NEEDS 2021

5th edition of the Northern European Conference
on Emergency and Disaster Studies

Östersund / online 21–23 September

Abstracts from the panel

Knowledge management and "unforeseen crises"

Knowledge Management – The Thing from Another World?

Corresponding Author:
Malte Schönefeld
University of Wuppertal Germany
schoenefeld@uni-wuppertal.de

Author(s):

Jana-Andrea Frommer[1], Patricia M. Schütte[2] and Yannic Schulte[3]

[1]German Police University, Jana-Andrea.Frommer@Dhpol.De, DEU
[2]University Of Wuppertal, Schuette@Uni-Wuppertal.De, DEU
[3]University Of Wuppertal, Yschulte@Uni-Wuppertal.De, DEU

The increased refugee movements to Germany between late summer 2015 and spring 2016 is an example for a phenomenon that seemed to come unexpected and had a long-lasting appearance. This led to a number of huge challenges in terms of sufficient registration, supply and shelter of more than a million people. Besides coping with the circumstances, involved organizations and local authorities had to fulfil tasks they were not used to. Relevant stakeholders instantly operate at full capacity and formed ad hoc networks to tackle the overwhelming situation in cooperative approaches. However, these challenging circumstances were actually not new in its nature, but do not occur regularly. More than 20 years earlier, high numbers of refugees, primarily from the civil war in former Yugoslavia, arrived in Germany. In 2015, meanwhile, very little knowledge from these experiences was available for the stakeholders, which was why they had to start their work quite unprepared and more or less from zero. Empirical findings and experience from workshops with practitioners indicate that knowledge and insights gained from past situations like this are only available in an insufficient form, because they lack appropriate resources (e.g., technical capabilities, personnel, strategies) to document and capture the developed knowledge afterwards as well as to evaluate it for further use and transfer. From our point of view, conditions like this lead to a kind of "knowledge crisis" that also seems to be manifested in the current pandemic.

On the one hand, knowledge management is often seen as a promising tool for prediction, prevention, preparedness and management of "unforeseen" crises. On the other hand, traditional scientific knowledge management models (e.g. the knowledge spiral) are often considered as too abstract for practical application. Against this backdrop, the contribution will take a closer look at the question, "What are obstacles and opportunities to consider when aiming for development of a practical and acceptable knowledge management approach for crisis management actors?" In order to discuss this question, the contribution presents empirical results on knowledge management in and between organizations involved in the refugee situation in 2015/16. The data was collected within the project "Security Cooperations and Migration (SiKoMi)" funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research. Results from interviews with representatives from police, public administration and private security will be presented as well as the transferability to the current pandemic and future situations.

Sustainable advanced learning in managing and communicating disaster risk by social media and crowd sourcing.

Corresponding Author:
Kees Boersma
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam Netherlands
f.k.boersma@vu.nl

Author(s):

Nathan Clark[1] and Chiara Fonio[2]

[1]Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, N.Clark@Vu.Nl, NLD
[2]Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, C.Fonio@Vu.Nl, NLD

The ability to learn from crisis and disasters is a vital part of resilient societies. Yet, learning rarely takes place in a sustainable manner, and more often than not, local stakeholders are ignored in taking up the lessons learned after a disaster. In this paper, we propose a Sustainable Advanced Learning approach, defined as the maintainable and evolving collection of knowledge produced for and by all relevant stakeholders. We build on the notion of resilience, a normative and positive quality of a system, institution or individual that increases the capacity to manage disaster risk to understand sustainable advanced learning. We are interested in learning processes within and across institutions and organizations in particular on uses of social media and crowdsourcing in disasters. Sustainable Advanced Learning entails a cognitive dimension (the capability to gain in-depth knowledge of e.g. crises and crisis management) and a social dimension (the collaborative efforts to implement that knowledge into new practices), and a transformative dimensions whereby reflections are made on how knowledge was learned, what has changed in the process, and how and in what ways new knowledge might continue to evolve. Sustainable learning involves three interrelated levels of knowledge production: 1) the *known* is concerned with the perception and problematization of concrete issues; 2) the *knowable* is the contextualization and critical reflections on these issues, and how they may overlap and interface across different social, institutional and technical boundaries: 3) the *unknown* is concerned with experimentation, innovation and implementation of new knowledge, as well as the monitoring and review of the benefits and impacts of that knowledge (e.g. change). With this paper we would like to contribute to the discussion on learning from crisis and disasters, important for researchers, practitioners and policy makers. *Researchers* may be interested in learning and contributing to helpful and new approaches (methods) to studying the benefits and drawbacks of social media and crowd sourcing in disasters. It may provide *practitioners* to develop a more hands-on approach on how to best implement social media and crowdsourcing into their operating procedures, in different phases of disaster management cycle. Finally, *policy makers* may profit from sustainable advanced learning for improving their national and regional governance strategies on SMCS in disasters. This paper is an outcome of the EU H2020 project LINKS: strengthening links between technologies and society for European disaster resilience: http://links-project.eu/