrella. When combining resources from e.g. local governments, state-led police and national military forces under one single umbrella, this will enable a more comprehensive response to extreme events. On the negative side, however, there is a risk that challenges related to inter-governmental coordination and too much centralization may come with the price of a lack of local knowledge, weak local anchoring, and more difficulties when motivating and mobilizing volunteers. Relying heavily on higher echelons of government to compensate for the lack of local capacity, it is “the least embracing” of the governance models in the sense that the relationships are primarily inter-governmental rather than public-private (Pierre 1999, 387). Hence, the main participants are national officials and state bureaucrats.

4 Applying the Urban Governance Framework in an Analysis of the Scaling of Local Disaster Response Capacity in Scandinavia

Models expressing different types of governance should not be mistaken for empirically precise accounts of urban governance in different countries, locales, and policy sectors; they are ideal types crafted for analytical purposes (Pierre 1999, 377). Urban governance differs across locales within the same national political culture and contending views of the purpose and goals of public policies co-exist within the same local government. In fact, urban governance in any given locale will typically resemble more than one of the four models and thus take the form of ‘hybrid’ or ‘mixed’ governance systems.

In its empirical application, the governance model typology carries the potential to identify the co-existence of multiple governance models and thus multiple institutional systems of values and norms, – which may serve to show how
the governance of disaster response is not simply technocratic, but tension-filled and politically charged. When different and sometimes opposing institutions co-exist and give meaning, direction and legitimacy to governance practices, then cross-pressures, dilemmas and power struggles arise within and around apparently technocratic and expert-based management systems (Krogh and Thygesen 2022). As an analytical tool, the governance model typology thus enables more nuanced analysis of governance hybridity and governance mixes that deepen our understanding of the local governance of scaling in different institutional contexts.

In order to illustrate this point, we will now apply the theoretical typology in an illustrative analysis of the Swedish, Danish and Norwegian disaster response systems. The case study is included for illustrative purposes only and does not provide an in-depth analysis of the disaster response systems in each of the three nations. Our aim is more modest, namely to provide a cursory indication of how the typology is useful for systematizing and discussing nuances within and across institutional contexts. Empirically, we draw relevant information from written documents. These include primary sources such as laws, executive orders, official websites and other publicly available material detailing roles and responsibilities of various actors, and secondary sources such as previous research-based evaluations, analyses and accounts of the three systems (e.g. Gjerde and Winsvold 2016; Nielsen 2022; Petridou, Sparf, and Pihl 2020). Based on these sources, our analysis primarily focuses on the formal aspects of the disaster response governance systems. More in-depth analyses that also include the informal aspects of governance could rely on other data sources such as qualitative interviews with practitioners and observers in the field could, but that is beyond the scope of the present endeavor.

When comparing the three systems, we rely on a “most similar systems design”, which presupposes inter-system similarity between two or more cases and variation in a key intra-system variable (Przeworski 1987). There are many over-all similarities in governance traditions and institutions of the Scandinavian countries, and the crises management literature often groups Scandinavian countries together in the same trope or regime type. For example, Kuipers et al. (2015, 8) categorize both Norway and Sweden as “decentralized systems” with “strong civil-military cooperation” (Denmark is not included in the study). In our illustrative case study, we intend to show how the conceptual disaster governance typology is not only capable of specifying such similarities, but also teasing out striking cross-case differences that analyses based on existing frameworks will likely miss.

Table 2 displays the main findings of our illustrative case analysis along the dimensions of key participants, key instruments, key coordinating mechanisms,
and underpinning values. The following three subsections elaborate on the findings related to each of the three disaster response systems before a final subsection considers cross-case similarities and differences between the hybrid governance systems and briefly discusses their relative strengths and weaknesses.

### 4.1 Sweden

In the day-to-day emergency management, the Swedish emergency management system follows a *principle of proximity*, according to which the lowest possible level of government must handle emergencies (SOU 2001, 41). In combination with two concomitant principles of *sector responsibility* and *parity*, i.e. those organizational responsibilities that apply under normal conditions also apply in times of crises (Petridou, Sparf, and Pihl 2020), the local governments play a key role in the daily management of emergencies. They are responsible for fire service, traffic accidents, water drownings, oil and gas fires, forest fires and accidents with chemicals (Krisinformation.se 2022). They also work out analysis of risks and vulnerabilities reflecting local needs and local context (MSB 2015). Hence, the professional governance model characterize the core of Swedish emergency management.
When large-scale disaster strikes, Sweden relies on a highly centralized national emergency management system of state actors. The Swedish Maritime Administration and the national coast guard provide rescue operations related to air and sea, while the police carry the responsibility for land-based rescue operations in the large Swedish mountain areas. County government has the primary responsibility for managing nuclear accidents. The state-reliant governance model of disaster response is thus evident in Sweden.

Compared to its Scandinavian neighbors, the formal emergency management system in Sweden stands out by its exclusionary public model. Under normal circumstances, neither national, regional nor local authorities make use of volunteers or private contractors (Bergling et al. 2016, 58), nor do they recognize for-profit or civil society actors as an integral part of the daily emergency management system (Petridou, Sparf, and Pihl 2020). Under extreme events, however, the main public actors do involve volunteers and for-profit actors at an ad hoc basis. For example, when the scale of a long-lasting forest fires in 2014 gradually exceeded the resources held by public actors, they involved all available voluntary and for-profit resources (Persson and Uhnoo 2018; Johansson et al. 2018).

The professional and state-reliant emergency management system in Sweden is organized through hierarchy and multi-level governance as its key coordinating mechanisms and rests upon values of coherence, consistency, dedication and expertise. As the civic model relies on governance networks, public-private collaboration, public participation and co-production, however, the formal emergency management system may clash with the need to involve private and civic resources when large-scale disasters strike. In the referred 2014 forest fires response, the professional actors generally acknowledged the contributions of volunteers, but also found their behaviour to be counterproductive, unpredictable and ineffective at times, challenging professional-volunteer cooperation (Persson and Uhnoo 2018, 76). Particularly, professionals found it hard to include spontaneous volunteers with weak organizational affiliations (Johansson et al. 2018). We may explain the observed tensions with the value-based differences between competing governance models, especially as they arise in a formal governance system that does not integrate or bridge the conflicting institutional logics.

4.2 Denmark

In Denmark, the local government and its municipal fire and rescue services carry the main responsibility for firefighting, rescuing and first aid following traffic accidents, building collapses, natural disasters, flight crashes, and shipwrecks at shore (Danish Parliament 2017). In case of larger incidents, they are also responsible for
receiving, accommodating and catering to evacuated persons (ibid.). Finally, they undertake local emergency planning, resource management and risk analysis in inter-municipal Emergency Management Committees. As such, Danish local governments play a key role in practically all land-based emergencies in Denmark, small or large, whereby a professional model of governance bears significantly on the organization of emergency management in Denmark.

As in Sweden, the governance of disaster response capacity in Denmark largely relies on a state-based system of public actors. In case of large-scale disasters, the National Staff of Operations (NOST) coordinates the response (DEMA 2019). NOST is headed by the National Police and also involves the Security and Intelligence Service, the Defence Intelligence Service, the Defence Command, the Danish Emergency Management Agency (DEMA), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Critical Supply Agency, the Health Authority, and the Transport Authority (Politi.dk 2022). The police also leads twelve Local Emergency Management Staffs of relevant public actors in the police district who are ready to step-in during major regional incidents (ibid.). Finally, DEMA operates six Regional Emergency Management Centers where they train professional and voluntary personnel to assist the local rescue services in need of extra resources and competencies (BRS.dk 2022). The state-reliant governance model thus clearly shapes the scaling of disaster response capacity in Denmark.

In Denmark, the civic governance model is also in play. National and local authorities rely heavily on voluntarism and organize a large number of volunteers (Nielsen 2022; Krogh and Lo 2023). First, the publicly run fire stations employ 1700 full-time firefighters and 4300 part-time and on-call supply firefighters, but also organize no less than 3600 unpaid volunteers. Second, the DEMA services organize and train a large reserve of on-call volunteers. Third, the police often call upon the largest organization of volunteers in Denmark – the Home Guard – who currently accounts for approx. 30,000 members (HJV.dk 2022). Moreover, spontaneous volunteers and local citizen groups arising in the midst of a crisis also often play an important role in the response to incidents such as coastal flooding (Nielsen 2022). While volunteers are an integral part of the Danish disaster response system, non-profit organizations do not play a significant role. Denmark thus displays a specific version of the civic model of governance that largely rests on publicly organized volunteers rather than NGO’s and civic groups.

In terms of for-profit companies, local governments have contracted-out about half of Denmark’s 241 fire stations to the private company Falck A/S. Hence, the contract-based model is part of the core emergency management set-up. As an extra-capacity for scaling, however, contracts and partnerships with private companies are not widely used whereby the contract-based model is present, but not prevalent.

Largely based on professional and state-reliant governance with an integral element of civic governance, the Danish governance system rests upon values of
coherence, consistency, dedication, and expertise, on the one hand, and public participation and co-production, on the other hand. To some extent, the tensions resolve through integration of volunteers in the operational procedures of public emergency management organizations (Krogh and Lo 2023). Thus, public participation takes place within the hierarchy and multi-level governance of the professional and state-reliant model and occurs with reference to the professional norms of dedication and expertise. However, the hybrid governance system involve tensions between volunteer amateurism and professional expertise, which may surface during large-scale disaster response (Nielsen 2022). Integration of multiple models in formal institutions may thus relieve tensions, but does not ensure frictionless disaster response in practice.

4.3 Norway

In Norway, local governments have a threefold role in the management of emergencies (DSB 2019). First, local governments are responsible for some of the most commonly employed resources in rescue operations such as the fire services and the first line medical services. Secondly, they are responsible for managing smaller incidents within their territory like flooding and extreme weather. Thirdly, they perform local emergency planning and risk analysis related to their territory. Many local governments have established crisis management councils where different public and civic actors take part, including police, fire service, medical services, and voluntary organizations.

Outsourcing of emergency management responsibility to private companies is not part of the Norwegian model, except for the mandatory emergency preparedness in the oil and gas industry. Overall, therefore, local governments play an important role in the national emergency management system characterized by network-like collaboration between many different public and voluntary actors. The Norwegian case thus exhibits a hybrid governance mix of the professional and the civil governance models.

In case of large-scale disasters, the state-reliant model also comes into play. Two Main Rescue Coordination Centers (MRCCs) and a set of Local Rescue Coordination Centers (LRCCs) integrate the different actors under the leadership of the police and a multi-level administrative management. The two MRCCs only fully control rescue helicopters. They must mobilize and coordinate all other resources needed for any given operation as a network manager. The government has mandated the military, the hospital system, the fire services, and the regional and local governments to provide all the resources that the rescue centers command. However, a significant portion of the potential and actual resources mobilized is rooted in civil society. For
example, a publicly co-funded voluntary organization carry out most sea-born rescue operations close to shore.

The public authorities officially recognize an alliance of seven voluntary organizations as an integral part of the national emergency management system (Gjerde and Winsvold 2016). These organizations are equipped for search and rescue, medical services, flight services, radio communication and cave climbing, which are resources that the public authorities do not possess themselves (Krogh and Lo 2023). The Norwegian disaster response system thus relies on the state, the local government, and civil society actors. It takes the form of an integrated network of voluntary organizations and public organizations at all levels of government.

Mixing professional, civic and state-reliant governance, the Norwegian emergency management system rests on an uneasy set of value orientations, including dedication and expertise, public participation and co-production as well as coherence and consistency. While the hybrid governance system does involve tensions between voluntary organizational life and a professionalized public management system, they are dampened through centralized network management and the intermediary function of specialized voluntary organizations that bridge civic norms of participation and professional norms of dedication and expertise (Krogh and Lo 2023). Specifically, state-controlled coordination centres such as the MRCCs and LRCCs facilitate cross-sector collaboration between the police, voluntary organizations and other relevant actors, thereby integrating professional and voluntary sets of norms in disaster response operations.

4.4 Governance of Disaster Response in the Case Countries: Similarities and Differences

Our analysis shows how governance of disaster response in the three Scandinavian countries is primarily professional and state-reliant with a secondary civic component. As previous research has shown (Kuipers et al. 2015), the three governance systems for disaster response share fundamental characteristics. However, our analytical lens not only specifies the institutional similarities, but also reveals important differences. In essence, it shows how the three systems are hybrids that contain traits of more than one governance model, albeit in various shapes and mixes.

As for similarities, the professional and the state-reliant models are prevalent in all three countries, especially when it comes to large-scale disasters that span the boundaries of local jurisdictions. The increased professional and state-based capacity to handle disasters has relived a burden on local communities, but risks damping local ownership and community-based capacity for disaster response. All
three Scandinavian countries have treated the tension between centralization and decentralization in a similar way. In all three governance systems, smaller incidents are handled at the local level, while larger incidents involve state authorities. However, the police – a state authority par excellence – act as the coordinating lead agency in disaster response and rescue operations on all administrative levels of government, installing the state as a key actor in the local governance of disaster response.

As for differences, the three governance systems integrate the civic component in various degrees and in various ways. With its particularly heavy reliance on the professional and state-reliant models, the Swedish governance system allows for a high level of professionalism and thorough coordination, but may not provide the necessary flexibility for rapidly mobilizing local resources for scaling the collective disaster response capacity. Denmark and Norway, on the other hand, exhibit two variants of the civic model. In Denmark, public authorities organize volunteers. In Norway, volunteers participate through their voluntary organizations who collaborate with the local and state authorities. In both cases, the governance system opens up a reservoir of local resources and enable ownership of local communities, but also runs greater risks related to general declines in voluntarism and skill deficiencies related to extensive “amateurism”. Engaging volunteers through partnerships with voluntary organizations, the Norwegian governance system strengthens professionalized leadership, competencies and skills outside the public sector, but may also lead to longer chains of command and fragmentation. Involving organized volunteers as an integrated resource of public authorities, the Danish governance system causes less fragmentation, but does not contribute towards capacity and capability building in voluntary organizations.

5 Conclusions

Increasingly confronted with the acute risk of large-scale disaster, local governments across the globe are searching for effective and efficient strategies for scaling their disaster response capacity. While emergency management research has examined such strategies in various urban settings, it has not yet grappled with the question of how institutionalized modes of governance condition the scaling of local response capacity in different national contexts. Based in the research tradition of urban governance, this article has developed a conceptual tool that enables scholars to conduct institutional analysis of underlying values, norms and practices shaping the local scaling of disaster response capacity. Dissecting nuances, similarities and differences between the disaster response systems in three Scandinavian countries, we have illustrated the analytical value of distinguishing between a professional, a
contract-based, a civic and a state-reliant governance model of disaster response. The framework enables examinations of disaster response in a broader policy context, which qualifies our understanding of the multiple institutional systems of values and norms shaping the governance of scaling.

Directing our attention to the wider governance context of disaster response, the presented framework has implications for both research and practice. It prompts closer examinations of national and local governance traditions and trajectories that frame the institutionalized decision-making processes and their outcomes. Applying the framework in empirical studies, future research will help deepen our understanding of the institutional embeddedness of scaling strategies in different locales. It will aid scholars and policy professionals to assess the possibilities and limitations to policy transfer between jurisdictions, cultures and polities. Acknowledging the hybridized, unstable and internally contested composition of any empirical governance regime, however, it also leaves an undetermined space for agency. As an analytical tool, it is thus apt for mapping the tension-filled institutionalized space in which policy choice and strategical manoeuvring takes place. We encourage scholars to deploy and refine the presented framework in order to augment our collective body of knowledge and further develop the theory and practice of local scaling of disaster response capacity.

Acknowledgments: We greatly appreciate the insightful comments we received at the event and would like to express our sincere gratitude to Jon for his lifelong contribution to governance research and theory.

Research funding: This work is supported by Norges Forskningsråd, grant no. 296064.

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