

What Do Organizations Write in their Crisis Management Plans?

A Study of Crisis Management Plans from Danish Organizations

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Agenda

- › Centre for Corporate Communication: A **research center** at BCOM, BSS, AU
- › **Internal crisis management and crisis communication**: A collaborative research project:
 - › The ICMCC survey
- › Purpose of the study of **emergency management plans** (EMPs) and **crisis management plans** (CMPs) from municipalities
 - › Theoretical framework
 - › Research design
- › Initial findings: 1) architecture of plans, 2) structure, 3) crisis definitions and typologies, 4) stakeholders, 5) crisis communication
- › Conclusion and implications for **practice**

Centre for Corporate Communication

- › International research center created in 2001
- › Staff:
 - › 33 senior and junior researchers (including 8 PhD students) from 6 different countries
- › Research areas:
 - › Corporate branding
 - › CSR communication
 - › Change management and change communication
 - › Crisis management and crisis communication
 - › Management conversations
 - › Social media
 - › Marketing communication: brand communities and user-driven innovation
 - › Digital Urban Living
 - › The Strategic Museum
 - › Innovation network: The advertising agency of the future

A collaborative research project

- › **Internal Crisis Management and Crisis Communication in Organizations**
- › A research project funded by the Danish Council for Independent Research (Social Sciences) (2011-2014)
- › An umbrella project:
 - › The ICMCC survey
 - › Crisis perception in organizations
 - › Crisis, organizational resilience, and communication
 - › Employees and the impact of negative media coverage

The ICMCC survey

- › A **mapping study** conducted in 2011
 - › Combination of a large survey and a series of in-depth interview
- › **Purpose**
 - › To study how middle managers in private and public organizations (i.e. chief communications officers, human resource managers, or other middle managers who are knowledgeable about and responsible for the crisis preparedness of their organization) perceive, plan, coordinate and implement internal crisis management and internal crisis communication
- › Respondents: 71 municipalities and 166 private companies

The ICMCC survey results: Crisis perception

	M (N=71)	P (N=166)
1. An event that for a short period of time puts the organization out of order	15%	18%
2. An event that harms or injures stakeholders (clients, citizens, users, employees)	49%	39%
3. An event that threatens the whole existence of the organization	6%	30%
4. An event that is badly managed by the management of the organization	13%	6%
5. Other definitions	17%	7%

Total sample: 71 municipalities out of 98 (response rate: 72%)

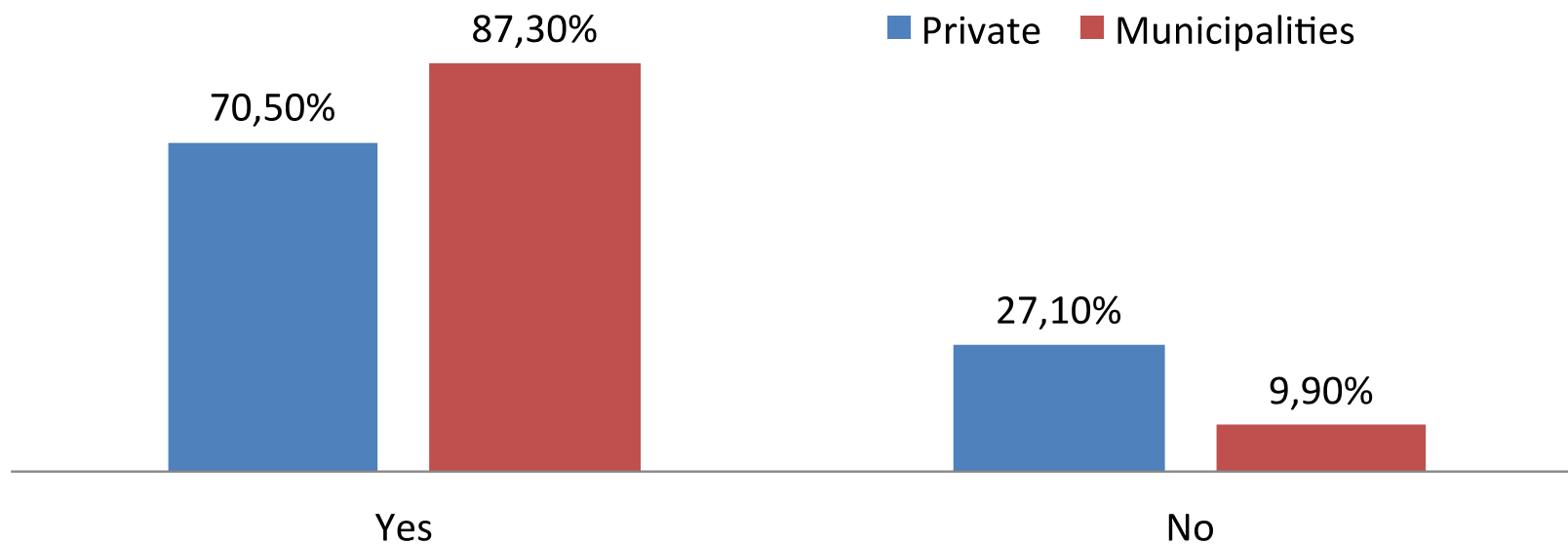
Internal crisis management and crisis communication tools and activities

	M	Total
Procedures for establishing a crisis team for internal handling	73%	62%
Internal coordination of knowledge during crisis	58%	54%
Internal spokesperson	56%	65%
Creation of a "crisis culture" where you speak openly about crises	51%	51%
Preparation of communication messages/channels beforehand	48%	50%
Crisis training seminars for management	37%	39%
Crisis simulations within specific focus on internal dimensions	34%	33%
Seminars in internal crisis management and crisis communication	31%	25%
Keeping of 'logbook' for evaluation of internal practices	30%	38%
Other tools or arrangements	13%	10%
Whistleblower or similar arrangement	6%	31%

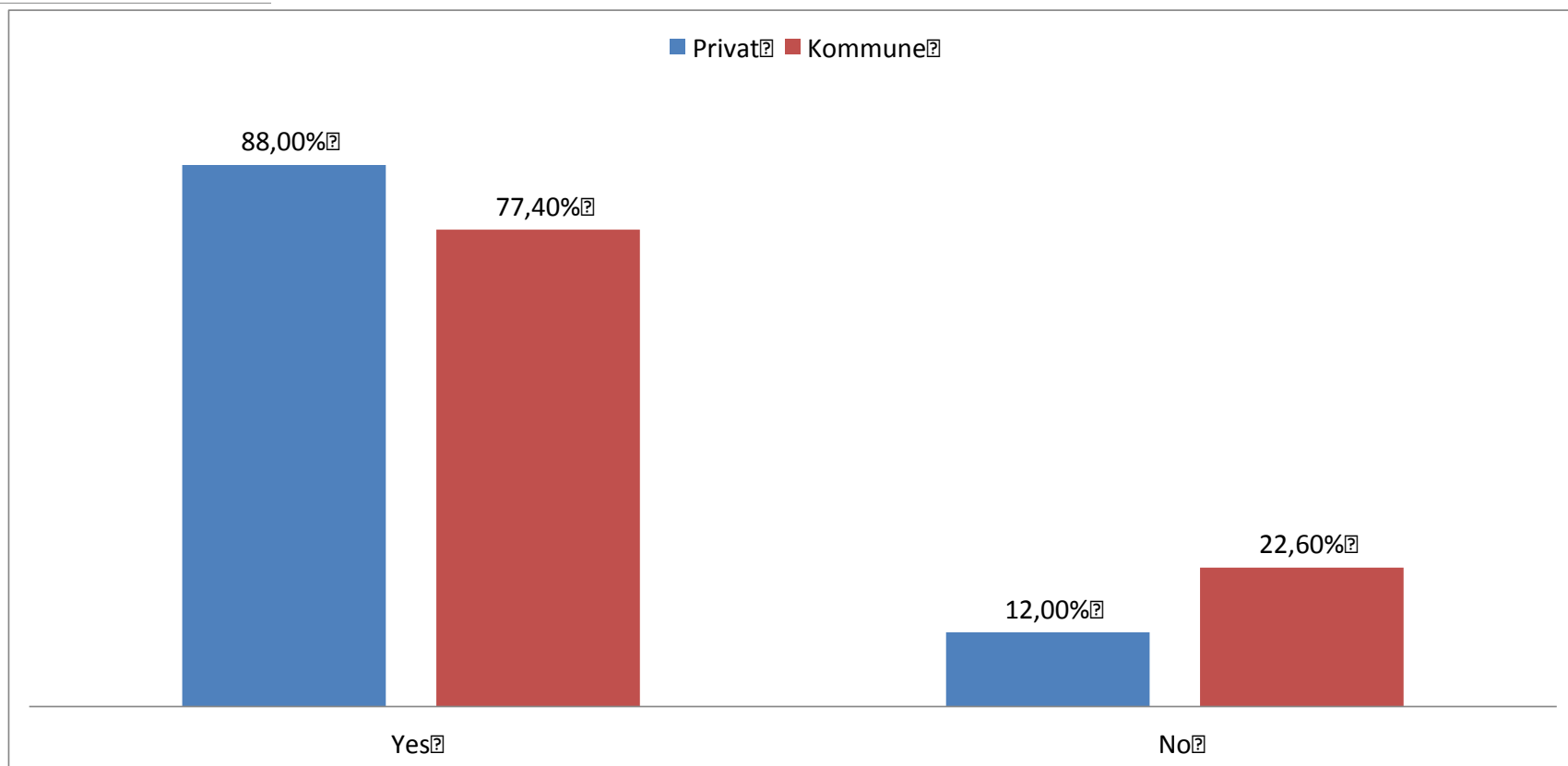
Municipalities: N=71

Total: N=237

Does your organization have an EMP/CMP?



Does the EMP/CMP contain elements specifically addressing the internal crisis management dimension?



The study of EMPs/CMPs: Purpose, hypothesis, research questions

› **Purpose:**

- › To study how the internal dimension of crises, crisis management and crisis communication are reflected in the EMPs/CMPs of Danish municipalities.

› **RQ1:**

- › What does the EMP/CMP reveal about the internal dimension of organizational crisis, crisis management and crisis communication?

› **RQ2:**

- › Is there coherence between what the municipalities say they will do (the ICMCC results) and what the formal EMP/CMP indicate they will do?

› **Hypothesis:**

- › The internal dimension of crisis management and crisis communication is to a large extent neglected in EMPs/CMPs

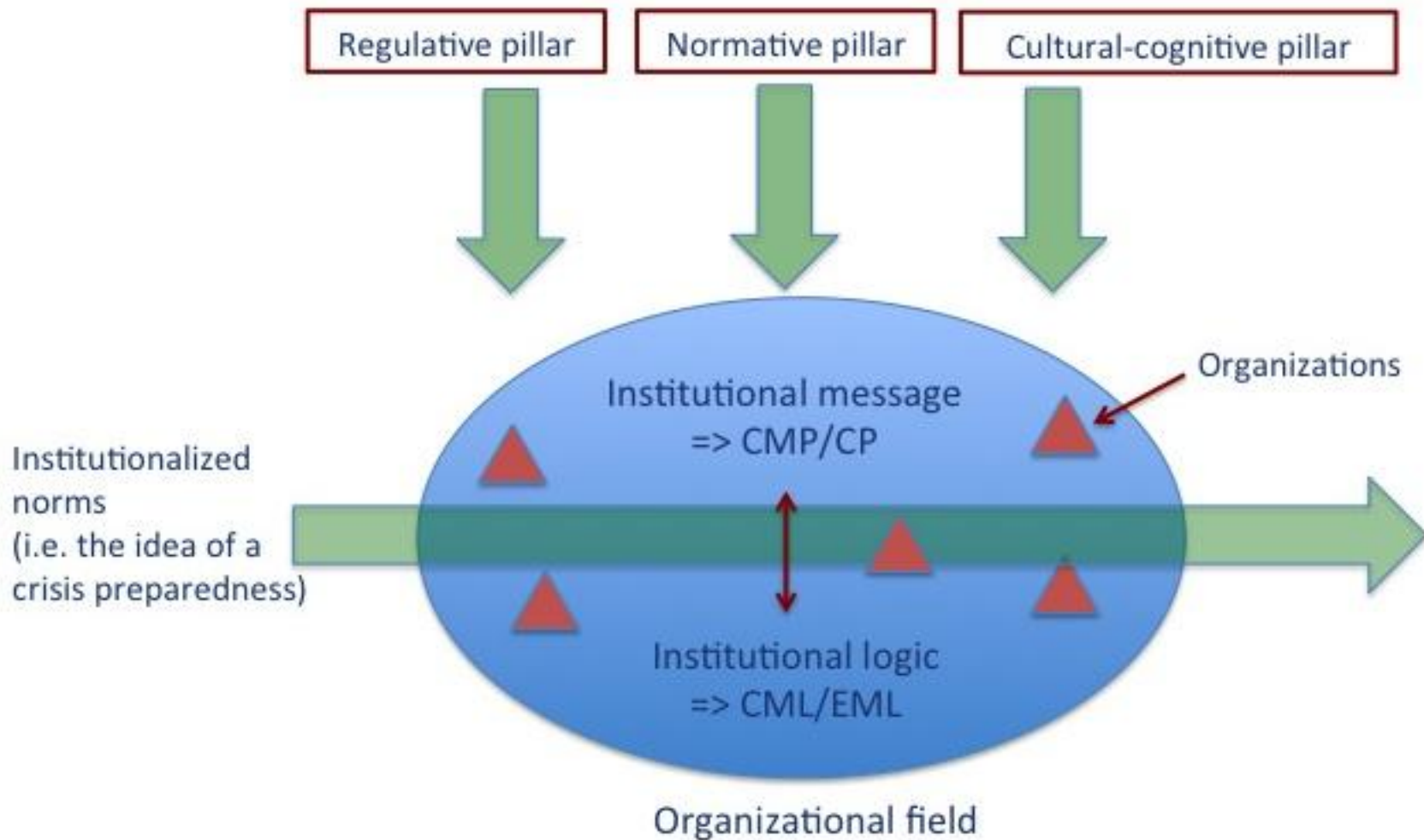
This presentation...

- › **Architecture** of EMPs/CMPs?
- › **Structure** of EMPs/CMPs?
- › **Crisis definitions and typologies?**
- › Which kind of internal and external **stakeholders** do the EMPs/CMPs address?
- › How do the EMPs/CMPs deal with **crisis communication?**

Theoretical framework

- › A **strategic, proactive and process-oriented** approach to crisis management and crisis communication => focusing on the pre-crisis phase
- › A theory of **internal stakeholders**
 - › Employees are "closer" to the organization than other (external) stakeholders (cf. Frandsen and Johansen, 2011)
- › An **interactive** communication model
 - › Employees are active participants taking their own communicative initiatives
- › **Neo-institutional** organizational theory (cf. Frandsen and Johansen, 2011)

Institutionalization model



Institutional logic

“The socially constructed, historical patterns of material practices, assumptions, values, beliefs, and rules by which individuals produce and reproduce their material subsistence, organize time and space, and provide meaning to their social reality” (Thornton & Ocasio, 1999: 804; Thornton & Ocasio, 2008).

The emergency mgt. logic => EMPs

- › Firmly anchored within the municipal organization for more than a 100 years
- › A narrow, event-oriented approach to crises, crisis management and crisis communication
- › Operates with simple stakeholder relations and few stakeholder types

The crisis mgt. logic => CMPs

- › New and not as firmly anchored within the municipal organization
- › Broader approach to crises, crisis management and crisis communication
- › Complex stakeholder relations and many stakeholder types (incl. media)

Research design

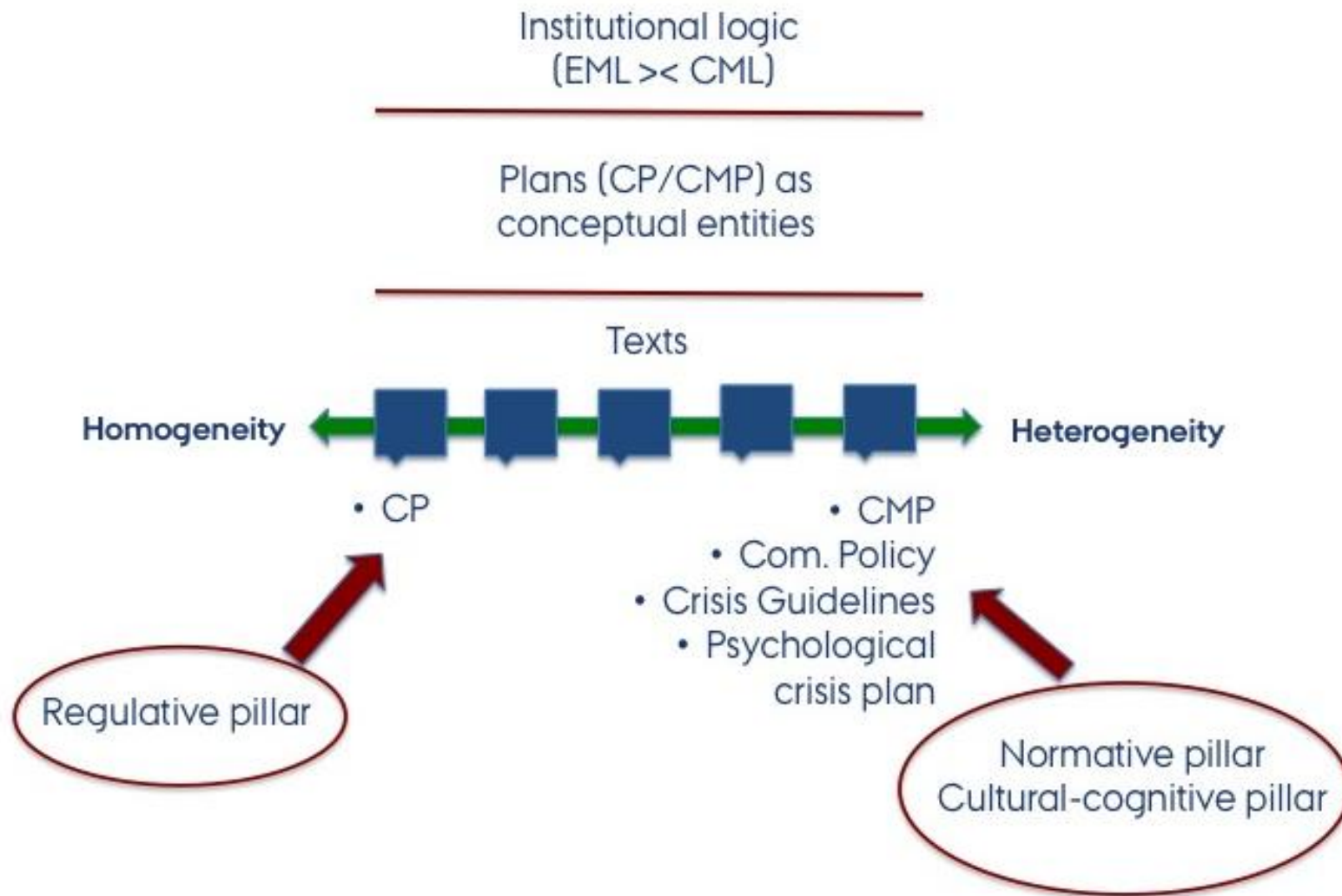
› **Data:**

- › Large corpus of EMPs and CMPs collected by three research assistants in 2011 and 2012 from the 98 Danish municipalities
- › Real life documents (not best practice documents)

› **Methodology:**

- › Content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004) and/or document analysis (Prior, 2003)

Findings (1): The architecture of plans



Findings (2): The structure of EMPs/CMPs

- › Some municipalities operate with more than 10 different plans!
- › Diversity (9 pages >< 71 pages), but there is a pattern...

1. Introduction

2. Deployment and operation of crisis management team (e.g. demands/requirements on the team, receipt of warnings/alarms, activation of municipal crisis management team)

3. Handling of crisis information (e.g. demands on the information handling, elaboration of situation report)

4. Coordination of actions and resources (e.g. explicit demands on the coordination effort, typical collaborations, procedures/precautions)

5. Crisis communication (e.g. the purpose, outline of communication tasks)

6. Operational efforts (e.g. subplans, templates, etc.)

Findings (3): Defining a crisis...

CMP:

› "A crisis is a serious event [...] which has received or risks receiving extensive media coverage"

(CMP of the municipality of Assens)

EMP:

› A crisis consists of "...those everyday events, which occur more or less without notice, e.g. fires, traffic accidents, collapses and environmental accidents".

(EMP of the municipality of Haderslev)

Findings (4): Stakeholder focus

CMP:

- › Focus on the media

EMP:

- › Focus on the citizens

Very little focus on internal stakeholder/employees

Finding from the ICMCC survey:

63% of the municipal respondents => there is a need for a CMP which to a larger extent includes the internal dimension (i.e. the employees)

Findings (5): Crisis communication

CMP:

- › Focus on 'communication values' such as openness, effectiveness, internal/external communications, and common responsibilities (in communication policies)
- › 'Media crises'
- › Communication strategy and reputation
- › How to handle the employees

EMP:

- › Focus on information (decisions) to (in)direct victims, citizens, (companies, employees and the media)
- › Communicative infrastructure (communication channels)
- › Coordination across levels and actors (external collaborators)
- › Languages (other than Danish)
- › Imitation

Conclusions

- › Two management logics in municipalities: the narrow emergency management logic dominates
- › The EMPs are diverse yet very similar in terms of structure
- › The CMPs form a “crisis management laboratory” for the time being
- › Lack of focus on the internal stakeholder => mainly focus on crisis response team members, employees involved in the crisis and the media/external stakeholders
>< the ICMCC result: 77% confirmed that the EMP contains elements specifically addressing the internal dimension
- › Crisis communication: between transmission and interaction (reputation)

Implications for practice (1)

- › Issues that must be addressed by public organizations in general, and by municipalities in particular:
 - › Municipalities are **complex, multi-functional organizations** with many different stakeholders in a new societal context
 - › Corporatization, new public management, new ‘claims culture’ among citizens
 - › The **lack of coherence** caused by the two management logics
 - › How can the chief communication officer and the emergency officer collaborate in a more effective and efficient way?

Implications for practice (2)

- › Issues that must be addressed by public organizations in general, and by municipalities in particular (*cont'*):
 - › EMPs and CMPs focus on **different stakeholders**: either the citizens or the media
 - › Only very few plans include the internal stakeholders (employees)
 - › The **strategic, proactive and process-oriented approach** to crisis management and crisis communication must be improved
 - › A more holistic approach

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

pRAISEN