Summary of results from the GOVCAP-project

The primary aim of the GOVCAP-project has been to strengthen knowledge concerning governance dilemmas to support societal security, safety and resilience. It aimed to strengthen evidence-based policy-making by focusing on performance in crises and the implications of different organizational arrangements in crises, and relations. A core focus has been on organization capacity and legitimacy, and how the two factors interact. The project has brought forth new insight on national arrangements for crisis management and the importance of citizen's belief in such arrangements.

The secondary objectives of the project were to provide useful knowledge for policy and decision makers, to communicate with user groups such as political and administrative executives and civil servants, private actors and civil society organizations, and to stimulate recruitment of new scholars within the field.

The GOVCAP project has through its various activities (both academic publications and dissemination to practitioners and the broader academic community) argued for the need to address governance capacity and governance legitimacy to understand crisis management. Not only what the state actually *does* but also citizens' views and expectations regarding what it *should do* matter for crisis management. People's risk acceptance, perceptions, participation and support are crucial because they constrain and enable capacity and instrumental action.

The research maintains that in order to understand the development and functioning of crisis management, the organizational structure in general and coordination mechanisms in particular are crucial. In addition, cultural features and processes related to legitimacy and trust matter. To understand crisis management fully, one has to take into account both structural and cultural features. The project has brought together insights into formal structural arrangements for national crisis management in five countries (Norway, Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands and UK). It has also provided in-depth case studies from these countries, examining different types of crisis, and analysed survey data and quantitative data on citizens' attitudes and trust in government in this policy area. One of the main outputs from the project as a whole is the published book edited by Per Lægreid and Lise H. Rykkja (2018): Societal Security and Crisis Management. Governance Capacity and Legitimacy (Palgrave Macmillan). In addition, the researchers in the project have published several academic articles in relevant peer reviewed journals.

Main Findings
Mapping of Administrative Arrangements and Changes in the Crisis Management Landscape
The mapping of administrative arrangements for societal security and crisis management reveals a fragmented, complex and varied administrative landscape characterized by sectorization and decentralization in the five countries studied. Over time, there has been a drive towards an increased focus on coordination and centralization, but there is no convergence towards a unified model across countries. The analysis shows that despite recent reforms in all countries, no single organizational principle dominates the area of crisis management.

Structural variations between countries concerning centralization/decentralization and their use of hierarchical mechanisms, lead agencies and network arrangements are significant. A main finding is, therefore, that the organizational arrangements for crisis management and societal security differ considerably from one country to another.

One common trend is nevertheless quite clear: Building up national crisis organizations whose main task is the coordination of other central administrative bodies is crucial for all crisis management organizations. Here we observe a movement towards a soft version of a 'lead agency' model, which tends to supplement the more traditional, sector-based organization. Another trend has been a long-term move from a military focus to a stronger civil approach in all countries, but in recent years, there has been a revitalization of the civil defence approach in some countries. There has also been a development towards an all-hazards approach, meaning that a broad range of hazards and threats are taken into account. At the same time, we see a more recent development across countries towards the establishment of special bodies to fight terrorism and cyber-crime.

Major crises are main triggers of change in the administrative apparatus. The changes seem overall to be rather reactive and pragmatic and constrained by established polity features and administrative traditions. An analysis of the coordinating central agencies in Norway and Sweden reveals what the authors see as a decoupling of strategic and operational crisis management owing to a tension between an increased demand for stronger coordinating capacity and a simultaneous wish to protect established institutional arrangements. The consolidation of tailor-made administrative capacity at the strategic level may over time forge a closer coupling between the strategic and operational levels of crisis management, however.

The complexity and hybridity of the field has increased owing to the emergence of more network arrangements alongside the more traditional hierarchical organizations. The result is a layered system in which new arrangements are added to the existing ones through incremental reforms. Transboundary crises are most often dealt with or assigned to more than one ministerial area and will therefore trigger coordination pressures. As transboundary crises emerge and multiply, new intermediate coordination arrangements for crisis management at the central level will complement, rather than replace, existing patterns of responsibility and accountability in the central government apparatus.

Crisis management in practice
The sample of specific crises analysed reveals that crisis management systems in general are not very well aligned to handle transboundary crises. There are success cases, such as the handling of the German floods, but the main picture is that crises reveal severe weaknesses in crisis management systems, especially when it comes to meaning-making and in the areas of coordination and communication. Under the stress of an unanticipated crisis, both preparedness and operational crisis management have faults. Crises also frequently reveal a rather loose coupling between the strategic and the operational level. Often, the strategic level does not react until there is an escalation and a more serious situation unfolds. While crises might be handled

well at the operational level, they can run into trouble at the strategic level, as illustrated by the fire at the chemical company in the Netherlands.

Crises and Governance Capacity
The analyses of the specific crisis cases in this volume reveal a varied pattern of governance capacity. Starting with the *non-intended crises*, the management of the floods in Germany in 2013 shows that the crisis management system worked pretty well as a result of the strategic, programmatic and organizational improvements made after the major floods in 2002. The governance style had changed towards a whole-of-government approach, implying more centralization and a stronger hierarchy combined with more network arrangements and negotiation.

In line with the German case, the management of repeated flooding in the UK up to 2015 highlights how flood crisis management has become increasingly centralized. One difference from Germany is that in the UK the flood management arrangements also became intertwined in a political blame-management battle. While there has been growing professionalization and enhanced coordination, this has coincided with continued politicization of appropriate policy responses. The 2007 floods disclosed a need for better forecasts, better warning systems and new flood defence systems. The 2014 floods show the top-level politics that were increasingly attached to questions of flood management in the UK, illustrating that not only governance capacity was important but also governance legitimacy. In terms of public opinion, politicians did not escape the blame.

 The analysis of Swedish crisis management performance in the case of the massive forest fire in 2014 exposed a number of challenges to the crisis response system, such as situational awareness, formal responsibilities, coordination with local and national actors supplying information to the public and evacuation. Generally, it disclosed major problems with regional and national actors intervening in operations when the need arose. Both the collaborative dimension and the operative capability of crisis management were questioned after the crisis.

The analysis of the fire at the chemical plant near Rotterdam revealed that it was effectively treated as a routine incident at the operational level. But this routine-like crisis ultimately turned into a stress test for the Dutch crisis response system. As the cloud of smoke crossed the local and regional boundaries of the Dutch system, collaboration between the safety regions began to flounder. Different actors communicated different messages to the public, and the national level became involved. In the end, the response appeared chaotic and ineffective, disclosing that the Dutch national response system could not cope with this prototype of a transboundary crisis.

The refugee crisis in Sweden in 2015 revealed several coordination and communication challenges in the Swedish crisis management system both vertically and horizontally. It was a true transboundary crisis, spanning policy sectors as well as administrative levels. As the crisis unfolded, there were coordination problems between central agencies and between central and regional authorities. The Swedish government was taken by surprise and it struggled to get to grips with the situation. Different authorities interpreted the crisis differently; there were ambiguous and uncertain responsibility relations and a lack of political leadership. Eventually,

however, the government managed to mobilize capacity and thus also to secure public legitimacy for the way the crisis was handled.

Moving to the *intended crises*, in this volume exemplified by riots and terrorist attacks, such crises are in general harder both to predict and to handle. The analysis of the riots in a Stockholm suburb in 2013 shows how unrest spread across Stockholm and lasted for two weeks. There was nothing to indicate early on that it would last that long or what crisis management needs would arise. Both short- and long-term crisis management efforts were put to the test. The overall crisis management effort was rather successful, but existing knowledge and potential solutions in different public bodies were only partly exploited. There was difficulty in making sense of the situation, and there were coordination challenges and communication problems with the public. Interpersonal relations were important during the crisis as well as relations with civil society.

The London riots in 2011 is an example of a major incident of civil disorder, which initially received significant attention but then was poorly followed up. From the beginning, there was a general agreement regarding the underlying policy problems linked to policing and deprivation and policy responses. Despite this, and despite the high initial attention, the policy response to deal with the underlying social causes quickly faded away in view of alternative objectives and budget costs. This illustrates the problem of learning and implementing new policy after a crisis owing to attention shifts and new agenda-setting.

The Norwegian terrorist attacks in 2011 resulted in changes in the central crisis management apparatus in Norway. These comprised structural changes, replacement of executives, regulatory changes and the introduction of new network arrangements. The terrorist attacks did not lead to major or immediate changes, however. The changes were largely within the existing administrative order. The ministry's role as a lead and coordinating ministry was strengthened but remained within the constraints of the principle of ministerial responsibility. The changes can therefore be understood as gradual institutional changes in line with the Norwegian tradition of pragmatic, incremental reforms.

Perceived crisis management capacity among civil servants in Norwegian ministries and central agencies continues to be rather high. The perception of the government's ability to prevent and handle crises has not changed significantly since the terrorist attacks. Variations in perceived crisis management capacity are due to structural factors, such as policy field, tasks and position and to cultural factors such as mutual trust relations and identification. Even if actual crisis management capacity has increased, so might also risk awareness, the risk acceptance level, the feeling of insecurity and expectations of possible crises have risen. Both the actual capacity and the civil servants' expectation of crises might have increased, leaving perceived crisis management capacity rather stable.

Crises and Governance Legitimacy
Crisis management is not only about governance capacity but also about governance legitimacy. One example is the case of the murder of Dutch politician Pim Fortuyn in 2002. The reaction

to his assassination was ferocious. The parliament was nearly stormed and the legitimacy of the incumbent order rapidly declined. Managing this legitimacy crisis represented a major challenge for national politicians.

The refugee crisis in Germany in 2015 likewise challenged the legitimacy of the central crisis management organization. Novel cross-sectoral and multi-level coordination arrangements inside the German federal bureaucracy were created in its aftermath as a way to repair the damage and create legitimacy. The changes in the coordination structures contributed to repairing organizational legitimacy by increasing governance capacity.

Legitimacy challenges are especially strong when it comes to terrorism, which is examined by looking at various citizen surveys. Democratic states' ability to ease citizens' fear of terrorism is analysed. The findings show that people in democratic countries worry significantly less about terrorism than those in non-democratic countries. Even in times of serious security threats or exposure to terrorism, citizens in democratic states are less fearful. In our view, this means that a country's best defence against terrorism is to enhance legitimacy through strong democratic practices. Governance capacity to fight threats is not the only source of state legitimacy, and it seems that democratic states show resilience by being better equipped to fight fear of terrorism.

The connection between the introduction of more radical counter-terrorism legislation in democratic states and people's attitudes to democracy is analysed and the main finding is that the introduction of new counter-terrorism legislation does not have any effect on satisfaction with democracy. We do not know whether this is due to unawareness or disinterest in counter-terrorism or whether it is a sign of more 'silent approval' of such measures. Although harsher measures do not cause a decrease in citizens' belief in democracy, at the same time they do not actively accept a weakening of democracy in favour of a state that is more capable of handling threats.

An analysis of the impact of the terrorist attacks in Norway in 2011 on citizens' attitudes towards the counter-terrorism authorities shows that the attacks influenced people's perceptions of government. There was little change in citizens' general support, while specific support diminished significantly. Indeed, the terrorist attacks actually reinforced citizens' general support for the crisis management authorities. At the same time, they became less satisfied with the performance of these authorities during the crisis, especially with the policy-makers, who were closely scrutinized. The attacks led to a politicization of the crisis management issues, even though the politicians responded to the crisis with an appeal for solidarity and common values. In Norway, counter-terrorism is also an important partisan issue. Political party attachment is important to understand how people perceive governance performance. On issues of security, the distance between right-wing voters and other voters increased after the attack.

Conclusion
An administrative reform trend emphasizing coordination has gained a strong footing in European public administrations, with labels like whole-of-government, New Public Governance and Post-New Public Management reforms. This reform trend is particularly

relevant within the area of crisis management, given that this is a transboundary policy area prone to 'wicked problems'. Still, evidence-based knowledge about the impact of such reforms and of novel coordination instruments is still patchy, incomplete and inconclusive.

We have shown that crisis management varies according to the type of crisis – whether it is rather routine or whether it is more transboundary and raises intricate 'wicked problems', whether it is intentional or not, whether it is unique and how much uncertainty it entails and how easy it is to handle. Facing the 'unknown unknowns' or Black Swans is more challenging than dealing with more predictable crises or crises that are similar to the ones that have been seen before. Black Swans represent 'unruly problems' where a simple rational approach to crisis management is not sufficient. In such situations, a more pragmatic approach to strategic crisis response characterized by flexibility, incrementalism, compromise, additivity and acting according to what is available, is necessary. There is also variation across countries according to the size of the country, the state structure and type of rule (if it is a federal state or a unitary state, for instance), the degree of centralization and decentralization of the crisis management system, the strength of the democracy and the citizens' trust in government in different countries.

A main conclusion is that there is no optimal formula that will harmonize competing interests and permanent tensions within the field, nor a 'silver bullet' that will allow uncertainty and ambiguous government structures to be overcome once and for all, enabling policy choices to be made that everyone will accept. Flexibility and adaptation are key assets, but they are always constrained by the political, administrative and situational context. A search for one optimal set of tools or one optimal organizational structure is therefore useless. Contemporary crisis management systems are characterized by interdependency and diversity and by adaptation to the situation and context. A better understanding of governance capacity and governance legitimacy and the interaction between them is complicated and context-dependent, but perhaps the only way forward.

Our research has not been able to reveal any tight coupling between different coordination arrangements (whether they are hierarchical or network-based) and how crisis management plays out in practice. Strong and reliable evidence-based knowledge about the impact of reforms on crisis management systems and of novel coordination instruments is still incomplete. Taken together, the findings highlighted in this project indicate that cultural dimensions, including contextual features such as administrative traditions and national variations, also have to be taken into account. Structures and governance capacity may constrain or enable crisis management, but there is also always some leeway for deliberate action within such formal arrangements. Therefore, cultural constraints, legitimacy issues and citizens' expectations and trust in government must also be taken into consideration.

The current reform trends, emphasizing more coordination and collaboration and a reassertion of the centre instead of more fragmentation, are particularly relevant within the area of crisis management, especially since this is a policy area increasingly characterized by its transboundary, complex and contested nature. However, the policy field of societal security and

crisis management does not seem to have fully taken on board the whole-of-government approach. Instead, we are seeing more supplementary and complementary reform trajectories following the distinct and unique country experiences, but also existing traditions within each national context.

The national public administrative arrangements for dealing with crises are composite and tend to combine various elements that may be contradictory, but still create stability. Rather than adopting a single organizational recipe, hybrid systems have emerged in which hierarchical and collegial measures co-exist and supplement each other in a rather complex way. The general picture is, then, that crisis management organizations often rely on such mixed arrangements. One reason for this is that these organizations have to handle governance dilemmas where there are no easy solutions, whether they concern specialization versus coordination, centralization versus decentralization, integration versus fragmentation, tight coupling versus loose coupling or stability versus adaptation. Fragmentation, for example, does not necessarily have only a negative impact on crisis management coordination. It might also enhance flexibility and improvisation. Not only is the environment turbulent in a crisis, but so are the internal and transboundary organizational arrangements.

The development of the structures within the area of societal security and crisis management can be seen as a case of institutional layering, affected by external pressure from major crises but also constrained by internal institutional traditions and cultures. We have observed processes of gradual institutional change in which new institutional elements are added to existing ones over time. One way to manage crises and turbulence is therefore obviously to modify existing crisis management arrangements through 'institutional syncretism', which implies more continuous but less dramatic reorganizations. As a result, actor constellations, problem structures and policy alternatives become more complex and more difficult to disentangle. The balancing of different principles might enhance flexibility and may enable and facilitate further adaptation. However, in other cases it might also constrain changes, as conflicting principles may contradict each other and create challenges for further stability. Reorganization efforts aiming to streamline and clarify demarcation lines between organizations and generate new overarching coordination capacity at central level might also produce new coordination challenges at operational levels. This means that documenting and keeping track of the changes, studying their causes and how they are produced, how they play out in practice and what consequences they have for both capacity and legitimacy will be important in the future as well.

Summing up these insights, five main points emerge. First, there is no significant convergence of crisis management structures, coordination arrangements and processes. Second, coordination structure is important for crisis management, but path-dependency and administrative culture matter too. Third, there are partly inconsistent hybrids in operation, albeit ones that seem to work well provided that the culture of coordination is appropriate. Fourth, there is no tight coupling between different administrative arrangements and the success or failure of specific reforms, and fifth, both governance capacity and governance legitimacy need

to be addressed in order to fully understand how crisis management unfolds and changes in practice.

Organizing for crisis management is characterized by interdependencies and diversity, indicating multi-dimensional coordination arrangements. Finding useful 'smart practices' to balance hierarchical tools and network solutions is complicated and context-dependent. Structural arrangements are broad categories that allow great variation in practice, implying that a loose coupling between structural arrangements and practice may be the way forward. This offers leeway for flexible adjustments, which often are needed to deal with variations in the magnitude and type of crisis. If we accept that there is no best practice and no panacea, diversity might be seen as a potential strength for gaining both capacity and legitimacy.