

Stressing Knowledge

Organisational closed-ness and knowledge acquisition under pressure

Mats Koraeus



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acquisition under pressure

Radboud Universiteit



CRISMART
Crisis Management Research and Training

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*“I confess that I have as vast contemplative ends,
as I have moderate civil ends:
for I have taken all knowledge to be my province”*

– Francis Bacon,
Letter to William Cecil, 1st Baron Burghley (ca. 1593)

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Abbreviations

AAR	American Academy of Religion
AG	Attorney General
ATF	(Bureau of) Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives
BATF	see ATF
BOI	Bureau of Investigation
CAUSE	Canada, Australia, United States, South Africa and Europe
CBN	Christian Broadcast Network
CEV	Combat Engineering Vehicle
CI	Christian Identity movement
CIAG	Critical Incident Analysis Group
CINT	Critical Incident Negotiation Team
CIRG	Critical Incident Response Group
CM	Crisis Management
CMP	Crisis Management Program
CoP	Community of Practice
CP	Christian Patriot movement
DoJ	(U.S.) Department of Justice
DPS	(Texas) Department of Public Safety
DSDA	Davidian Seventh-day Adventist Church
EU	European Union
EU-MIC	EU Monitoring Information Centre
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
<i>FÖ</i>	<i>Försvarsdepartementet</i> (Swedish Ministry of Defence)
<i>FÖ/CIV</i>	<i>FÖ:s enhet för civila ärenden</i> (Department of Civil Affairs)
<i>FÖ/UNDBER</i>	<i>FÖ:s enhet för underrättelse- och beredskapsfrågor</i> (Department of Intelligence and Preparedness)
HCN	Hydrogen Cyanide
HRT	Hostage Rescue Team
IDF	Israeli Defence Force
<i>KBM</i>	<i>Krisberedskapsmyndigheten</i> (SEMA)
KKK	Ku Klux Klan
KM	Knowledge Management
M.O.M.	Militias of Montana
NCAVC	National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime
NWO	New World Order
PDF	Patriots' Defence Foundation
<i>POSOM</i>	<i>Psykosocial omhändertagande</i> (Psychosocial Care)

PTSD	Post-traumatic Stress Disorder
RCMP	Royal Canadian Mounted Police
<i>RK</i>	<i>Regeringskansliet</i> (Swedish Government Offices)
<i>RKP</i>	<i>Rikskriminalpolisen</i> (Swedish National Bureau of Investigation)
<i>RPS</i>	<i>Rikspolisstyrelsen</i> (Swedish National Police Board)
SAC	Special Agent in Charge
SDA	The Seventh-day Adventist Church
SECI	Socialisation, Externalisation, Combination, Internalisation
SEMA	Swedish Emergency Management Agency
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SNAM	Swedish National Air Medevac Service
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure(s)
<i>SoS</i>	<i>Socialstyrelsen</i> (Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare)
SRSA	Swedish Rescue Services Agency
SWAT	Special Weapons and Tactics
TCPS	Texas Child Protection Services
<i>UD</i>	<i>Utrikesdepartementet</i> (Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
<i>UD-ASO</i>	<i>UD:s Asien- och Oceanienheten</i> (Department for Asia and Oceania)
<i>UD-GS</i>	<i>UD:s enhet för global säkerhet</i> (Department of Global Security)
<i>UD-KC</i>	<i>UD:s konsulära och civilrättsliga enhet</i> (Department for Consular Affairs and Civil Law)
<i>UD-PIK</i>	<i>UD:s press-, informations- och kommunikationsenhet</i> (Department of Media, Information, and Communication)
UN	United Nations
UNDAC	UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination
USAO	U.S. Attorney's Office
USMS	U.S. Marshal Services
ZOG	Zionist Occupation Government

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A decade later, the section that took an interest in this type of question has been transferred to a different ministry. The Swedish National Defence College has become the Swedish Defence University. CRISMART will soon disappear into a new research, analysis, and training centre at the university. And my ponderous volume will no longer be around as a weight on my shoulders. Everything has changed, except not in any way that matters. All the interesting, dedicated, crazy and wonderful people I have met along the way are still there, still providing the same joy, challenge, and discourse of curiosity and discovery. I thank you all.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In the spring of 1993, the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) was put in a very familiar position that was at the same time something wholly unlike anything the agency had been faced with in its 85 years of operation. On the face of it, the FBI was involved in a hostage negotiation with a cult-like off-shoot of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church in rural Texas. Just over 100 people had established themselves in a communal home at the Mount Carmel compound, but had in recent years become the target for accusations of systematic child abuse, drug manufacturing, and of illegal possession and modifications of weapons and explosives. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) had started to investigate these allegations, yet when trying to serve the close-knit community with a search warrant to inspect the compound, the reception was violently hostile.

A two hour long gunfight ensued, leaving several dead on both sides, The deaths of federal agents made the matter fall under the FBI's purview, and what followed was the 51 day long stand-off that has been labelled the Waco Siege. In the end, the agency's negotiation efforts failed and an attempt to break the stalemate by forcing the residents of the compound out of their shelter using tear gas ended in disaster – a fire broke out that left more than 70 dead, cementing the event as one of the blackest moments in the agency's history. The political, judicial, and cultural fall-out was significant, creating a decade of investigations and recriminations trying to uncover the truth of what had happened. The question on everyone's mind was, what had gone wrong? What caused a seemingly straight-forward negotiation to generate such meagre results over a nearly two month period and how could it come to such a disastrous and fiery end?

What became apparent in the many reports and hearings on the matter was that this *was not* an ordinary hostage/barricade situation against an entrenched group of criminals, like the ones the FBI were used to dealing with, but rather a thoroughly asymmetric conflict of faith. Even though the FBI was up against an established religious group that communicated in biblical quotations and parables,

religion was never a factor in the FBI's analysis of the motives and motivations of the opponents. Even though there were English-speaking Christians on both ends of the phone line, it is doubtful if the two sides ever spoke the same language. Somewhere along the line, the FBI had failed to identify and rectify a crucial knowledge gap in its operative arsenal, even as it was opening up before its very eyes, and it had taken a nasty tumble as a result.

Three years after the Waco siege, the FBI got a chance to redeem its image. In Jordan County, Montana, a right-wing militia group called the Montana Freeman, belonging to the larger Christian Identity (CI) movement had for some time clashed with the local law enforcement community and had, among other things, tried to sentence a local judge according to their own biblically based "Common Law" judicial system, committed several counts of fraud. In addition, there were suspected ties to a number of robberies in the area. When two members of the militia were caught with what appeared to be a trunk full of stolen goods and incarcerated, the remaining Freeman barricaded themselves in their compound and waited for the FBI siege. This time, however, there was something different about the dynamics of the conflict. Instead of relying on a select few, tried and tested experts in the field of criminal profiling, the FBI had begun building a nascent network of scientists in a number of somewhat related fields: from the classical psychology and criminology scholars to legal and religious scholars. The FBI also went beyond just the scholarly field for aid and advice. Members of related militia movements were invited as intermediaries, as were old friends of the Freeman and even a group of lawyers whose every-day business was to defend Christian Identity members such as these from the US legal system.

In the end, there was no Waco-like siege. While the FBI had the compound surrounded for more than 80 days, at no point did the conflict escalate to the exchange of gunfire, and at no point did the negotiations come to a complete halt. In the end, the issue was untangled by the CI legal team, who was able to "translate" the Freeman's view on the issue, which was stated in terms of their particular Common Law system, into the US legal language the FBI negotiators could understand and vice versa. The standoff ended in a whimper as the Freeman agreed to take the matter to court rather than to fight it out in the Montana forests, and the incident has all but passed from public memory since it never really became a crisis. What explains this drastically different outcome, and why did such a similar situation not turn into the same massive crisis as the Waco siege had done only three years earlier?

In many ways, the Freeman standoff was a direct echo of the Waco siege: the same actors – in some cases even the same *individuals* – were involved in both events. Both required the FBI to negotiate with an opponent who had a radically different world-view on things that might seem very mundane and common, where religious extremism was a cornerstone in how the opponents interpreted everything going on around them. In both cases, there was great pressure to get

things over with through tactical means; for example, some kind of assault on the compound and mass-arrests of anyone found there. Yet, the two episodes played out in radically different ways. Why?

At first glance, an obvious difference seems to be the way the FBI chose to attack the problem of understanding its opponent. In the Waco case, the FBI came into the situation with the perception that it was essentially a hostage negotiation: the classic deranged “cult leader” using a group of people as a human shield to keep the authorities at bay. Consequently, the FBI brought its usual tool set for the job in the form of people who could advise on hostage-taking mad-men. The only real change in perception that happened during the siege was the realisation that the supposed hostages were apparently there of their free will, but this did not generate any greater change in the strategies employed. In the aftermath of the crisis, this singular vision, and inability – some even suggested unwillingness – to consider alternative interpretations was often quoted as a key factor in determining the disastrous outcome. In the Freeman case, on the other hand, the FBI agents seemingly went into the situation with the same basic perception, but they were now willing to consider that the tool set they had brought might not be the best for the job. In fact, the FBI had even built a separate support structure for the purpose of, not just providing other tools, but figuring out which tools would be best for the job. In the end, it turned out that what was needed was someone who could debate and re-frame the same issues within two radically different legal philosophies and judicial systems. Still, the FBI, as such, did not actually change its approach; it just used a different “filter” between that approach and the opponent – a filter that translated this odd behaviour that the FBI did not understand into something it could use its normal strategies against, and which then translated those chosen strategies back into actions to be used against the opponent.

This all good and well, but it only shifts the question in a slightly different direction: why did the FBI suddenly use this radically different approach? The organisational studies literature would suggest that this was a case of organisational learning, but that explanation does not quite reach all the way, and only hints at the underlying issue. What had the FBI learned? It was not just to consult experts – the bureau had plenty of those around for the Waco case. It was not to consult “the right” experts – the FBI still brought the same expertise to bear on the Freeman case, and given the similarity of the two cases, it is unlikely that these experts would be the wrong ones in one instance, but not in the other. Furthermore, in spite of the similarities it was a completely different set of experts, working from a drastically different perspective, that broke the Freeman case than what the critics had claimed were missing from Waco to such catastrophic effects. Maybe the FBI had learned to use more experts, but that still relies on knowing which ones to listen to in the end, and as mentioned, one of the core issues was that the bureau did not know which ones were the “right ones” and which were the “wrong ones.” The lesson rather seems to be that the FBI learned to be more

open and accepting of different ideas, and to the notion that its perception going into the situation might not be the correct one. In other words, the FBI learned to be open to the idea that maybe it had no idea.

As mentioned, the Freeman case seems to suggest that, in actuality, the fundamental outlook of the FBI had not significantly changed its world view: to them, it was still essentially a matter of negotiating with a criminal opponent over the safe release of a number of innocent people – presumably hostages of some kind or another. This means that the shift between openness and closed-ness in the FBI was not so much a matter of a change in outlook, but in the policy of using unorthodox tools to get that negotiation job done.

In a more general sense, this raises the question of whether bureaucratic organisations universally can be described in terms of being open or closed, and, for that matter, exactly what open or closed would entail that case. How is it expressed in the organisation? Is it a matter of breaking out of the bureaucratic mould, or something more complex? Moreover, how can we expect this openness or closed-ness to influence the organisations problem-solving abilities and the kinds of tools it makes use of? These questions become particularly interesting if the behaviour of the organisation has to be adapted in the face of external constraints such as the time pressure inherent in crises. Conceivably, if there is nothing holding it back, an organisation might experiment with new ways of doing things “just because”, but the inherent uncertainty of a crisis has historically shown to make both individuals and organisations grasp at what familiarity the situation can offer, and commonly this entails falling back on known operational practices. If nothing else, such practices offer the promise of knowable time-frames for whatever solution is chosen, and a course of action can be chosen in light of how these time-frames compare to the (lack of) time available to deal with the crisis. The additional complication of a crisis should therefore create a least-likely scenario that further throws in relief the differences between organisations that are open to the possibility of adding new tactics, new knowledge, or new people and those that are not: displaying the same kind of versatility under such adverse conditions would indicate a very high degree of openness to alternative solutions.

However, this is not the only imaginable constraint that might affect the decision-making process or – as an extension – the outcome of that process. The FBI cases offer an example from an (ostensibly) singular actor in a narrowly defined sector within the domestic domain, but what other constraints would we come across if we expanded the borders somewhat and added a new set of variables that might impact the procedures being used and also fundamentally alter the processes the agency has to follow in order to do things “the right way”? The Waco and Montana Freeman cases offer two very handy points of comparison since it is the same actors facing the same class of problems in, if not the same, then at least a very similar situation. So can a similar pair be found elsewhere? One candidate for further study would be the Swedish Government

Offices' handling of the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami and the 2006 evacuation of Swedes from a war-torn Lebanon. Again, we have the same set of (bureaucratic and governmental) actors, the same class of problems, and again very similar situations. Just as with the FBI cases, the second of these two events is generally considered a successful case of crisis management, whereas the earlier one has gone down in history as a management disaster. So again, the question is: why the different outcomes?

During the tsunami, the Swedish Foreign Ministry became the central node in the government's effort to deal with a crisis that affected tens of thousands of Swedes halfway across the globe. However, this was not a task the ministry was at all familiar with, nor was it used to handling consular matters on the sheer scale of this disaster. At the same time, by virtue of being the formal connection between the Swedish government and other nations, all other national actors had to go through the Foreign Ministry in order to do their work abroad. Even agencies such as the Swedish Rescue Service Agency, who had a relatively free mandate to send aid and personnel to other countries, had to clear its actions with the ministry and defer to its judgement on what kind of operations might be needed. As a result the Foreign Ministry quickly became a severely overloaded central node, and its inability to respond to queries in a timely manner hampered the efforts of a large number of other agencies involved in the crisis management effort. The ministry itself also suffered greatly in terms of its ability to collect and manage the many input streams from those outside agencies, and thus could not aggregate and co-ordinate the knowledge needs of the whole operation. Moreover, having the final say in the matter of who was allowed to go where, the Foreign Ministry declined a number of requests to send personnel from various agencies abroad, simply because the ministry staff members – who were not subject-matter experts – deemed it unnecessary or counter-productive.

Just like the FBI, the Government Offices got the chance to redeem itself two and a half years later, when the Israeli invasion of Lebanon left a large number of Swedes stranded in the region and in need of evacuation. Just like after the tsunami, the exact same set of agencies had to solve the exact same problems: identifying people in the area and evacuating them back to safety, and potentially dealing with large numbers of shocked and injured individuals. This time, however, the agencies had set up a number of co-ordination mechanisms and joint working groups that, at least theoretically, allowed the various actors to share knowledge and information far more effectively and distribute the workload according to competences and availability of personnel. The Government Offices had also been given a different mandate in the aftermath of the tsunami and it was not afforded a bit more freedom in deploying its people in other countries, without having to abide by the full set of strictures laid forth by the Foreign Ministry, and likewise, the Foreign Ministry no longer had any need to try to incorporate the processes of other agencies into how it did its own work. Perhaps more importantly, all the agencies involved had had their roles

scrutinised and clarified within the context of a larger crisis-management system, so the individual formal responsibilities were much more clearly defined this time around. Just like the (normally) domestic-oriented agencies were freed from some of the formal restrictions previously imposed by the Foreign Ministry, the ministry itself was somewhat freed from having to adapt its work-flow to match the requirements of those other agencies. This operation was largely hailed as a great success and a testament to the learning and organisational improvements that had happened since the tsunami. However, this seemingly goes against how these kinds of governmental organisations normally behave. Why were all the other involved agencies allowed to bypass the Foreign Ministry and act outside of the nation's border on their own, or – perhaps more accurately – why did the Foreign Ministry allowed this reduction in political clout, and what were the actual effects of this revised setup?

At the same time, it might be debatable whether the outcome really was all that different, and what this difference consisted of. In many ways, the desk officers that handled the Lebanon crisis did a much worse job than they had after the tsunami, but the involvement on the political level was much higher. Perhaps the measure of a “good outcome” in these cases was more a matter of public perception of the government actually doing something, with less regard to exactly what it was doing. At least someone was in charge and was making decisions at an early stage during the Lebanon crisis, unlike the evasiveness that had characterised the initial phase of the post-tsunami rescue effort. Maybe the “success” actually lay in the agencies’ ability to keep their respective departments, ministries, and ministers out of the limelight, and the fact that the best way to accomplish this just so happened to be to serve the public interest in an expedient manner?

Here, too, there are some differences between the two cases that could be attributed to classical organisational learning, but once again this perspective does not quite go all the way in explaining the differences. It certainly does not – or at least should not – explain how certain parts of the effort were managed even worse in the latter of the two cases. Perhaps the same framework based on openness and closed-ness to external aid can help us in understanding what was done differently and why, only now we also have the added hurdle of dealing with a layer of international relations and foreign-policy dimensions on top of the set problems that had to be solved. This fact alone adds the complicating factor that most, if not all, decisions had to go through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and receive the blessing of the appropriate ministers, which circumscribed the freedom of action in a way that was not applicable to the FBI's handling of its crises. While the FBI certainly had to appeal for a go-ahead from the attorney general regarding the final assault against the Davidians at Waco, the decision-making happened on a much lower level in these cases, and the “veto power” (and, perhaps more importantly, the power of approval) of the political leadership level was rarely a concern.

A unifying theme for all these crises is that they all revolve around a critical need for knowledge that could not be found within the existing organisations. For the FBI, it was the knowledge and understanding of an opponent that on the surface might not have looked very different, but which operated in accordance with a radically different world-view. For the Swedish Government Offices, it was the knowledge and understanding of a disaster context that, once again, was similar to things it already knew about, but which had some key differences that made that knowledge all but useless. In all cases, the fundamental issue can be boiled down to a number of key questions: how did the respective organisations deal with this knowledge gap? Did they even perceive that the gap existed, and how did they come to realise this? Once (if at all) the realisation set in, what measures did they take to remedy the situation? What organisational knowledge structures were in play, and how adept were these structures at reorganising themselves to meet a hitherto unforeseen problem? Or, in more general terms, can we see a behavioural difference in how organisations perceive and attack such a problem, and can this difference be explained by some common characteristic in the cases or the organisations? In addition, can this difference help us explain the different outcomes we see among the four cases? These questions are made all the more interesting as we note that the organisations involved in these cases are all *bureaucratic* organisations – that is, at least in the Weberian sense, organisations that are supposed to be defined by specialisations in subject-matter expertise and in solving problems related to these matters. So the question becomes even more pertinent: how do organisations *that are supposed to be experts at dealing with a particular issue* handle a situation where their much-vaunted expertise will not carry them all the way? Do they accept this shortcoming and try to fill in the gaps with new knowledge, or do they fail to (or even refuse) to acknowledge their knowledge deficit and simply go with what they already know?

1.1 Aim & purpose

The aim of this thesis is to create an analytical framework for studying the dynamics of organisational permeability to external knowledge. This will be achieved by tying together a number of theories on how external factors affect the openness and ‘closed-ness’ of bureaucratic organisations and, in turn, how this degree of openness/closed-ness affects the ability of an organisation when to identify and solve knowledge needs that cannot be satisfied within the organisation. Openness, in this case, means the organisation’s willingness and ability to investigate, adapt to, and adopt new situations and solutions provided by outside sources – ‘closed-ness’ being the opposite trait: an inability to accept outside ideas. These two notions are closely linked to more general concepts such as organisational flexibility and rigidity, but are more focused on the acceptance of external ideas rather than on some (in)ability to rearrange the inherent and pre-existing structures to fit an unfamiliar situation.

The background for this particular inquiry is an observation that, although specialist organisations (such as most bureaucratic institutions) have the collection and application of expert knowledge on some particular subject matter as one of their main purposes and roles, their ability to fulfil this role can change very quickly when circumstances take an unexpected turn or when their actions and methods are circumscribed by rules that are being imposed from an external actor or context. The classic perception of a “bureaucracy” may conjure up images of something slow and rigid, but which still are steadily absorbing subject-matter knowledge to further their goal. However, this image does not hold up to closer scrutiny. Occasionally, the situation demands a quick reassessment and after a sudden and unexpected flurry of activity – sudden and unexpected, at least, from such a lumbering beast – the bureaucracy evolves and delivers far more expert knowledge more than this classic image would suggest. On the other hand and on other occasions, this Weberian machinery simply breaks down. It is no longer slow, and certainly not steady, but is rather wavering at a standstill, or even devolving in what kind of knowledge it produces; advice and recommendations that have long since been discarded or labelled as outdated suddenly re-appear because in the heat of the moment, it is all the organisation can conjure up that gives it an option it at least somewhat comfortable with.

It almost seems like, in times of crisis, organisations as a whole might exhibit some of the disaster behaviours we see in individuals. They might become near-catatonic and almost seem shell-shocked, or, on the other hand, they might rise to the challenge and over-perform in ways not even they imagined themselves capable of. So what causes these shifts? Is there a way to determine beforehand which way these organisations will take when a crisis hits? At the same time, there are organisations that are normally very hardened against these kinds of situations – they might even have crises as their every-day business – but which still exhibit variations in how well they handle high-pressure situations when they are forced to act outside of their “comfort zone”. What causes this regression in behaviour?

In particular, organisations that are very well adapted to every-day crisis management can become bogged down when forced to conform to some new bureaucratic context or when having to adapt to an unfamiliar rule set or to unfamiliar processes that are required in the co-operation with other actors. One such change of contexts is when agencies with a largely domestic focus are required to act outside the national borders and either interact with similar actors from other countries, or when they are forced to go through intermediaries to do the job they normally handle themselves. Whether due to constitutional constraints or because the ministry asserts it as its “turf”, national agencies are commonly required to not act on the international arena without going through the Foreign Ministry or some similar branch of the government and this introduces procedural changes that are not part of how these organisations operate. Even for the Foreign Ministry itself, these collaborative efforts require

changes in work processes, which can cause all kinds of hiccups to occur. Perhaps unsurprisingly and much like crisis situations do, these kinds of constraints and enforced processes seem to limit organisations' ability to act with the degree of freedom and agility that one might otherwise expect from them, and as a result, they can no longer do their work to the best of their ability.

1.2 A quick note on crises

Before venturing further into the details of these questions, it is worth discussing exactly what constitutes a "crisis." It is, after all, the very special context of a crisis that makes these cases interesting in and of themselves, and it further accentuates the question of what caused the different outcomes. This thesis takes as its point of departure the definition proposed by Boin et al. (2005; 2017), where three key characteristics separate a crisis from an every-day situation: a *sense* of urgency in the decisions that need to be taken, a high degree of *felt* uncertainty about what is going on, and a *perception* that critical values are at stake. Of particular importance in this definition is the wording of *sense* of urgency, *felt* uncertainty and *perception* of values at stake. It is a subjective definition where an event is not a crisis for any given person unless that person *thinks of it* in terms of a crisis. Nor is it a static concept. Just because someone dismisses an event as a non-crisis does not mean that he or she will not at a later stage feel the pangs of urgency, uncertainty and values at stake coming on as more information becomes available (or, for that matter, fails to materialise, contrary to expectations).

This categorisation alone helps in explaining many of the things that can, and often do, go wrong in crises. On the one hand, the three defining factors point towards cognitive problems that, each on their own, can be difficult to handle and which, when combined, can cause vastly diminished problem-solving capabilities as the mind struggles to resolve the conflict between these three different issues all at once. On the other hand, the fact that it is a subjective definition aids in illustrating and explaining many of the common issues that crop up in connection with the coordination of efforts in times of crises. To put it simply, it is far from certain that different people – let alone different groups and different organisations – perceive any single event in the same way. What is an earth-shattering disaster for one might seem entirely mundane for another, and even among those feeling the chaos and confusion of the crisis, the source and solutions to those problems might be wildly different. This divergence in perception, in turn, often causes a secondary set of issues where one party becomes convinced that the other is nothing short of hysterical, whereas that other party is further devastated by what it sees as the completely unfeeling and even ignorant indifference of the first party when help is needed the most.

In and of itself, then, the Boin et al. definition provides a high degree of explanatory and analytical power, but it is not – nor is it meant to be – the final word on what explains all manners of crisis behaviour. Rather, it provides the

tools to define the special context “a crisis” presents us with, and then lets us prod at and pick apart that context using other analytical tools at our disposal. For the purpose of this thesis, it has numerous uses. Firstly, it provides a tool for answering the very fundamental question of “is this a crisis?” Secondly, it serves as a gateway into, and a point of convergence for, a large literature dealing with decision-making under difficult circumstances. Thirdly, as has already been mentioned, it works as an analytical tool for certain questions regarding the perception and handling of crises. The use of Boin et al. also serves a slightly more indirect purpose. It provides us with a set of factors that might help to explain why organisations choose an open or closed approach to problem solving, and at the same time, it provides us with a context in which these factors come to a head: situations that act as least (or most) likely cases for some theorised course of action. A more in-depth discussion of this definition and what it brings to the study can be found in Chapter 2.

1.3 Closing in on a question

This jumble of issues and contextual factors can in essence be boiled down to a few macro-level questions that provide a topic for further study:

- Under what circumstances will bureaucratic organisations make use of relevant expertise outside of their own institutions?
- In particular, what difference does it make for an organisation’s use of expertise that there are external restrictions on the organisational behaviour and working processes?
- Moreover, what kinds of changes in this organisational behaviour do the special circumstances inherent in crises cause?

A quick overview of the cases seems to suggest that there is a distinction to be made between open and closed organisations – that is, some organisations that are more or less accepting towards outside ideas – and this might in turn help explain why we see such a drastic shift in outcomes between the two pairs of crises. However, this requires us to adopt a couple of a priori assumed definitions that separate the two categories of organisations. Here, an open organisation is one that allows for new tools and methods to be employed without much preparation and training, and which is dynamic enough to adjust itself to its current needs depending on the feedback on both old and new methods. On the other hand, we have the assumed closed organisation that relies on tried and true methods and that is almost completely insensitive to feedback from the environment regarding the effectiveness of those methods. Whether or not these definitions will hold up all the way is a matter of both empirical and theoretical research.

In order to get to the bottom of this mystery, there are also a few other problems that need to be solved. First of all, there is the question of the nature of the crisis context and how it might affect bureaucratic organisations. Then, there is the matter of how these bureaucratic organisations “store,” and make use of the subject-matter expertise that define them. Lastly, there is the more general problem of how expert knowledge is actually discovered and acquired. It is worth pointing out that this line of reasoning rests on the assumption that being able to identify and acquire “the right” knowledge will coincide with a better use of the available expertise and, in turn, with the ability to make “informed” decisions. It is quite beyond the scope of this thesis to determine exactly *what is* the right knowledge for a given situation and whether or not we can always make that link between good knowledge and good (or at least informed) decision-making. It will certainly not make a case for the idea that informed decision-making is a guarantee for good outcomes since history has already shown such a link to be tenuous, at best.

The important last step in this chain is one that so far has largely been left out, but which deserves more emphasis: the original question was what caused the different outcomes in the two pairs of crises. An immediate observation that can be – and, indeed, *has* been – made is that when they got a second chance at taking on the same problem, the organisations in question knew to acquire more information in order to better formulate their strategies. This involves a process of discovering and incorporating external knowledge into the normal flow of activities, and the fundamental question is really how an organisation’s capacity and capability of observing or even remembering this process is affected by outside factors such as crises and imposed political strictures. Huber (1991) divided this process into two activities he called the “sourcing” and “grafting” of knowledge. This knowledge can be more accurately described in terms of the triplet of different types of organisational knowledge: *meta-knowledge*, *empathic knowledge* and *second-order knowledge* (henceforth abbreviated as MESO-knowledge).

1.4 Research questions

To reiterate, the main questions for this thesis, then, are how do the two external factors of crises and unfamiliar externally imposed work processes affect the degree to which an organisation is open or closed, and how do these varying degrees of openness in turn affect the organisation’s willingness and ability to discover and make use of outside expertise?

To this end, the thesis sets up and tests three hypotheses related to the different steps along this row of interrelated attributes. The exact details and argumentation behind these hypotheses will be the main topic of Chapter 2, but working backwards from the observation of different outcomes the short version of the chain of logic is as follows: the final decision on how to act depends on what kind of information is available to the decision-maker and the availability

of information depends on how well the organisation can identify and acquire knowledge and information – in other words, how well the organisation can apply its MESO-knowledge. The organisation's ability to apply its MESO-knowledge is in turn affected by the degree of openness or closed-ness the organisation exhibits at any given moment, and this can vary over time depending on external factors. Two of these factors will be studied in this thesis: the stress induced by a crisis and the stress of having to incorporate and adhere to new and unfamiliar problem-solving processes. The assumption is that both of these stress factors will increase the closed-ness of the organisation.

Thus, the following three hypotheses will be tested in order to provide answers to the aforementioned questions of how different external factors, through the mechanism of openness/closed-ness, affect the information and knowledge processing that formulates the basis for decisions:

- ii) Organisations will fall back on well known, prescribed, and preferably consistent problem-solving procedures when subjected to the stress of a crisis. Crises will thus push organisations towards a more closed behaviour.
- iii) Organisations can be forced to limit their problem-solving creativity by external regulations. Unless already anticipated and incorporated in how the organisation interacts with outside actors, the presence of an externally enforced process will thus push organisations towards a more closed behaviour.
- iv) The degree to which an organisation is open or closed decides how well and how willingly an organisation makes use of external knowledge. An organisation that moves towards increased closed-ness will thus lose its ability to apply its MESO-knowledge.

Hypothesis i describes the assumed influence crises will have on the organisational behaviour. When faced with the dreadful combination of time pressure and indecision, organisations will tend towards what they perceive as familiar and “safe” behaviours. For an organisation that is already fairly closed, this familiarity can be found in the standard operational procedures – a standardised toolbox intended for situations when the chips are down. For an inherently more open organisation, the familiarity may rather be found in familiar tool selection processes. They may not have any standardised crisis toolbox, but they have standard ways of finding out what tools might be useful and where to get them.

Hypothesis ii describes the assumed influence that unfamiliar and surprising requirements will have on the behaviour of an organisation. For instance, relation-

ships between nations is a heavily politicised arena and requires a diplomatic touch before anything can be decided, much less acted upon, which demands a certain work-order before decisions to be made. This need to enlist the political and/or diplomatic corps before taking action means that there is a new point of vetoing power – or even an entire host of them – injecting into the work process that puts a damper on how innovative an organisation can be in its problem-solving efforts. Conversely, in trying to be the gate-keeper for international contacts, the foreign office has to adopt formal requirements of a domestic agency into *its* processes in order to be able to collect and pass on information that is vital for that agency's work. While these kinds of strictures can obviously be found elsewhere, they are very apparent in the foreign policy domain. It is an area that often has a single ministry or a single office that in most cases acts as the singular official sieve for any kind of question with a trans-boundary component to it, no matter what the actual subject matter is.

Hypothesis iii describes how the variations in openness and closed-ness caused by crises and the presence of enforced formalities will influence one particular behaviour of interest for this thesis: the organisation's readiness to identify, find, and integrate external sources of knowledge. In a sense, the organisation is the "black box" we are trying to unravel, and this application of MESO-knowledge is the measurable output of that black box as we vary the inputs in the form of stress level and behavioural strictures.

1.5 Design

This thesis will employ three main methods of getting to the answers to these questions, two of which are borrowed wholesale from George & Bennett (2005): the structured, focused comparison in order to get as full a spectrum of variation as possible from just a few cases; and process tracing in order to create a clear picture of why one particular course of action was chosen over other possible choices given what was known at the time. However, a third method is required to determine the "base level" of openness or closed-ness of the organisations that will be studied. In order to avoid a completely circular logic, this method has to be disconnected from what is fundamentally the dependent variable in the study: the application of MESO-knowledge (in essence, the ability to make use of external expertise). This is instead done in through an ideal-type comparison of the actors involved. Chapter 3 is dedicated to expanding on these methodological challenges and providing a useful analytical framework that lets us spot the answers to our many questions within the empirics.

The four cases against which the hypotheses will be tested have already been presented: the 1993 siege outside Waco and the 1996 standoff against the Montana Freemen from the perspective of the FBI, and the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami and the 2006 evacuation from Lebanon from the perspective of the Swedish Government Offices – in particular that of the Swedish Foreign

Ministry (*Utrikesdepartementet*, or *UD*). In both case pairs, there are numerous other actors involved. Indeed, without those, it would be difficult to discuss the matter of making use of external expertise and knowledge of that expertise, but here the FBI and the Foreign Ministry are the principal actors whose knowledge needs and uses will be the subjects of the investigation.

This cluster of cases can be sectioned in a number of different ways to provide variance between the different variables. The expectations of processes vary between the two actors' first incidents and their second, both of which were very similar cases and where they had the opportunity to learn from previous mistakes. There is also some variation between the two actors themselves, although it can (and will) be argued how comparable the two really are, in that the FBI is "merely" an agency that has to operate within a tangle of local and federal law, and is ultimately controlled from above by the U.S. Department of Justice, whereas *UD* is a part of the central government, and operates more on a political and policy level. While *UD* as a ministry certainly is also bound by various national laws, it is usually the one who sets policy for, or even directly controls, external agencies and who is therefore more accustomed to having others adopt its procedures than the other way around.

A variation in the crisis variable can be found between the Montana case and the other three cases. The Waco siege was a transformative event for the FBI, just as the tsunami was for the Swedish state. Calling it "revolutionising" might not be far off the mark, since research done on the topic hints at the poor management of the tsunami crisis was a contributing factor to the Social Democrats being ousted from power in the 2006 Swedish general elections. The Lebanon case, while perhaps not as earth-shattering as the tsunami yet still a significant crisis for the Swedish government, was successfully managed and thus did not create the kind of aftermath seen with the two other crisis cases. The Montana case began as the spectre of a repeat of the Waco disaster, but soon lost one of the key factors that would allow us to call it a crisis according to the definition presented earlier. In fact, while the actual FBI operation lingered, the event faded from public consciousness, and today almost only exists as a vestigial, abandoned build-up to a "second Waco that never happened."

Finally, the variance in the use of expertise shows up between the first and the second case in the two pairs: the Waco and tsunami cases exhibit one pattern whereas the Montana and Lebanon cases exhibit something rather different.

Exactly how these influences *should* look will be the topic of Chapter 2, where the theoretical model for the pressure on organisations is drawn up based on what the literature on crisis management, knowledge management, foreign policy decision-making, and bureaucratic organisations have to say on the matter.

1.6 Relevance

A final question that needs to be addressed is: why bother? What is the practical and theoretical use of this study? The practical concern is fairly easy to address: it is very much in fashion to call for increased co-operation and information sharing, and better use of the expertise available within both the public and private spheres of society. Public-private partnerships are all the rage, as is the use of think tanks and other kinds of research institutions to guide both strategic policy-making and more operational day-to-day decisions. However, this philosophy is founded on the belief that such collaborations will provide a better exchange of ideas, and that this, in and of itself, will be a panacea for all kinds of problems that crop up in today's complex society.

What this study hopes to show is that this notion actually rests on rather precarious grounds; that there are numerous external factors – beyond the control of the actors involved in these exchanges of expertise – that might cause these efforts to come to naught because just when the knowledge is needed the most is when it is the least likely to actually be used.

From a theoretical standpoint, the relevance of this research is rather different. The thesis employs a set of theoretical fields that, while in many ways connected, are rarely mixed together even though they share a lot of common ground. The crisis management literature is certainly already a melange of all kinds of research on decision-making, but it has a tendency to focus on exactly that: the making (and makers) of that decision. If the presence of advisors is acknowledged, it is usually because they are part of the “inner circle,” which essentially makes them decision-makers as well, or at least part of the decision-making “function” within the larger organisation. The question of how this decision-making actor (whatever its nature) interacts with external sources of knowledge is very rarely addressed. At the opposite side of the spectrum, we have the knowledge management literature, which is consumed by the question of how independent actors can exchange and assimilate knowledge, but which pays little heed to the complicating factors such as crises or an asymmetric set of behavioural strictures, or to how these factors might impede this idealised flow of information.

Additionally, this thesis will explore and apply a new kind of organisational knowledge: the hitherto rather mysterious MESO-knowledge mentioned earlier in the chapter. More accurately, it will lay bare a kind of knowledge that is not actually new, as such: it is implicitly present in the literature on organisational knowledge and knowledge management, but is never fully verbalised. However, this concept can actually serve a number of very useful analytical purposes in the study of how organisations expand on their knowledge base. In particular, this (re)conceptualisation may prove fruitful for the study of organisational learning since the three knowledge types represent a set of organisational skills that can be used as indicators of a learning process.

The thesis also introduces the concepts of ‘open’ and ‘closed’ organisations, which are somewhat similar to, but not exchangeable with, the more common notions of flexible and rigid organisations, and which can help us understand some of the preferences, methods and behaviours of an organisation.

There is also an interesting empirical relevance of the study. Among the cases selected, there are two that fall into a fairly uncommon category, from a research standpoint: the (supposedly) “successfully” managed crisis. This kind of case is perceived as uncommon and as rarely occurring, but the reality is quite the opposite. In fact, they happen every day, but we as researchers have a problem catching them on our “interesting case radar.” An event that evolves into a full-blown disaster is hard to miss; one that is handled well might not even evolve beyond the faintest “blip.” As a result, we risk ending up only studying failed instances of crisis management, and all we learn is what not to do. Even in crises that have a happy ending, there is the lingering fact that it became a crisis to begin with – perhaps that escalation was avoidable, and in many ways, it was not actually that well managed at all.

The cases studied in this thesis might not aspire to quite those heights of “good management”, since, again, they *did* evolve into critical issues that had to be handled with both speed and care. The Montana Freeman case comes close, though, since it ended in that much more desirable whimper, rather than the Waco-like bang. It had the escalation that one might associate with an oncoming crisis, but then nothing happened. What these cases do provide, though, is an interesting example of two highly comparable instances of “good” and “bad” management: the exact same actors in the exact same situations, facing the exact same problems, but with drastically different outcomes. With this kind of setup, not only can we make a case for what not to do, but we might also be able to say what to absolutely do. Such an opportunity should not be missed.

Last, but not least, the thesis aims to investigate the trade-offs governmental organisations make to serve their two different masters: the “higher-ups” in the larger governmental hierarchy and in the political arena, and the common good for which the organisation was originally created. As both the cases and the theory will show, it is not at all clear that when a substantial problem appears, an organisation will focus on solving that problem. Instead, the mere fact that a crisis is brewing might cause the organisation to swerve away from its assumed crisis management duties and instead try to solve (and in the process perhaps even cause) the political problem that often accompanies a large-scale crisis.

1.7 Structure

The thesis is divided into 8 chapters, each dealing with its own facet of the overarching problem. Chapter 1 has been spent on setting up the problem area and introducing both the questions that need to be answered and the empirical cases that will help answering them. Chapter 2 will delve into the theoretical model

of how external influences shape an organisation's behaviour when it comes to seeking external aid. It will bring in and employ theories from a number of fields and literature related to the question at hand, most notably crisis management, knowledge management theory, and organisational theory.

Chapter 3 will go into detail about the methodology of the case studies that will be used to test these initial hypotheses. The chapter will describe and adapt the general methods of structured, focused comparisons and process tracing, as well as argue the relevance of the cases and discuss how the hypotheses might be falsified in the course of the study. Chapter 4–7 will present the empirics of the four cases – more specifically the *two pairs* of cases. In Chapter 8, comparisons of the data from the two case pairs will be made, both *within* these two sets of cases and *between* the pairs themselves. Finally, the information gleaned from this analysis will be used to draw the conclusions of this thesis and thus answer the questions set up here in Chapter 1.

Chapter 2: The Framework

This chapter will discuss the theoretical underpinnings of this thesis. It will describe the logic and reasoning behind the hypotheses and also discuss a number of core concepts that will be necessary to fully answer the research question set up in Chapter 1. The thesis revolves around a model of organisational behaviour that dictates how organisations respond to external pressures. In order to describe both the pressures and the behaviour, this chapter draws on organisational learning theory, knowledge management theory, crisis management theory, and the theory of cybernetic decision-making. In particular, it takes a fairly long detour through the knowledge management literature to (re)conceptualise three specific forms of organisational knowledge, or three skills that an organisation can use to obtain knowledge from external sources.

2.1 Modelling the pressure on organisations

The basic framework for this thesis revolves around the inherent characteristics of bureaucratic organisations in terms of openness and ‘closed-ness’, how these characteristics are affected by certain external constraints and contexts, and how these characteristics in turn affect the organisations’ propensity to make use of expert knowledge. While the study will mainly focus on the circumstances under which these organisations look for external knowledge sources, the framework itself is not limited to any given locus for these experts. Indeed, the same mechanics could produce the insight that the knowledge needed to face unforeseen and unfamiliar problems may actually already be found in the organisation’s existing structure, but that it just has never been called for or been brought to anyone’s attention. It may be the case that the knowledge the organisation uses for its every-day business is applicable to other areas and that all that is needed is a new perspective on that knowledge in order to find a solution to a new and surprising problem. As a very trivial case, an analytical firm that dissects decision-making

for a living might for instance face problems that stem from their own internal decision-making processes, and might have to turn its analytical eye inwards on itself. Or maybe the organisational culture is such that it has attracted lots of people with a particular personal interest that is unrelated to the normal work the organisation performs, and suddenly that informal internal interest group holds the key knowledge needed to untangle some otherwise incomprehensible problem that has just arisen. Nothing about the framework precludes such scenarios – they are just not the focus of this thesis. There is already an entire literature on organisational cognition and culture and on the vague overlap between large groups and full organisations (*cf.* Janis 1971; 't Hart, Rosenthal & Kouzmin 1993; Martin 2002; Schein 2004; Deverell 2012; Lindkvist, Bakka & Fivesdal 2014). In addition, there are even some who more specifically study the internal feedback mechanisms that turn various organisational features into direct causes (or cures) for crises and similar misfortunes (*cf.* Perrow 1984; Weick 1987, 1988; Mitroff et al. 1989; Roberts 1989). This thesis, however, concerns itself with *external* factors that influence or cause similar behaviours, pathologies, and feedback mechanisms.

At the heart of the matter is the notion that the degree of openness or closedness of a bureaucratic organisation will directly influence the way in which the organisation in question goes about solving problems. A closed organisation will tend towards using prescribed, tried and tested practices directly aimed at solving a given class of issues, and will be less sensitive to external indicators that might suggest that the problem at hand may actually belong to a completely different class and that the problem-solving tools available to the organisation might not be fully up to the task. An open organisation, on the other hand, is more likely to try to extensively and accurately classify the problem before figuring out how to attack it, and is less likely to have pre-made standard operational procedures for all conceivable eventualities. It is worth noting that there is no normative value to these terms, and that the process leading up to how either of these organisational cultures came into being is well beyond the scope of this study. Any given organisation can have a multitude of reason for choosing – actively or otherwise – to go in either direction. While there may be some subtle processes that make organisational behaviour naturally tend towards openness or closedness, self-conscious and deliberate choices influence far more how the organisation develops in the long run. Perhaps the nature of the problems the organisation is meant to deal with are of such a time-critical, yet highly technical nature, that check-list diagnostics routines are vital to keep people from overlooking critical details. Or perhaps the kind of problems the organisation expects to face are of such a varied nature that no common pattern exists between them, so no attempt has been made to come up with any step-by-step procedures because it has been identified as a largely futile and wasteful effort. What matters is how (or even *if*) the organisation has set itself up to identify and cope with unexpected situations.

However, this is only the default state of the organisation, and it cannot realistically be expected that any such institution will be completely predictable in everything it does. Even the most rule-bound organisation will display some flexibility in how less important tasks are handled, and even with the important ones, mistakes will happen and will need to be rectified. Likewise, even the most flexible and innovative of organisations will have – albeit informal – standard practices that with time have shown themselves to simply be the easiest and most practical way of doing what needs to be done.¹

This inherent mutability means that any organisation is subject to external stimuli that may push it either towards a more open behaviour or a more closed one. One such stimulus is the organisation finding itself in a crisis, with all the perceived uncertainty and time pressure this entails. This thesis aims to test the assumption that during crises, an organisation will strongly tend towards a more closed behaviour. What standard practices the organisation has, whether they are informal or made explicit, will provide *some* degree of familiarity – and thus of non-uncertainty – that the organisation will want to cling to. The same procedures will also offer a predictable time schedule for the actions the organisation wants to take, which provides a useful heuristic for dealing with the time pressure imposed by the crisis. Granted, the stress of the situation may render any such schedule thoroughly unrealistic in practice due to a higher tendency to make mistakes under pressure, but just the perception of a lack of time creates this sense of a crisis, the perception of at least knowing how long a given course of action will take makes this known choice preferable to the completely unknowable time frame of some newly concocted and in every way untested scheme.

Closed-ness can also be imposed from the outside by an organisation suddenly finding itself in a context where adherence to strict protocols is a requirement. Within a state bureaucracy, the division of labour between different ministries and departments means that, over time, numerous different standards and practices will evolve, and the patterns of interaction of one policy area might differ significantly from how work is done in a different area. Within the foreign-policy arena, for instance, there is the constant pressure of diplomatic niceties and conventions that have to be followed. There are usually strictly defined channels that have to be used within the political system – namely the foreign office or some similar agency that

1 The predictability of a completely rigid organisation is easy to envision, but to some extent, the same kind of predictability can be seen at the other extreme as well. A completely dynamic organisation will never do the same thing twice, and every time anything happens, a new way of dealing with it will be devised. Eventually, it will probably run out of new ways in which the people in the organisation could do some things (e.g. the way they go to lunch), at which point it will no longer be as dynamic as it previously was. Its earlier predictable pattern of never doing the same thing twice is thus lost, but is replaced with a new pattern in how this one routine task is done.

has a near monopoly on dealing with sensitive matters on the international arena. Beyond this, there is also the general pattern of bureaucratic hierarchies. In the example of the international arena, the foreign office becomes a lead agency of sort in dealing with other nations and thereby gains an implicit veto power over questions that normally do not fall under its purview. Similar hierarchies can, and habitually and even by design *do* crop up everywhere in this large construct we refer to as “the state” or “the government”. Specific departments within an agency will be held accountable to the agency leadership; the agency leadership will be held accountable to departments within a ministry; those departments will be held accountable to the ministry leadership who in turn are held accountable to the head(s) over government. Layers and layers of regulatory and oversight bodies are purposefully built this way, and the whole intent is exactly to enforce strict protocols and practices. In short, opportunities for imposing closed-ness by requiring adherence to formal pattern of behaviour abound. In most cases, these formalities are part and parcel of the every-day work of any given organisation, so calling it an imposition at that point is somewhat misleading. Rather, it is when the normal work-flow gets disrupted and completely new and unfamiliar formal arrangements are imposed that the tendency towards closed behaviour starts creeping in. Those regular procedures now become a source of familiarity and security to fall back on, even though the situation may ask for a far more flexible approach than those procedures would allow for. Worse still, that flexibility might actually be available during every-day use of the very same procedures, but in response to the unfamiliar, the organisation falls back on doing things strictly “by the book,” eschewing a more dynamic response that it would normally be able to effect without any real friction. What might look like an every-day closed-ness turns out to be a surprisingly flexible set of processes and procedures, as long as they are not disrupted and suddenly forced to mesh with some other process or procedure that an external actor expects the organisation to follow when the two actors interact.

The final piece of the puzzle is what these kinds of imposed closed-ness do to the organisation itself. As will be expounded on later on, the literature on Knowledge Management (KM) implicitly suggests that the effectiveness of any information-gathering venture within an organisation depends on the organisation’s capacity of understanding the limits of its knowledge; on its knowledge of the needs and capabilities of other actors in the same field; and on its capability of identifying not just the problem at hand, but also what kind of knowledge might be relevant to solving that problem. These are, in essence, the three knowledge concepts this thesis adopts as a way of re-conceptualising Huber’s (1991) ideas of sourcing and grafting: meta-knowledge, empathic knowledge, and second-order knowledge (a triplet that will often be referred to as a whole in the form of MESO-knowledge). Together, they create the foundation and the set of tools an organisation has for dealing with unexpected problems, where the

fundamental assumption is that the better it makes use of these tools, the more informed decisions the organisation will make.

Figure 1 illustrates the model of how these different factors are supposed to interact. Something to note here is the additional coupling that has not yet been discussed: the connection between MESO-knowledge and the influence of crises. This connection lies somewhat outside the scope of this thesis, but as we delve deeper into both crises and knowledge management, this connection will become so clear that it would be imprudent to pretend it did not exist. This coupling denotes the “identification paradox” that can occur when organisations rely on external sources, willingly or forcibly, to provide a framing of a crisis. Upcoming sections will explain this problem in more detail once the underlying facets of both crises and KM have been discussed. For now, the quick summary version it is that a lack of properly applied MESO-knowledge (that is, an inability or unwillingness to identify and acquire the knowledge needed to understand a new and unexpected situation) can in and of itself be a cause for crises through mechanisms reminiscent of Weick’s (1988) notion of ‘enacted sensemaking.’ We might misinterpret completely benign information as cause for huge concern and start chasing our own shadows trying to solve a problem that does not actually exist, or, conversely, we might miss critical details that indicate that yes, this is indeed a monumental crisis, and thus fail to act because we cannot interpret these weak signals.

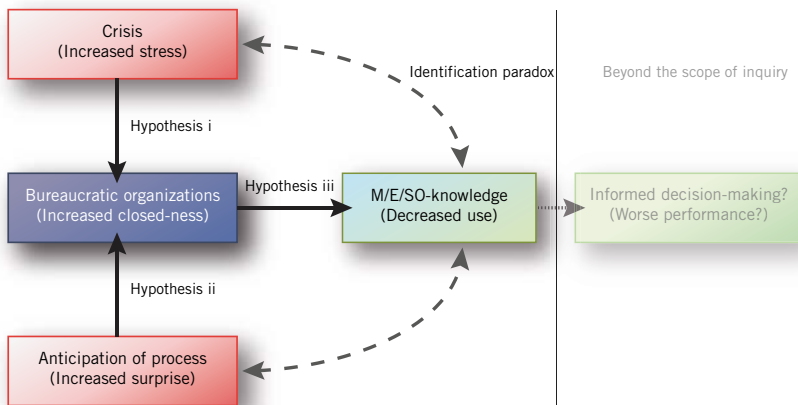


Figure 1: A model of the pressure on organisations.

Furthermore, and perhaps more worryingly, this lack of understanding can generate a self-replicating cycle of not fully comprehending the issue at hand. We do not understand the problem so we have to find someone who can explain it to us,

but since we do not understand the problem, we are not capable of evaluating the value and relevance of the explanations offered to us. So we need someone who can clarify the relevance, but since we do not understand the problem, we are not capable of evaluating the relevance of *these clarifications*... and on it goes. If left unchecked, this recursive cycle can generate a host of meta-uncertainties – a worry about not understanding the explanations that should otherwise soothe our worries – that become a far larger issue than the actual crisis that created the original niggling seed of doubt. The instinctive “safe” solution to this problem is equally recursive: to properly identify the problem we need an expert on the area, but in order to identify an expert on the area we need an expert on experts in the area, but then again, how can we really trust *that* expert, and so on. The less safe (but probably far more constructive) solution is to simply go by instinct and pick whichever solution sounds good from a layman’s perspective and listening to the expert that sounds the most like (s)he knows what (s)he is talking about, but this requires a determination that is not always present. Insert 1 on the next page gives an example of one such case as further illustration.

The main thrust of the model, however, is the relationships between crises and organisations, between the imposed (unexpected) formality and organisations, between organisations and expert knowledge, and finally between expert knowledge and decision-making. The rest of this chapter will discuss these different connections and explain the logic behind the three hypotheses of how we can predict the behaviour of an organisation when it is subjected to outside pressure.

2.2 The black box: the organisation itself

At the heart of the model lies the organisation, as conceptualised by March & Simon (1958) and Cyert & March (1963): a group of individuals working towards a collective goal and producing a collective good or result, often independent of their individual goals, where the work is cut up into sub-units and where the behaviour of (and within) each sub-unit is co-ordinated towards that collective goal. In practice, of course, an organisation may strive towards multiple goals at once and the efforts might not always be quite as concerted as the ideal image suggests. History is littered with examples of organisations where the sub-units work at cross-purpose, and the literature on the topic has become deeply fascinated with these internal conflicts and found them a near-endless resource for studies and research, to the point where even scratching on the surface would produce an inordinately lengthy list of case studies and theories.

The two key words in this are “goals” and “co-ordination”, both of which imply that decision-making and intent are among the defining features of organisational studies. Tenbrunsel et al. (1996) go so far as to describe decisions as “a core unit of activity” within these groups. That is not to say that the behaviour of or within organisations is always reasoned or rational – only that the structure itself imposes processes that direct actions towards a particular outcome.

Insert I: Illustrating the identification paradox – the case of the music industry

At the tail end of the 20th century, the Internet was still relatively new but had already quickly given rise to a new means of distributing information in almost all its various forms and had become the basis of both new and revamped businesses. Caught in the middle of this technological evolution was an almost century-old music industry, which over time had been so closely associated with its main medium of distribution – at first the shellac and vinyl records and, later, the CD – that its name had become synonymous with the “record industry.”

During the last few years, however, the exponential growth of the Internet as a distribution channel for all kinds of media had caught the industry completely off guard. None of their preconceived notions about how to get the goods to the consumer seemed to apply. Duplication was trivial and could be done on demand at zero cost, as opposed to making large batches in specialised facilities to keep costs down in hopes that stocks would sell out. Distribution was equally trivial. The ease of duplication meant that there was no reason to bundle music on albums and go through multiple layers of shipping, storage, and retail. Instead, the exact right song, or even just a single clip or sound bite, could be transported nigh on instantly from a central repository and directly to the media player inside the consumer’s home. Consumers understood these advantages very quickly. They could get what they wanted, without extraneous fluff, without ever leaving the comfort of their chair, much less their home. The recording industry, however, did not. It tried to cling to its age-old business of selling physical records, which left the doors wide open for various illegitimate

enterprises to move in and seize the nascent digital distribution market. Some early attempts were made to stamp out the most egregious cases of illegal music sharing – Napster being perhaps the most obvious example – in hopes of getting rid of the problem and getting back to business as usual.

The problem was that the usual business no longer existed – at least not in the same sense it had before. By the time the case was settled, Napster had long since been supplanted by better tools and technologies and was no longer a relevant threat. Illegal music sharing had become so mainstream that the very idea of paying for music had started to become slightly absurd for a large portion of the technologically savvy. In addition, the rhetoric and legal tactics used to the industry to stigmatise piracy had only served to highlight industry’s lack of understanding of what the customers wanted. By not moving quickly enough in face of this shift in technology and in customer behaviour, the industry had missed the boat on digital distribution. It now had to fight an uphill battle not only to put the required infrastructure into place, but also to provide a commercially viable competitor to “free music” – a market the industry itself had unintentionally spawned through its inaction – and to reconnect to an ostracised customer base. Years later, the CEO of the Universal Music Group explained the development fundamentally as a failure of knowledge, not only of the subject matter at hand but also of whom to turn to:

There’s no one in the record company that’s a technologist. That’s a misconception writers make all the time, that the record industry missed this. They didn’t. They just didn’t know what to do. [...] We didn’t know [whom] to hire. I wouldn’t be able to recognize a good technology person – anyone with a good bullshit story would have gotten past me. (Doug Morris, quoted in Mnookin 2007)

The organisation may be heavily proscribed in such a way that situation A always means the individuals do activity X, which might intuitively seem like the *absence* of decision: the response is nigh-on automatic. Even so, this act is still an artefact of a decision: namely that in these A-type situations, the organisation shall always act in accordance with X. At the other end of the spectrum, there is the situation where there is an apparent absence of decision on the organisational level because there are no explicit, verbalised dictates on what needs to be done. Here too, however, is an artefact of decision at play, namely the formulation of intent, only instead of a prescribed means of achieving the expressed goal, each individual has to take that intent to heart in a more (post)modern manner and figure out his or her own means of getting there.

In either case, and as time passes and the environment changes, this chosen activity might even come to be seen as counter-productive from an outside perspective, and both the near-automated, prescribed behaviour and the complete “laissez-faire”, self-governed behaviour might seem almost nonsensical in context. Even so, they are still the result of a number of decisions within the organisation to set a certain goal, to employ a certain methodology to try to achieve that goal, and not the least a decision on how free the individual should be in discovering and deciding on his or her own way for achieving the goals (or, for that matter, to set goals of their own). Regardless of the locus and freedom of decision, and regardless of the logic and rationality of the decisions made, the notion of decisions and of decision-making as a key feature of organisational studies holds true.

The question is, then, how are these decisions made? How is the intent identified and verbalised and how is the process to reach this objective envisioned and communicated? What are the characteristics that signify whether an organisation relies more on internal regulation and artefacts of decisions in driving the behaviour of individuals, or whether it relies on an internalised understanding on the individual level of the collective goal, which will then, in turn, generate the right beneficial behaviour?

2.2.1 The fundamental issue: organisational cognition

What the likes of Cyert, March and Simon had created was the concept of the organisation as a cognitive organism, separate from the individuals that made up that organisation. In many ways, the organisation can be thought of as an individual in and of itself and many of the faculties that we normally associate with people can also be associated with organisations. These days, we talk about organisational memory, knowledge, learning and perception as reasonably clearly defined concepts that share many traits with their human parallels. As with people, organisations can suffer from learning disabilities, memory loss, and reduced awareness.

The question then becomes, how far can this metaphor be pushed? Do organisations suffer from the same kinds of cognitive bias as we can observe in individuals, for instance, and if so, do they suffer from them for similar

reasons? There are several types of pathological decision-making processes that are already of interest in the study of organisations in general or in the study of decision-making within an organisational context, such as groupthink (Janis 1972, 1982; 't Hart, Stern & Sundelius 1997), over-reliance on analogies (Khong 1992), and naturalistic decision-making (Zambok & Klein 1990). These authors all identify and analyse how both individuals and small decision-making groups rely on various heuristics and environmental cues to try to grasp the full scope of complex events. However, both the heuristics themselves and the perception of cues that they rely on are, in one way or another, simplified models that can easily lead the mind astray. In social contexts in particular, the social cues may completely override the factual cues from the event itself. For example, a felt need for consensus guides the thought more than the facts on the table, for instance, and so a decision is made more on the basis of how people feel about the decision itself than on whether or not the decision makes sense in view what is going on in the world at large. While these all deal with individuals within a group or organisational context, the notion that the organisation itself has its own form of cognition raises the question of whether the same concepts can be applied to this larger organism: can (and do) organisations suffer from a kind of groupthink when co-operating with other organisations? Since organisations learn and have memories, do their previous experiences colour the decisions and policies of an organisation the way analogies the “mental slides” of naturalistic decision-making colour the individual’s choice of action?

The aim of this thesis is not to delve too deeply into these questions, but to answer some of a similar nature: what are some of the factors that inhibit an organisation’s “cognitive functions” and what skills can the organisation evolve to deal with these inhibitions? In an attempt to answer such questions, the first assertion to be made, then, is that much like how people can be open or closed-minded, an observation that organisations can also be open or closed to new ideas and external influences.

2.2.2 What counts as “open” and “closed”?

It is worth stressing from the very start that it is a conscious decision not to include the “-minded” part when discussing the openness and closed-ness of an organisation. The connotations of “open-minded” and of “close-minded” are not entirely constructive and risk leading the thought towards a more normative argument. For the purpose of this thesis, they are simply two different states on a sliding scale, and as we shall see, there are good arguments to be made for both states. An organisation being closed may very well be the right thing for that organisation, given its primary purpose. Instead, “open” and “closed” organisations simply function according to different ideals and principles towards a different preferred outcome. While an argument will later be made that in times of crisis, a certain amount of openness will be helpful to deal with the dynamic environment such an event will generate; this does not mean that the

organisation's core ideal should change, but rather that the degree of openness or closed-ness can be maintained at a useful level.

The notions of an open or closed organisation borrows heavily from Allison & Zelikow's (1971; 1999) analytical models of decision-making. The open/closed divide also mimics some of the features of Burns & Stalker's (1961) conceptualisation of the mechanistic versus the organic organisation, as well as of Mintzberg's (1979) categorisation of machine bureaucracies and ad-hocracies. However, the two latter focus more on the separation, delegation, and coordination of tasks and responsibilities whereas the open/closed split takes more of an interest in the actual task *processing* and problems-solving. Essentially, an open organisation is one where the individual actors involved in the problem-solving effort are constantly jockeying for control over which course of action should eventually be taken, and one where the kinds of solutions available to the group as a whole very much rely on which actors are present. In addition, which strategy is ultimately chosen depends heavily on to what extent the decision-maker has to rely on a consensus-assessment among his or her advisors. This generates an arena where dynamism is the overarching theme and where a large degree of flexibility is built into the system. Moreover, the process is informal in the sense that there are few if any prescribed rules as to which kinds of decisions are acceptable as an outcome of the process, and there is no formal set of parameters that must be met for a prescribed action to be taken. This parallels Allison's "type iii" model, where the ultimate decision depends on which players are involved, their relative power within the system, their ability to formulate a convincing problem image, and an implicit "game of politics" that determine how the different views and ideas are evaluated (Allison & Zelikow 1999:302ff).

The closed organisation, on the other hand, rather follows an ideal that is best described by Allison's "type ii" model. This is where an organisation's problem-solving relies on more or less strictly prescribed operational procedures and where the instinctual response to any given problem is to try to adapt the framing of the situation in such a way that it fits with one these already known solutions. Here, the outcome is predicated on what types of situations the organisation has prepared itself for and what kind of, and to which extent, outlier issues can be squeezed into those standard practices. This kind of organisation strives first and foremost for a consistency in its decisions. For example, an event that falls within the parameters as pre-defined pattern will generate the same response, time and time again. The response is based on regulations, as are the methods of altering this rigid structure.

The reader may at this point rightly object that this is not what Allison's models are really intended for. Rather, they are modes or perspectives for analysing the decision-making of a small group. At the same time, however, they also represent two different assumptions about how decisions are made that can be tested against an actual case to see which yields the "better" explanation; or they can be used as delimitations to better filter out the different factors that influence a decision. These assumptions, and in particular the differentiations

in terms of which factor influences what, can also be seen as an ideal for how an organisation is supposed to function. One organisation might not want to be stymied by internal rules and bureaucracy and would rather like to see the kind of dynamic competition of ideas described in the type-iii model. Another organisation might instead want to minimise the individual factor and exclusively rely on written procedure. Whether these two organisations manage to live up to their ideals is a completely different question, so just because an organisation is open does not mean that a type-ii analysis of it will find nothing.

In more concrete terms, and to return to the key issue of the use of expert knowledge, the open organisation will be more inclined to seek out and call on expertise that has not already been identified and tried through previous experience. Instead, an individual actor is able to present and champion these hitherto unknown and untested ideas and make the external knowledge behind them a part of the decision-making process. The closed organisation, on the other hand, may very well have access to a large battery of external experts, but their use and their inclusion is strictly regulated; adding new ones on an ad-hoc basis is either outright not allowed, or there are no clear procedures for it, making it a much less likely path for the organisation to take. In the former case, it could be that the organisation is dealing with topics or information of a sensitive nature and only those with the right clearance can be allowed to support the effort. In the latter case, it could simply be a matter of inexperience – the organisation has always managed well with what it has – or it can be a matter of pride, where the organisation believes itself to be so self-sufficient as to never really need outside help.

2.2.3 *The ideal types of openness and closed-ness*

There are, in short, numerous ways in which these characteristics can manifest themselves and a multitude of reasons why. This thesis cannot begin to hope to catalogue them all, nor is it the goal to do so. Instead, these two ideal types work as a simple categorisation of organisations, where most will find themselves on a sliding scale between the two extremes, and where the core question of the thesis is what influences the organisation's movement on that scale. The methodology section in chapter 3 will delve deeper into the problem of evaluating these two extremes, whereas this section is more concerned with defining the terms as clearly as possible. It is still worth pointing out that while they are presented here as a binary variable – open or closed – the reality will be that there is a gradation between them and indeed the entire point of the thesis is that organisations will switch preferences depending on the situation. While an organisation may be characterised by a high degree of formality on most occasions, certain situations may call for strict by-the-book adherence to the rules and regulations, and even the most rigid organisation will have its lulls and lapses into a more relaxed state. We are perhaps more served by expecting a *move towards* either extreme, as opposed to a full and clear flip-flop between the two. Rather, we might expect that only

one or two ideals change – that an otherwise open organisation suddenly favours rigidity over flexibility, for instance – and that this can be interpreted as a change towards a more closed stance.

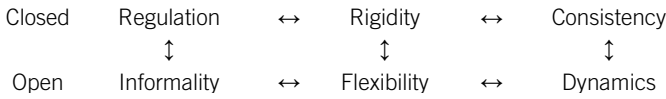


Figure 2: The ideal types of open and closed organisations

Conceptually, the two types can be categorised by operating on a *guiding principle* of how the organisation’s work should be directed: through regulation or through less formal processes where issues are allowed to be resolved on a case-by-case basis, each with their own bespoke interpretation of what is “allowed” or “suitable” and what is not. These principles generate an *instrumental work flow* where either rigidity or flexibility is the core characteristic: either work has to be done by strict adherence to the rules, or the rules are more intended to be guidelines to solving the issue at hand. The rationale behind these work flows is the *preferred outcome* they are intended to generate. Either we have a situation where the outcome is consistent and predictable – all pegs *have to go* in a hole after all, even the square ones, and the round holes are good enough to fit that purpose – or we have one where an exact fit between problem and solution is paramount for whatever reason. Continuing the peg-and-hole parable, maybe any damage to either element is unacceptable, and the effort to make new holes for oddly-shaped pegs are worth it to avoid that larger headache. The open/closed schema can be seen in Figure 2 above.

As with all ideal types, these categories and labels do not mean that we should expect them to always appear and be adhered to. An open organisation may be labelled as having a “dynamic” rather than “consistent” preferred outcome, which does not mean that every decision will differ from the last. They, too, will most likely also generate a familiar pattern of outcomes, but will simply be far more sensitive to letting new and additional parameters go into that decision, and are more willing to specifically tailor a decision to a given situation. Likewise, it does not mean that a closed organisation will be a single-answer monolith, but rather that it will show a preference for fitting everything into a set of standardised responses. A closed organisation may also be sensitive to changes in the parameters that go into a decision – even a small change may completely alter the outcome – but only if the parameter in question is already known and accounted for and if there is a ready-made response to such a change. Similarly, it is not hard to imagine, at least on a conceptual level, a situation where the regulations *dictate* a flexible response and a dynamic outcome. For instance, the health-care sector, for instance, is often heavily regulated towards offering the patients individualised and personalised care, which is possible because there are so many different diagnoses and treatments for the physicians to choose between.

So it bears repeating that these are just the extremes with specific features that signal a trend towards either end, and that the main interest of this thesis lies in how organisations can shift from one to the other. It is also worth reiterating that the exact inner nature of the organisation and how decisions are made are of a lesser importance here. It is the black box that we can categorise as being more or less open or closed as far as what information the organisation chooses to accept. How that information is handled internally is beyond the scope of this study. Finally, it is worth mentioning that, quite counter-intuitively, the analytical “output” of this black box, as studied here, is actually the type of *input* it accepts. We cannot tell what the organisation is doing, but we can study how it responds to external pressure of different forms. The output of the black box is that response, and the response consists of the use of three organisational “skills” that let information flow back into the black box.

2.3 The output of the black box: knowledge and the use of expertise

One of the core concepts for this thesis is the notion of *organisational knowledge* – an idea born out of Cyert & March’s (1963) and Cangelosi & Dill’s (1965) research into the behaviour of organisations viewed as singular entities. Extrapolating what had previously been considered human and individual qualities such as cognition onto organisations, allowed for a new way of exploring and explaining how larger social constructs act. A key discovery was that, even though organisations are made up of large collections of individuals, there is knowledge embedded in the organisation itself that does not exist within any one of those individuals. The way this social structure has organised itself to deal with every-day issues is, in and of itself, an artefact of how poorly or well previous working procedures have turned out. By reshaping itself to better cope with similar situations, the organisation has formed what more or less amounts to a memory of past experiences, and it now behaves in a way that is consistent with those memories. The exact reason why any given organisation uses certain procedures nowadays might be lost on the individuals, but is rather embedded in the organisation itself. It is the organisation that holds that particular piece of knowledge, not the individuals, and it has often been shaped over a longer period of time than the individual has been around.

From this observation sprung a raft of new fields of research, most notably into *organisational learning* (cf. Cangelosi & Dill 1965; Argyris & Schön 1978, 1996; Huber 1991), the concept of *the learning organisation* (cf. Argyris & Schön 1978, 1996; Senge 1990; Huysman 2000), and more recently the idea of *knowledge management* (cf. Nonaka & Takeuchi 1995; Alvesson & Kärreman 2001; Easterby-Smith & Lyles 2003b; McNabb 2007). Organisational learning is also an important part of the crisis management literature (cf. Rosenthal, Boin & Comfort 2001; Boin et al. 2005, 2017). Knowledge management (KM), in particular, takes on the task of examining how knowledge is created and transferred, not just between individuals, but also between different organisations as

well as between the organisational and individual level. This sounds like exactly the right thing for explaining how organisations (and individuals within those organisations) take on the task of figuring out what they need to know and where to learn it. It also ties neatly into the notion that organisations are subject to variants of the cognitive processes we see in individuals, which makes KM useful as a marker for the kind of changes due to external pressures that we want to study: what kind of knowledge do organisations use when the heat is on?

One observation that can be made at this point is that this kind of reshaping and adaptation almost immediately creates a tension between the definitions of open and closed of the previous section. While they are defined by their rigidity, this does not mean that closed organisations cannot accumulate knowledge, but that they do so in a rigid way. In the extreme case, their knowledge is stored exclusively in the operational practices that regulate organisational behaviour, and it takes a concerted effort to change these regulations. Conversely, in a totally open organisation, the knowledge is solely stored in informal structures; it exists more in the connections and interactions between people rather than in the regulations; and the knowledge can far more easily be changed and adapted on the fly due to the inherent flexibility of these organisations. This observation alone gives us a hint of what we might come to expect of organisations under pressure: that organisations under stress will “forget” certain things they already know, and instead fall back on one particular kind – or one particular source – of knowledge depending on whether they tend towards openness or closed-ness under these circumstances. If the organisation tends towards openness, it may forget lessons that have been codified in its regulations and standard operational procedures, and be prone to “reinvent the wheel,” but it will be capable of quickly (re)generating the new knowledge it requires. If the organisation tends towards closed-ness, it will instead forget the knowledge encoded in the individuals and informal structures, and rely on what is set out in the rulebook. It will also be less capable of inventing new methods on the fly. If the rulebook is not up to the task, the organisation quickly runs out of ideas and *only then*, if at all, does it try to generate new knowledge.

However, in order to examine these ideas more closely, we need to take a rather elaborate detour in order to understand the core concept that is used here: we need to understand “knowledge.” Specifically, we need to understand how different kinds of knowledge generate different kinds of behavioural artefacts that can be observed for the purpose of determining where organisations stand on the open/closed spectrum. How is knowledge used in organisations and how can this use be observed?

First of all, it is important to separate knowledge from a couple of different concepts that are notably similar to the point of often being used as synonyms (even in this thesis – a practice that ends here). Even within the knowledge-focused literature, there is some confusion over what, exactly, knowledge is, but the attempts to ring it in usually come down to a progression between data, information, and finally knowledge. At each step of the way, further layers of

complexity, refinement, processing, and interpretation are added. Table 1 below (Koraeus 2007) lists some of the ways these three concepts are differentiated in the literature, and while they all offer slightly different views, there are a couple of common patterns. One is the aforementioned successive embedding of more and more context and interpretation. Another is a rather clear distinction between data and information, both of which are often described as reasonably objective in nature, and knowledge, which is almost universally subjective to the knowledge-holder. Another way of looking at it is that data and information are the *results* of a process – be it fact gathering, sifting, organisation or contextualisation – whereas knowledge is a process in and of itself. This is most clearly shown in the foundational definition made by Polanyi (1966), where knowledge is tersely defined as *the act of knowing*: the process of believing, interpreting, understanding and – perhaps most importantly – of making use of the available information and data. While it is perhaps the best illustration made of the difference between knowledge and simple data and information, some authors doubt whether this definition has really survived in modern-day texts on the matter (Tsoukas 2003; Gourlay 2006).

Table 1: Data, information, and knowledge

	Data	Information	Knowledge
Alawi & Tiwana (2003)	Fragmented factoids (objective).	Integrated, interlinked, summarised, and profiled data (interpreted).	Reflections on, or learning of, information by individuals and organisations.
Blackler (1995), Assudani (2005)	Abstract phenomena, devoid of any context.		A mediated, situated, provisional, pragmatic, and contested idea.
Collier (2006)	Raw facts.	Organised data. Data processed for a purpose but without interpretation.	The application of a cognitive process on information to make it useful, enabling conclusions to be drawn.
McNabb (2007)	Facts, concepts, or statistics.	Data organised for comprehension and understanding.	Information used by a person and for a purpose.
Nonaka & Takeuchi (1995)		Data given meaning through syntax and semantics.	Justified true beliefs, created by the flow of information anchored in the beliefs and commitments of its holder.
Waltz (2003)	Measurements and observations (content).	Data placed in context, indexed, and organised (context).	Information understood and explained (Meaning).

(cf. Koraeus 2007, 2008)

Even with this caveat, the most common trait of the various definitions of knowledge, and true even in Polanyi's definition, is that knowledge is 'actionable:' it is not just some intellectual object that tells us what to do, but rather the informed ability that lets us process the world around us and decide what to do. Blackler (1993) frames knowledge, and in particular organisational knowledge, as the art of picking the right action or activity to move forward – in other words, knowledge is the art of making the right decision.

Given this description, it becomes a trivial matter of defining what constitutes an 'expert.' It is simply an agent that holds the knowledge required to fully process the various details that has a relevant influence on the topic at hand – in other words, these agents are the holders of 'expertise,' which is how this kind of topic-complete knowledge is usually labelled. An expert is someone who can look at the information and data available and turn that into a decision on how to act. This, in turn, means that we can understand 'expert organisations' as a collection of people where the prescribed procedures and arrangements with that institution (that is, its organisational knowledge) *are* that process of knowing; the process that generates an activity or action that solves problems. Blackler (1993) even goes so far as to say that what an expert organisations *really* is, is an "activity systems" – a term borrowed from Engeström (1987). It is a context in which activities are created and actions are defined. It is a system that wrings out individual knowledge from the persons inside the organisation, and which then processes it further to decide the direction of the organisation as a whole.

But here is the rub: all this tells us is that an organisation can make decisions based on what data and information is available to it. But it also tells us that if the organisation does not have the right *knowledge* – on an individual or organisational level – to fully process all the relevant details, it will strictly speaking instantly lose its expertise, and is no longer able to pick *the right* activity. It can certainly create action plans, but they are detached from the realities of the situation, and the organisation will most likely suffer some kind of consequence. In fact, the organisational learning literature quite expressly tells us that this happens more or less constantly, but that, in the ideal case, the organisation can bridge this gap, detect the disconnect, learn and do better next time. But what if there is no "next time", or rather, what if "next time" is far too late? Or what if the gap needs to be detected and bridged right here and now?

This is where the need for external expertise (be it individual or organisational) comes in, but with it comes the need to be able to identify these knowledge gaps on the fly. The question is less of the nature of "how do we solve the problem?" and more in line with "how do we expand our knowledge to include a solution?" It might seem like a rather small, semantic difference, but given the notion that knowledge is, as described above, the ability to process information and figuring out the right action, this latter formulation is far more precise in what actually needs to happen. This breaks the problem down in two parts: how do we discover the locus of this missing knowledge, and how do we incorporate into the body of knowledge we already possess? Let us tackle these two questions in reverse order, because the former problem turns out to be an extension of the latter.

2.3.1 *Tacit & explicit knowledge*

The main crux of knowledge transfer is that, as Polanyi (1966) remarked, knowledge can be broken down into two distinctly different parts: *tacit* and *explicit* knowledge, depending on how well it can be articulated. A somewhat older, but very similar, distinction is made by Ryle (1949), who divides knowledge into “knowing how” and “knowing that”, respectively. In fact, this particular distinction that has been the basis for a number of differently reformulated variants across a number of disciplines.²

Tacit knowledge is sometimes referred to as “silent” knowledge, in reference to the fact that it can only be verbalised and articulated with great difficulty. It comes in the form of some kind of know-how: a skill in arts, crafts, creativity, or manual and mechanical skills. A classic example of tacit knowledge is riding a bike: it is something you know how to do, but cannot really explain to someone and then have him or her ride off into the sunset. Telling someone how their sense of balance works and how the hunk of plastic and metal will influence it does not actually let them maintain that balance until they have felt it themselves (and the pain from a couple of scraped knees). A slightly more complex version, and more in line with the topic of this thesis, is tacit knowledge of the idiosyncrasies of an organisation: knowing which parts of the request forms to skip, which parts can be filled out in short hand, and which parts need to be signed in triplicate or it will bounce somewhere along the line; knowing that, since it is Monday, Alice will be manning the desk, so you had better hurry, because tomorrow Benny will be there instead and with him in charge, you will not get an answer to your important question before Christmas. Tacit knowledge can usually only be gained through experience, and if one tries to write a comprehensive manual of how to do it, it will invariably generate a four-volume monster of checklists and contingencies that no one can make either sense or use of anyway.

Explicit knowledge, on the other hand, is superbly easy to write down, to the point where it might actually be far easier just to leave it in written form and remembering where to find it, rather than memorising it as a whole. It deals with “knowing that” something is true, which generally means dealing with facts and logical conclusions from these facts. That is not to say that tacit and explicit knowledge might not overlap in that they can provide the same answers, but

2 Cf. Gourlay (2006), Collier (2006), Kakabadse *et al.* (2003), and compare with the use in Sadra & Thagard (2003), who deal with microbiology, and Abelson & Sussman (1986; & Sussman 1996), who discuss computer science. Abelson, Sussman & Sussman, in particular, present an interesting point of comparison due to a parallel with Polanyi’s definition of knowledge as a process. In computer science, “knowing that” is often labelled ‘declarative knowledge’ and is defined as given data, whereas “knowing how” is labelled ‘imperative knowledge’ and is the a process that generates a result. Here, too, it can be difficult to determine from the outside whether any particular result came from declarative or imperative knowledge. It is not until we analyse the process behind that result (if one exists at all) that we can tell the two apart.

they will do so in radically different ways. Simple multiplication, for instance, can easily be expressed in both forms: you know your multiplication table (explicit knowledge), so you know that $5 \times 5 = 25$, or you know that multiplication is a process of successive addition (tacit knowledge), so you perform the calculation $5 \times 5 = 5 + 5 + 5 + 5 + 5 = 25$. In both cases, the end result is the same, but the ways getting to that result are radically different. The difference between the two can similarly be described as the difference between *knowing the ingredients* and step-by-step instructions of a cake recipe, and *being able to bake* a cake. In terms of organisational knowledge, the difference could rather be expressed as the difference between having an accounting department (explicit knowledge: their roles and practices are documented, and they can easily be moved around on the organisational charts) and actually being able to keep the books in order (tacit knowledge: only through years of experience have they learned to make sense of the Byzantine mess of incoming and outgoing bills and not be charged with accounting fraud in the process).

So when it comes to the issue of transferring knowledge, there is a problem: only certain pieces of knowledge can be easily exchanged, and quite often, the really difficult questions can only be answered through the means of tacit knowledge – the kind of knowledge that will not easily lend itself to transfer. This is where the knowledge management literature steps in to offer its solutions. It is, in essence a field of study that concerns itself with how it is possible to ensure and control the flows of knowledge within organisations. In particular, it takes an interest in how to short-circuit the transfer of tacit knowledge by converting it to explicit knowledge that can be transferred easily, rather than having to spend years in apprenticeship.

2.3.2 *Managing knowledge transfer: the SECI process*

The conversion back and forth between tacit and explicit knowledge was the core subject of Nonaka & Takeuchi's (1995) study that more or less kick-started the entire KM field. As mentioned, the idea is to short-circuit the normally very slow transfer of tacit knowledge by trying to use explicit (and thus easily transferable) knowledge as a conduit for this transfer. However, this is still not a matter of composing the aforementioned tomes of mystic lore, but rather *a managed social interaction* between the knowledge-holder and the recipient. As an example, the authors used a number of cases where manual tasks had to be automated in order to create new technological appliances, which meant that the designers and engineers had to absorb key knowledge from the craftsmen currently doing the job. This had to be done within the time frame of a normal product cycle: a matter months, of which only a part was allotted to the actual design phase.

What Nonaka & Takeuchi had noted was that companies that were successful at this kind of transfer of manual labour skills to automation employed a very specific methodology to capture key components of the fundamental skills required for the job. The authors conceptualised this in the form of the SECI process – an iterative cycle of articulating, discussing, and assimilating knowledge in four separate steps. Figure 3 (Koraeus 2008, reproduced from Nonaka & Takeuchi 1995) illustrates the sequence of these four steps: Socialisation, Externalisation, Combination, and Internalisation. This process is a back-and-forth between tacit and explicit knowledge, as well as a back-and-forth between group- and individual processing of the knowledge that is being exchanged. At each step of the way, the individuals involved take away a new aspect of this knowledge from the process, and the goal is to come out at the other end with (as near as) full operational knowledge about the skill being taught. It should be noted, however, that while it is most commonly illustrated as a cycle with no particular beginning or end, later publications held that the practical application of the process was better formulated as a spiral of diminishing returns that continuously edged closer to this “full” knowledge but which was generally halted after a few iterations, when the additional gain from going another full cycle became too small (Nonaka & Toyama 2003; Nonaka, von Krogh & Voelpel 2006).

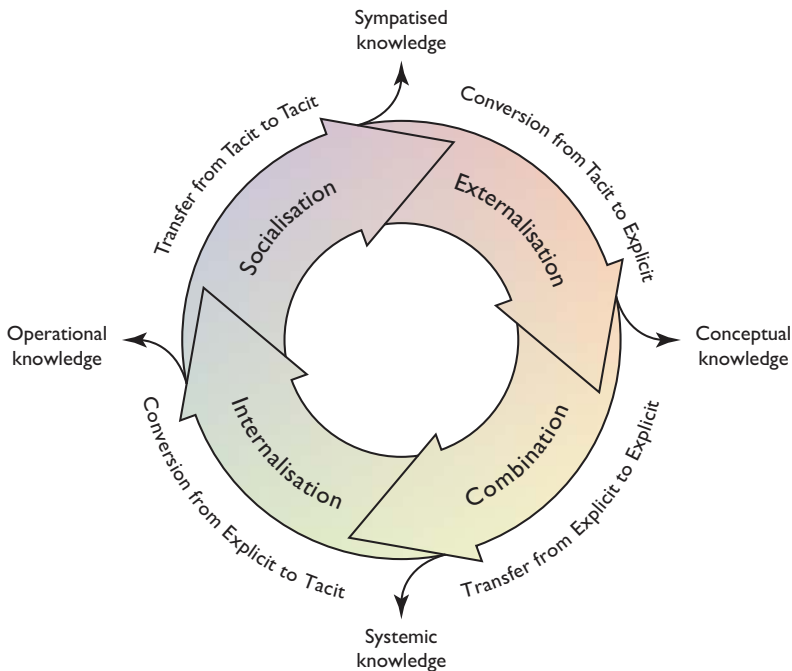


Figure 3: The SECI process

Of course, this model is not without its flaws, and over the decade and a half that it has existed, it has received its fair share of criticism. Perhaps the most damning of it all comes in part from the original architects: Nonaka, von Krogh & Voelpel (2006) express some dismay over the fact that, while it has proven useful enough, very little is actually known about the cognitive and social processes that make these transformations work. Shariq (1999) offers the rudiments of a theory on the nature of these conversions, but also notes along with Cauvel & Despres (2002) and Tsoukas (2003) that the conversion is far from perfect. Some ideas simply cannot be converted from tacit to explicit or vice versa, and some information will be lost in the process. Then again, given the definition of knowledge, which holds that it is a subjective skill or art form or process, this might not come as a complete surprise. Being subjective also means, almost by default, that the exact same knowledge is thoroughly unlikely to exist in two different knowledge holders. Even so, its critics do not rob the SECI process, much less KM as a whole, of the promise that knowledge – not even that elusive tacit knowledge – can be transferred, and that there are shortcuts and heuristics for doing so. It simply comes with a couple of caveats, such as a high risk of making a less than perfect copy, and that exactly to which extent it can actually be managed still remains a largely unanswered question.

So what implications does this have for organisations? To begin with, it completely rejects any preconception that might exist about the locus of ‘expertise.’ We are no longer discussing the classic image of an ivory-tower academic who has claimed the title of expert by researching the topic for the last few decades and who can refer us to his or her ample collection of treatises on the subject. Instead, the expert is someone – *anyone* – who has the appropriate applicable knowledge, which might just as well be a seasoned practitioner, whose knowledge is almost entirely of a tacit nature. This means that an organisation that at some point might require external expertise to solve its problems will also need methods and procedures along the lines of the SECI process in order to be able to extract this much-needed knowledge. The only alternative is to spend vast amounts of resources – in particular time – on educating members of the organisation to the point where they themselves become experts. If the need proves to be constant, or at least commonly reoccurring, this might be part of the organisational learning process, and sooner or later, the expertise of the organisation is restored. However, if the knowledge need is rare or unique for the one particular situation the organisation finds itself in, this approach will not only be prohibitively costly, but will most likely not yield any useful results until long after the need for the knowledge has disappeared. Instead, SECI-style “instant learning” processes are required to get the most out of the knowledge sources that can be found, unless the organisation is willing to limit itself to just acquiring explicit knowledge.

This might seem like an acceptable concession, but the problem is that the explicit knowledge might not be enough. Certainly, anyone can read, and probably even learn by heart, the facts and theory and analytical tools that come from the

forementioned academic treatises, but without the skill to make use of them, they are of little value. We essentially come back to the distinction between knowing the cake recipe and knowing how to make the cake. In other words, being able to absorb knowledge in all its forms is in and of itself a piece of organisational knowledge that is critical to maintain, so here is the first partial answer to the question posed earlier: how do we expand our knowledge to include a solution? The first requirement is to have the capacity to accept all kinds of knowledge, and while it may be flawed, the SECI process proves that such a capacity *can* be obtained. The quest for external expertise is not in vain.

What it does not answer, however, is how to provide that capacity with some input; how to find the locus of knowledge? Or, for that matter, how to figure out exactly what kind of knowledge is needed? What are the holes that need to be plugged? For this, we have to turn to the process of knowledge discovery.

2.3.3 *Managing knowledge discovery: MESO-knowledge*

The KM literature has quite a lot to say on the topic of discovering and incorporating external knowledge – or ‘sourcing’ and ‘grafting’ knowledge, as Huber (1991) labels it. It also mentions a number of tried and tested methodologies to discover knowledge gaps, as well as unexpected treasure troves of knowledge within the existing organisation, that have been used since long before knowledge management was conceptualised (for example, knowledge audits, cf. Alavi & Tiwana 2003; Huber 1991; McNabb 2007; Rose 1993).

What this literature does not mention, however is what these audits result in, which is a fairly surprising oversight considering that the topic of the research is the varying nature and use of knowledge. Digging deeper into what the many authors actually are suggesting (cf. Koraeus 2007; 2008), a clear pattern emerges that, what is actually going on, is the creation of a very particular kind of knowledge: a kind reflexive awareness and understanding not only of the organisation’s own capability, but also of how it is situated in a larger expert environment and of how other inhabitants of that environment in turn are situated. This, in essence, is the hitherto unexplained but often mentioned concept of MESO-knowledge.

The observation starts with what might somewhat cruelly be called the *obsession* the KM literature has with describing the needs, conditions, and requirements of so-called *knowledge workers*, as well as the gains that stand to be made by having good ones (cf. Carneiro 2001; Zellner & Fornahl 2002; Wiig 2002; McNabb 2007). A knowledge worker, in the simplest terms, is a person that adds value to data, information or knowledge; they are the ones that perform the successive refinement and embedding discussed earlier, and they are the ones that keep track of who knows what so that this knowledge can be called upon when needed. A consistent track in these descriptions is that knowledge workers need to keep track of three main focus areas: the organisation’s own resources and needs; the

resources and needs of similar actors within the same general arena, and the extended network of both the own organisation and of those similar actors.

The most commonly proposed way of gaining and maintaining this knowledge is the establishment of ‘Communities of Practice’ (CoPs), where groups sharing common issues and problems can get together to learn from each other and gain access to the pooled competences of everyone invited, including some knowledge that is only tangentially connected to their every-day operations, but which might prove to come in handy some day (Brown & Duguid 1991; Holmqvist 2003; Huysman 2000; Lindkvist 2005; McNabb 2007; Zellner & Fornahl 2002). If this sounds like the ideal (and possibly idealised) solution the previously mentioned “identification paradox” and the problem of not understanding what it is you do not understand, it should not come as a great surprise. That is the entire purpose of the CoP.

The idea of the identification paradox was described briefly at the head of the chapter, but it is perhaps *the* central problem in the use of external expertise and needs to be explained in bit more detail. The identification paradox is what occurs when you are faced with something unknown and are unable to come to an understanding of what it is because your lack of knowledge means you are not even able to identify what it is you need to ask about in order to get more knowledge. All you have is your own assumptions and guesses, which may lead you to ask the wrong questions to the wrong people and end up with an explanation that is anywhere from completely false to true, but not relevant to the actual issue. Even if, by lucky guess or pure chance, you manage to ask the right person, you might not ask the right questions and thus not get any kind of useful answer because you are unaware of and unable to convey the specifics that the expert needs in order to tailor their answer to your needs. Communities of practice attempt to solve this problem by congregating people who have a common area of interest or concern, but who have different perspectives, needs, and levels of expertise in the many fields that are connected to this area of interest. It is not there to make everyone experts at everything, but to rather to show what facets there are of this common issue area, and to familiarise the participants to the many fields of expertise that can offer some insight into the panoply of questions that might arise.

But what is actually going on here? For one, it is very clearly an arena for the aforementioned SECI process, whereby organisations (or at least their representatives) can be socialised and combine their ideas and hopefully come away with some new knowledge that is of particular relevance to them. But more importantly, what they are doing is building a cognitive imprint of themselves. They are getting to know what they know and don’t know. It is this particular knowledge, knowing what you know, and by extension, knowing what you don’t know, that I have chosen to call *meta-knowledge* – the ‘M’ in MESO. This is the first step in the process of discovering, or sourcing, knowledge, not just because it gives you a sense of what gaps there might be that need to be filled, but also

because it creates a clear picture of what you have to trade with. What can you offer others who discover that they have knowledge gaps that also need to be bridged? Meta-knowledge can also extend to other organisations, and thus to an understanding of their gaps and needs, as well as what they have to offer, which lets you predict what issues they might have and how you can help them. In the same vein as connecting tacit knowledge with the idea of “knowing how” and explicit knowledge with “knowing that”, meta-knowledge can be expressed in terms of “knowing *why*.” It essentially lets you know why some particular piece of information or bit of knowledge is needed and/or why something you know might be valuable to someone else.

This “someone else” is the object of a second type of knowledge that is being generated through the SECI-process. This time, it is a matter of “knowing who” – specifically knowing who possesses some particular expertise or who is in need of whatever information you have just uncovered. This is the ‘E’ in MESO: what I have chosen to call *empathic knowledge*. It is in essence a form of meta-knowledge that covers other people rather than oneself. This is often a second step in the sourcing of knowledge. While your meta-knowledge tells that something is missing and that you have important information to convey, empathic knowledge tells you whom to barter with and what they will want (and need) in return. Another critical component to empathic knowledge is the understanding of the other party’s knowledge gaps, in particular in the areas you know intimately and almost intuitively.

The final part, and the last two letters, in MESO-knowledge is the concept I have named *second-order knowledge*, or *deutero-knowledge*, in an explicit echo of the notion of second-order/deutero-learning described in the organisational learning literature. Just as second-order learning is described as “learning how to learn” (that is, understanding and embracing the processes by which the organisation can adapt to a changing environment) second-order *knowledge* is “knowing how to know more”. It may lack the pithiness of earlier descriptions such as “knowing how” vs. “knowing that” and the “knowing why and who” of meta-knowledge and empathic knowledge, but it is also an altogether much more complex concept. Fundamentally, it is the core concern and ultimate goal of the SECI process and, I daresay, of knowledge management as a whole.

Second-order knowledge, then, effectively entails the ability to get out of the identification paradox. It is the process of combining and refining pretty much all the previous knowledge types to answer the question of where to go next; the ability to formulate useful questions on topics where the current knowledge is negligible; and the ability to transform the answers into the kind of “actionable knowledge” that sits at the heart of Polanyi’s original definition. In other words, it means first having an understanding of what gaps there are in the current knowledge base (meta-knowledge), then knowing who might be able to provide an answer or, if not, who know *someone else* that might point you in the right direction (empathic knowledge), and finally knowing how to explain your gaps

in such a way that the respondent can provide answers that are relevant to you and that you can understand. To use the analogy of a classic jigsaw puzzle: if meta-knowledge and empathic knowledge are the puzzle-solvers ability to recognise certain patterns – the role of corner and edge pieces, large patches of similarly-coloured tiles and so on – and the strategies for clustering these pieces into relevant piles so they can be found quickly later, then second-order knowledge is the puzzle-layer's ability to juggle all these sources of information at once and actually solve the puzzle. Just as how differentiating between tacit and explicit knowledge lets us separate reading a recipe and making the cake, the MESO-knowledge perspective lets us differentiate between the mechanical separation and categorisation of puzzle pieces from the process of putting them back together to form a coherent picture. In a sense, second-order knowledge is the ability to have an open mind full of pieces that may end up fitting together in very surprising and unexpected ways.

It is entirely possible for an entity to be very good at one of these things and not the other, and the organisational knowledge literature provides numerous artefacts of this kind of disconnect in the form of fantasy documents and superstitious learning (*cf.* Clarke 1999; Birkland 2006). There is ample empirical and theoretical evidence of organisations that are very good at taking inventory over assets and liabilities as far as intellectual capital goes, but who are seemingly incapable of actually doing anything with this information. Perhaps more rare is the opposite: organisations that are very good at making use of what they have in new and interesting ways, but who are, from one day to the next, very unreliable in terms of what they seem to have at their disposal. Such an organisation would be creative, but would also *have to be* because old discoveries are never recorded and reused, so every attempt at solving a problem would have to go through the same process of trial and error.

2.3.4 *Benefits of a MESO perspective over other theories*

At this point, the reader might ask why this new concept is needed – does deutero-learning not cover the same idea? Only in the sense that we are talking about filling capability gaps. What MESO-knowledge lets us do is to formalise the different stages and methods for doing so, even outside of a learning context. The learning literature generally focuses on the changes (or non-changes) that happen in response to events or changes in the environment. It is a reactive and often long-winded process. What this thesis tries to conceptualise, on the other hand, is a far more proactive, introspective, and very quick process where knowledge gaps are continuously identified and addressed as they arise.

MESO-knowledge also lets us take a different view on knowledge management as a whole. While KM has its roots in the crucial differences between tacit and explicit knowledge and the difficulties in expressing one in the form of the other, the field as a whole has effectively overlooked the cogs in the machinery

it builds, focusing instead on the input and output of that machinery. The KM literature talks about encapsulating, encoding and transferring knowledge, but surprisingly little about why anyone would go about doing so. The implicit assumption is that you want to know more – especially about things that cannot be properly described in words alone – and that the SECI process helps with achieving that goal. The questions of *why* you would want to learn more, about *what*, and how to put the SECI wheel in motion are largely left unanswered. The three MESO-knowledge types allow us to answer those questions. We want to know more because our meta-knowledge has allowed us to identify a critical gap. Or empathic knowledge has identified someone who can help us with this problem, and our meta-knowledge has also provided us with a bargaining chip to trade against this help. Our empathic knowledge thus also helps us set up the social context within which the SECI process can begin to function. Our second-order knowledge, finally, is crucial for our ability to both externalise our concerns and internalise the answers – specifically to see if they actually fill the gaps we have previously identified.

That is not to say that the MESO-knowledge concept in any way competes with or obsolesces any of the ideas in the KM literature. Quite the opposite, they are all of critical importance for understanding and enabling the actual knowledge transfer. Instead, it provides a context for why this is at all important to begin with. The main concern here is that, while we can identify gaps in our knowledge, those gaps also prevent us from filling them on our own accord without going through the time-consuming process of actually becoming subject-matter experts ourselves. Instead, the goal is to be able to communicate those *supremely* tacit gaps to the person who is going to help us fill them in.

This perspective also allows us to put a different slant on a number of common concepts in organisational theory. For instance, the new knowledge types provides us with a source and an admittedly still unformed locus for multiple advocacy, which is often brought forward as a critical component in group-based decision-making processes (*cf.* Fischer 1990; Friedman & Berthoin Antal 2005; George 1997; Gusfield 1979; 't Hart 1997; Janis 1982; Vertzberger 1990). On the one hand, we can conceptualise multiple advocacy as a result of good meta-knowledge: as a problem arises, the organisation is able to parse the issue from multiple perspectives and offer different interpretations, including that the problem does not actually fit any previously known framing. In KM parlance, the advocates become knowledge workers who have access to the data, information, personal contacts and networks, and also to the prevailing perception of the organisation that seems relevant to the issue at hand. While there will be overlaps, the meta-knowledge and the empathic knowledge they each have will be slightly different and thus yield different solutions when subject to the second-order-knowing process.

Reciprocally, that literature offers some insight into where this elusive second-order knowledge might be embedded. Authors such as Thomas Preston

(1999; *cf.* Preston & 't Hard 1999), who focus on leadership styles, will point us towards an interpretation where it is the product of the leader's individual cognition and problem-solving methodology. Questioning obvious and immediate answers will spur the kind of deeper search and the re-evaluation of the questions themselves that sit at the heart of SO-knowledge. Allison & Zelikow (1972; 1999), on the other hand, would rather lead us to examine the idea from the viewpoint of their type-iii model of group decision-making. Here, the advisors involved compete to provide the "best solution," to a problem. This competition becomes the driving force that ensures that gaps are being examined, and that all available knowledge networks are squeezed for every last drop of relevant knowledge. The organisation's SO-knowledge would then be embedded in this informal competition.

Of course, as always and as the literature on the subject is quick to point out, one should not assume that this kind of knowledge-seeking process always takes place. As Janis (1972; 1982) points out, the group context is often prone to various pathologies that inhibit the investigations of new ideas and solutions. In fact, and speaking directly to the main thrust of this thesis, close-mindedness is mentioned as his "Type II" category of symptoms of group-think. From a MESO-perspective, many of those symptoms can be seen as inadequate meta-knowledge, empathic knowledge, or second-order knowledge. The symptom of rationalisation – that is, ignoring signals that go counter to previous held beliefs – can be recast as a lack of meta-knowledge, since those gaps are not being addressed. Stereotyping is a clear case of lacking empathic knowledge: unfounded presumptions about other parties' abilities, wants, and needs. Self-censorship and assumptions of unanimity are failures of both empathic and second-order knowledge since they entail not wanting to question what other people seem to believe. The various forms of pressure to conform, both internalised and externalised, are best cast as failures of meta knowledge since it entails people actively preventing the group from taking a full inventory of the available expertise, and the same goes for Janis' Type-I symptom of overconfidence, where gaps in the group's capacity to do the right thing are outright inconceivable. The same kind of characterisations can be made of many of the expanded group pathologies that have been described in more recent literature (*cf.* 't Hart, Stern & Sundelius 1997; Stern 1997).

It should be noted, though, that we are only really talking about a different categorisation of the symptoms rather than a redefinition of their exact nature of those symptoms. The various group-think processes happen on an individual level whereas MESO-knowledge – or more likely the lack thereof – is an output of those processes. In essence, the organisational knowledge angle lets us answer the question of "what went wrong?," whereas the group psychology angle answers the question of "why did it go wrong in that particular way?"

At the same time, it is important to note that both the organisational knowledge and the political psychology literature converge on this particular problem spot. The concept of "mind-guards" (Janis 1982; Stern 1997; Vertzberger 1990) as

inhibitors of free inquiry in decision-making processes has become a mainstay in the latter field, but has also found its way into the knowledge-management literature (*cf.* Nonaka & Takeuchi 1995; Riggs Fuller & Aldag 1997). Here, however, it has since become recast as an inherent issue with knowledge workers. While they are more commonly described as the ones who refine and add value to information to turn it into actionable knowledge, a part of the knowledge worker's task is to filter out irrelevant information and only present the worthwhile bits for further consideration. This means they act as gatekeepers for all knowledge flowing into the decision-making process (Fox 2000; Huysman 2000; Rashman & Hartley 2002; Rynes, Bartunek & Daft 2001; Chua & Lam 2005), and this filtering can easily become a systematic error that enforces a uniform perception on the world – the end result being very similar to the stereotyping and mind-guarding that leads to group-think.

This is why the knowledge management literature often stresses the importance of Communities of Practice: to enforce and institutionalise the process of seeking alternate outside viewpoints that offer differing opinions on what should and should not be filtered (McNabb 2007). Since the MESO-knowledge perspective is derived from that literature, it is perhaps not surprising that the use of some form of CoPs also forms the basis for the empathic knowledge component and act as a prerequisite for having good second-order knowledge. After all, if you have nowhere to go with your questions about new and unfamiliar concepts, all that is left is fumbling in the dark and hoping to find some dim ray of light to provide at least a shred of illumination. These communities provide the arenas for exchanging ideas and for gathering all those “others” that you have empathic knowledge of. On a purely semantic level, it is important to note that the literature calls them Communities of *Practice*, specifically, since the idea is that they are gathered around similar issues of practical and technical expertise. This sets them apart from the fairly closely related concept of epistemic communities (Haas 1992; Reinalda & Verbeek 1998), which are rather characterised by shared beliefs and norms, even though shared policy practices are often a part of the community as well. In theory, at least, CoPs can benefit from *not* being quite as normatively uniform since that would offer even more variety of viewpoints, but in practice, it is probably more likely that CoPs will arise as sub-groups in pre-existing epistemic communities. The exact process of formation of these groups is beyond the scope of this thesis, however, so for now, that hypothesis will have to be left untested. Suffice to say that without some kind of community focused on similar problems of a practical nature, the empathic knowledge – and consequently the second-order knowledge – of an organisation is left severely hampered by very definition. There are some normative consequences of this that will be discussed in the methodology chapter.

2.4 Towards a hypothesis on organisational behaviour

So knowledge of yourself, of others, and of how to make use of those components in some larger network of knowing things is an interesting abstraction. But how does it help us understand organisational behaviour under stress? To begin with, let us reiterate that point from Janis: that closed-mindedness is a symptom of group-think, which raises the question of what happens if close-mindedness is an organisation-wide trait. Let us also reiterate the ideal-type characteristics of a closed organisation: regulations, rigidity, and consistency. What should be abundantly clear by now is that while MESO-knowledge might be subject to regulations, its very goal is to escape from rigidity and to provide solutions that are specifically suited for the given situation. Rather, the MESO-knowledge ideal is more in line with what characterises an open organisation: informality, flexibility, and the ability dynamically adjust to unforeseen problems.

That is in and of itself an interesting observation. We now have some kind of metrics to look for when studying organisations in order to characterise them as open or closed: do they exhibit the skilful use of (at least parts of) MESO-knowledge? This knowledge classification has also some value of its own in that it takes a broader perspective on the entire knowledge management literature. Instead of falling into the same trap of only looking at tacit and explicit knowledge, the last section used that very same literature as a basis for asking the more fundamental question of why anyone would go through all the trouble of trying to transform tacit knowledge into explicit or vice versa. What are the driving forces behind the SECI process and the creation of communities of practice? The answer is that it that they satisfy an implicit need to enhance an organisation's MESO-knowledge, in whole or in part.

This explanation from curiosity also ties well into the notion of open and closed organisations. A closed organisation wants consistency and chasing after every whim is not a productive endeavour from this point of view. In fact, trying to be creative could under many circumstances be considered directly harmful. Airline passengers would probably prefer that the pilots followed the prescribed checklist to determine the status and the appropriate settings for the flaps and fuel flow rather than wing it every time, perhaps by calling a friend to quiz them on favourite cockpit switch setting patterns, even if that friend also happens to be a pilot. The engineers at a nuclear power plant are presumably better off following the manual for correct emergency shut-down procedures rather than consulting their book circle, even though this month's reading happened to be a book on power plant design. Conversely, when the checklist ends and has failed to yield the desired result, it might be worth considering new and bold solutions. A second or third attempt could perhaps show that one crucial step was missed by accident, but as the popular saying goes, trying the same thing over and over and expecting a different result is a definition of insanity. In a time-critical situation, in particular, something quicker than doing everything all over again for a fourth or fifth time might be called for, and as research has

shown. Contrary to popular belief, adding more components can actually speed up the process of finding a useful solution (*cf.* Comfort, Ko & Zagorecki 2004). So there may be times where experimentation and flights of fancy will yield interesting and important results, but there are also times where a strict closed behaviour is highly preferable.

But saying that there is a time and a place for both open and closed behaviour comes with the suggestion that maybe it is possible to alternate between the two states, or at least move away from one extreme and – even ever so slightly – closer to the other. More importantly, it also means that MESO usage is perhaps not as clear-cut as it has been described up to this point. Openness and closed-ness are opposite ends of an ideal-type spectrum and most organisations will find themselves on a sliding scale somewhere in-between. If the ability to exhibit MESO-knowledge is a function of an organisation's degree of openness, then that ability will itself exist in degrees. Moreover, if the degree of openness in an organisation is subject to variations depending on some particular factor, then the MESO usage will as a result also vary depending on that factor – a possibility that is of crucial importance for the overall outcome of the model described at the beginning of this chapter.

Out of necessity, the concepts in this section have to be described before we can start addressing the other pieces of the large puzzle this thesis attempts to tackle since they are key concepts for the thesis as a whole. While we could certainly return to this matter later, we might as well get the important part out of the way while the details are still in fresh memory. Thus, beginning at the end by looking at the final output of the process, we have arrived at the third of the hypotheses posited in the introductory chapter:

Hypothesis iii: The degree to which an organisation is open or closed decides how well and how willingly an organisation makes use of external knowledge. An organisation that moves towards increased closed-ness will thus increasingly lose its ability to apply its MESO-knowledge.

There is one immediate problem with this hypothesis, which is that it means that, at least momentarily, we have to separate the measuring of openness and closed-ness from the measuring of MESO-knowledge use. Even though the MESO perspective proposes to offer a means of detecting open and closed behaviour, that particular implication has yet to be proven. Instead, we will initially have to rely on the ideal type described earlier in the chapter and contrast that against the description of the various knowledge types developed in the previous section. The exact indicators for both of these will be part of the topic of chapter 3. Meanwhile, we still have to conceptualise the different factors that could make an organisation slide up and down the scale of openness and closed-ness.

2.5 Input #1: the effect of crises on organisations

The first factor that this thesis will take into consideration is the context of a crisis. For the purpose of this analysis, the notion of a crisis will be borrowed from Boin et al. (2005, 2017), who offer a subjective definition based on a *sense of urgency*; a *feeling of uncertainty*, either about the nature of the situation or about the possible outcomes of the available strategies; and a *perceived threat to critical values*, in particular where there are value conflicts and one thing has to be sacrificed to save another. All of these are based on the perception of whomever is struck by the crisis. This means that one person’s daily grind may be another person’s crisis, so the question will always be *whose* crisis we are actually talking about. In particular, it means that the decision-makers involved may not judge an incident as an actual crisis, and their perception may come in direct conflict with the perception of the people they are deciding over. It also means that the exact same decision makers facing the exact same situation may switch perception from one moment to the next, seeing crises where they previously did not or no longer thinking of incident as a crisis.

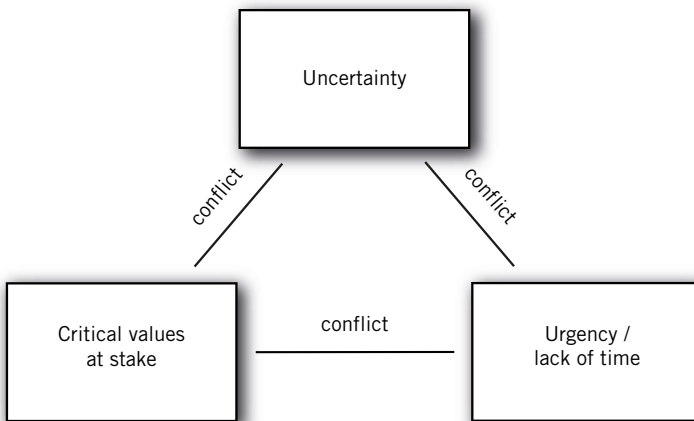


Figure 4: Components of a crisis

Generally, only one of these three components needs to vanish or be resolved in order for the entire crisis to go away. This is because of the inherent conflicts and tension between them that only really exist if all three are present. If there is no time pressure, it is entirely possible to explore various options and solutions and thus resolve any uncertainty or ambiguity in what is going on or in what the consequences might be if a particular path is chosen. If there is no uncertainty, then the correct decision is already clear and the time pressure is no longer a constraint for reaching that decision. If no critical values are at stake, then it not really a crisis but rather some minor nuisance – even a “wrong” decision or one that arrives a bit too late will have no greater impact.

At the same time, it is important to note a latent problematic consequence of this definition, and that is the decision-maker's ability to create a crisis out of thin air, purely as a consequence of being ill-informed. This means that the identification paradox now takes on a whole new aspect that is potentially much more problematic than what has previously been discussed. Whereas the earlier section described the identification paradox from the perspective of being stuck in a mode where the nature of a problem is forever impossible to understand, this definition creates the possibility for that paradox to appear from nowhere and to generate a full-blown crisis as a result. Or, to tone down the doom slightly, it allows for the possibility that a crisis might be made much worse than it otherwise should be, simply because it generates confounding questions that eat away at the already precious time available. The inability to properly identify the actual problem causes in and of itself a confusion about what needs to be done. Is it more important to get a clearer picture or to start trying to solve the pieces of the puzzle that (seemingly) *can* be identified? How soon does one need a definitive answer to what is really going on? Problem identification thus becomes perceived as *yet another* critical value at stake and has to be resolved in conflict with more tangible uncertainties and urgent matters.

This kind of trilateral conflict between different facets of a problem is very similar to the dilemmas George (1993) set up for policy- and decision-making. Each such decision is a balancing act where trade-offs have to be made between the quality of the decision, the management of resources, and the acceptability of the proposal. In other words, a (subjectively) excellent proposal is likely to take a lot of time and money to develop and is likely to come under fierce attack from other actors in the decision- or policy-making sphere. A very quick decision will not be of high quality and will also not receive any time to "sell" it to constituents or other policy-makers. A completely consensus-based decision will evoke the old joke of camels and committee-based horse designs, and will require a lot of time to receive everyone's input.

Again, if only one of these components becomes a non-issue, the remaining dilemmas largely go away as well, although perhaps not as completely as in the case of removing one of the legs of a crisis. If, for instance, there is already complete consensus, no time needs to be spent on building any more and the time saved can be put towards generating a higher-quality decision, or just not spent at all, since everyone seems to agree that it is satisfactory in its current state.

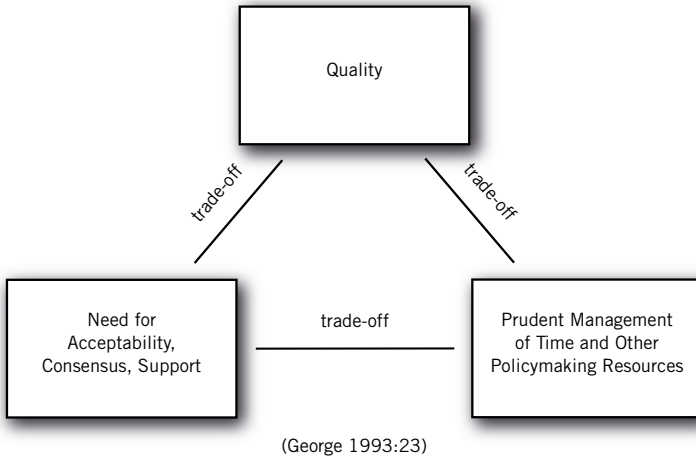


Figure 5: Trade-off dilemmas in evaluation

While each leg of these two trilemmas are subject to closer scrutiny and attempts at resolving the conflicts connected to them, the focus of this thesis is of course on the use of knowledge, specifically to resolve issues of uncertainty and ambiguity. It is, however, worth pointing out that while this section deals with crises in particular, the same pattern of conflicting wishes exists on a larger scale and in every-day decision-making and policy-making as well. So while it may be outside the scope of this thesis, this observation points towards the usefulness of concepts such as MESO-knowledge and the identification paradox on a more general level and when dealing with a much broader spectrum of issues than is being discussed here. The side-board earlier in the chapter, illustrating the identification paradox in the example of the music industry, shows how and where this construct can be applied to understand long-term policy failures.

For the purpose of this thesis, however, we need something that describes how individuals and organisations respond to uncertainty and similar stress factors. This may seem like a rather drastic reduction of the crisis definition – only one (and maybe a half, if we allow “stress” to include time pressure) component is being used. But as previously discussed, the way Boin et al. define crises, it is somewhat an all-or-nothing deal. If one part is missing, the rest become irrelevant, and since the overarching goal is to establish a connection between outside pressure and the use of MESO-knowledge, the (non)existence of knowledge on the input end of the equation provides a neat thread to follow through the entire process. Moreover, one of the supposed advantages of having this knowledge is that it presupposes that some time has already been spent exploring and auditing existing knowledge sources, which should speed up that search in the event of a crisis and help cut down the time pressure as well.

2.5.1 *Managing uncertainty: the cybernetic approach*

One answer to this question is offered by Steinbruner (1974; 2002), who posits two modes of dealing with complexity and uncertainty in decision-making. He is quick to note that neither complexity nor uncertainty are inherent causes for indecision (Steinbruner 1974:89), but rather that they cause individuals to adopt coping strategies to eliminate the perception that those problems exist, at least in the short run. In fact, these strategies are so pervasive that they are used pretty much all the time, even for seemingly simple problems. He contrasts the *cybernetic approach*, which presupposes that there are general patterns and methods for reducing complexity into manageable chunks, with the *analytical approach*, which relies on a classic rational-actor model. While one should not read too much into the similarities, there are some clear parallels between Steinbruner's analytical approach and Allison's (1971) Model-I approach to analysing decisions, and between the cybernetic approach and Allison's Model II approach. In the latter case, both authors theorise that standardised patterns and routines explain how organisations and the individuals within them approach any given problem.

Steinbruner takes a somewhat bolder stance than Allison in his explicit rejection of the rational actor approach, though. He posits that complexity and uncertainty are too pervasive to ever allow for the full and detailed analysis that the rational actor model requires from each decision (Steinbruner 1974:65f). As such, the trade-offs between two different courses of action are impossible to determine and there would never be any basis to pick one decision over another. Not only are all options not known to the decision-maker, but the outcomes of those options are fraught with ambiguities as well. The calculating rationale that, "if I do A, then events B and C will take place, so is the combination of A, B, and C really worth it?" is impossible because the actions, events, and causal relationships cannot be distinctly and clearly dissected to level required.

So far, this all follows the logic of a more modern bounded rationality model, but what the cybernetic approach does is offer two different "tracks" for describing how the problem of eternally insufficient information is solved. Track I offers a model of people generally seeking consistency in their environment (Steinbruner 1974:90). This means a preference both in how solutions are picked and in how problems are framed. If an old method works, there is little reason to change it at a whim and problems are categorised in accordance with familiar patterns, much in line with the intuitive "mental slides" heuristic described in the naturalistic decision-making framework (*cf.* Steinbruner 1974:95; Zsombok & Klein 1997). Operating within this track means that uncertainty is dealt with by returning to what you already know and are familiar with. While both the solutions and the problem framing can certainly change, it is a fairly burdensome process – preferably done in increments – where the assumptions that guide the problem-solving are slowly changed to be consistent with reality until reality stop feeding "inconsistent" input into the decision-making process. The charac-

teristics of this process very much echo Argyris & Shön's (1978; 1996) notion of second-order learning, where the important change lies in the framing of a problem, which in turn generates new problem-solving methods, rather than in those methods in and of themselves.

The behaviour expected from this track is one of choosing the "path of least inconsistency" (Steinbruner 1974:106). Trade-offs between pre-existing solutions are preferably avoided altogether, since they violate the spirit of consistency that the decision-maker seeks, but on the other hand, the complex nature of most issues prohibits the kind of detailed breakdown that would allow these trade-offs to be properly evaluated, so the final course of action will never stray very far from a solution that has already been established in the past to begin with. Instead of trying to figure out new possible framings for the problem, the decision-making process will focus on the details that can be reliably and positively identified, on previous experiences, and on a reliance on an intuitive version of Occam's razor. If I observe familiar details, the simple solution is to do what I have always done when faced with those details, especially if doing so has produced consistent and predictable results in the past.

In other words, out of the chaos of uncertainty, familiar points of reference are filtered out and acted upon. This mode allows for quick and "safe" decisions based on very little information, and the reliance on memory, simplicity, and what is perceived as "real" information causes the decision-maker to skip all the cumbersome and time-consuming value judgements on issues that are far too complex and/or unfamiliar to be handled in a fully rational manner anyway. Track I should by now be immediately familiar as a description of typical closed behaviour. Again, the preferred outcome is consistency and the guiding principle is an adherence to fairly rigid frames of reference.

This behaviour is contrasted against Track II, which describes people as "naïve scientists", essentially willing to explore new avenues, but who still make use of various heuristics to eliminate uncertainty (Steinbruner 1974:51). The expected behaviour in this track is one of a recipes-and-blueprints logic. There is a known end goal to be achieved, and the general pattern for reaching that goal is known, but there are always opportunities open for altering smaller parts, thereby hopefully improving the end product. Instead of the slow process of altering core assumptions, this exploration relies on short feedback cycles where some detail is altered and then some larger portion of the whole scheme is tested to see if there was an improved outcome. The process is still not entirely premeditated – the complexity and ambiguity of the intricate details are still too large to allow for calculations on the outcome, so this kind of continuous adaptation is effectively based on small-scale trial and error. The logic behind the exploration is entirely instrumental, rather than causal. If it works, it is adopted and if not, it is rejected, but neither outcome can be predicted beforehand.

This is much closer to an open behaviour: the guiding principle is a flexibility in the problem-solving process and the outcome is a constant dynamism

in evaluating and exploring different problems and solutions. So far so good, but here the cybernetic approach delivers a worrying reminder. This track still presupposes that heuristics are used to deal with uncertainty – and that what the exploration entails is essentially a way of keeping the uncertainty at manageable levels above what is already certain. The process effectively creates a smattering of pre-existing and tested solutions, but there is no guarantee that these solutions will actually be captured, encapsulated, and institutionalised in the organisation as a whole unless there is a good reason to do so or there are processes in place to harvest these yet-to-be-useful solutions.

The practical effect of this is that Tack-II behaviour can quickly fall back on Track-I behaviour if the acceptable level of uncertainty drops low enough. The exact level of uncertainty that is allowed in these explorations is never really quantified, but it covers everything in what is assumed to be a very complex and chaotic system where even small changes can have large – and almost by definition unforeseen – consequences. The main difference between the two tracks is that Track I deals with known quantities of uncertainty by filtering out what has previously been assessed as useless information, whereas Track II allows for additional uncertainty from which new filters can be generated (but only if a need for such an updated filter can be discovered at the same time).

So what happens if we add crises to the mix? For one, the amount of additional uncertainty and ambiguity sky-rockets. Also, unpredictable outcomes become far less acceptable – the goal of crisis management is to de-escalate the crisis and return to some semblance of a *status quo ante*, so anything that deviates from this end-state is highly undesirable. The combinations of these two facts may not matter much to the Track-I mode of decision-making, but it makes a huge difference for Track II. Again, while the actual level of acceptable uncertainty is left unmentioned in Steinbruner's theory, the budget allotment for pure exploration is cut into by the inherent uncertainty of the crisis itself, and some uncertainties as far as the end-result of potential explorations are now nigh on unacceptable. This is, in short, not the time to casually try something new the way one would in every-day behaviour, but rather to return to a known position which at least offers *some* insurance, if ever so slight, of a predictable outcome. If the Track-I behaviour can be characterised as essentially closed and the Track-II behaviour as essentially open, the addition of a crisis to an already complex system causes the Track-II behaviour to retreat back, partially or in whole, towards a more closed Track-I-like behaviour. And so we arrive at a hypothesis for the first link in the proposed model of organisational behaviour:

Hypothesis i: Organisations will fall back on well-known problem-solving procedures when subjected to stress. Crises will thus push organisations towards a more closed behaviour.

Just as was the case with Hypothesis iii described in the previous section, the way in which we arrived at this hypothesis – specifically the choice of theory

– will have some methodological implications that will be described in more detail in chapter 3. Moreover, it would be intellectually dishonest to discard the cybernetic paradigm just because it has fulfilled its purpose of driving a point without returning to and re-evaluating some of the core assumptions once we have a firmer grasp of the impact of knowledge management techniques on the crucial factor of uncertainty. As mentioned at the beginning of this section, there is an interesting crux of mixing the ability (or lack thereof) to manipulate the amount of available knowledge with a concept that so much hinges on exactly how much knowledge is available. Both the crisis definition and the characteristics of the cybernetic tracks warrants a revisit in Chapter 8 alongside the other concluding remarks.

2.6 Input #2: the anticipation of process.

The second factor that might influence the degree of organisational openness or closed-ness that this thesis will study closer is the organisation's expectations of a formal work-order for its every-day business. Far less a subject of theory and scholarly writing than the previous links in the chain, this concept is simply meant to capture the notion of organisations having a familiar home environment within the larger context of society as a whole. Within this environment, the organisation has developed organically to match whatever normal and institutional interaction patterns exist and is therefore not caught by surprise by the fact that some things have to be done a certain way.

Rather, the surprise comes when an organisation has to step outside of those familiar boundaries and work with actors that do not follow the same processes and/or that have a different organisational cultures that influence their behaviour. An increasingly common example of such a cultural difference and cultural shift is between agencies that belong to the societal security sector – everything from law enforcement to defence to the modern concept of homeland security. These ostensibly public organisations have a long tradition of less than public internal processes for both the operational and the analytical work they do, and as more and more agencies fall under this umbrella, and more and more societal matters become securitised, that culture of secrecy spreads. When such organisations have to co-operate with actors that *do not* share this culture (such as many ordinary public institutions), or actors that have a vastly different kind of security mindset (such as private companies that deal with lots of industrial secrets and proprietary information), the confusion about how to handle information sharing rapidly rises and leakages abound. The concept of strategic surprise (*cf.* Ansoff 1975; Handel 1984; Parker & Stern 2002, 2005) while unrelated to the kind of procedural surprise discussed here, is sometimes a practical result of these kinds of gaps. Information crucial to one party is not delivered in time or in the right format or at the right level or detail (or *at all*) and this causes decision-making failure even though everything needed was actually available.

As with crises, a key component here is uncertainty, which comes in many forms. As such, the cybernetic theory should be applicable here as well, but instead of repeating the same logic twice, let us take a more self-contained approach and look at what reasons there might be for an organisation to close up when faced with uncertainties in the problem-solving process. First of all, if rather than an *ad-hoc* arrangement between two organisations who are unfamiliar with each other, there are explicitly prescribed ways of doing things, those prescriptions may be full of ambiguities that result from assumptions from or implicit knowledge in whichever party put them on paper. Even without such ambiguities, if a process has never been used, the first time will be slow and lumbering since the steps themselves are familiar, as is the intended outcome and the relative importance of each step. Of course, at the other extreme, where everything is *ad hoc*, the ambiguity is pretty much complete and every step warrants an explanation. Either way, the temptation and safe fall-back is to say that “this is how we always do things.” In other words, to fall back to the familiar, the already regulated, and the consistent in order to get rid of any perceived ambiguities in the process. Of course, since the processes discussed here deal with the co-operation between two or more parties, any such attempt at reducing the ambiguity for one actor will *increase* it for the others, who will then respond by trying to drag the interaction back on their own terms. While some kind of equilibrium of “fair ambiguity” can certainly be reached, the process of getting there requires multiple interactions and a fair amount of time, and it is unlikely to be particularly harmonious. However, such an equilibrium would in and of itself have crossed the threshold into being an anticipated process: the parties involved know how much of their own ways they have to give up and how much the other actors give in return. A step away from the normal way of operating has already been done and has been worked into a pattern of interaction with others – the surprise factor is long gone. This does not necessarily mean that the process is fully formalised, but at least it is stable enough to allow for some consistency between each occasion it is being used.

Another cause for uncertainty is simple lack of information, not so much in the sense that good information is ultimately needed to make a decision, but in the sense that the information-sharing itself is unfamiliar and creates new questions that need to be answered. What is it the other party needs to get out of the process and how does it have to be packaged and presented in order for them to make sense of it? Even with modern information technology and a trends towards increased standardisation and interoperability, the number of schema for information is still almost on par with the number of actors. If nothing else, what one actor values as critical information may just be a footnote for another, and as information is shared back and forth, such details can easily be filtered out over and over again until the material only consists of some fairly banal least common denominator of what both parties feel is strictly necessary. This leaves the question for both parties of what has been left out and what is genuinely not available? Validating the information then becomes an additional requirement

that can take up almost as much time as just going straight to the source and gathering the information on one's own. Not filtering the information at all would be the immediately obvious solution, but this is not always possible or even practical. Information overflow is, as ever, a real concern as is the possibility of accidentally spreading private, proprietary, or otherwise sensitive information into a channel and losing control over where it ends up. This evokes a somewhat different type of closed-ness – more akin to playing one's cards close to the chest than to the original notion of a sort of organisational close-mindedness – but the effect is much the same. It causes a regression into a safe and familiar way of handling things that, paradoxically, only increases the uncertainty. The use of meta-data would be a somewhat more advanced way around the same issue, where the (possibly sensitive) information itself is not necessarily shared, but instead replaced with something that describes *what kind of* further information is available. The party that holds this information can then release further details on request and if nothing else, at least it is possible for the other actors involved to get a sense of what has been deliberately left out and what was never there to begin with.

In general, trust is yet another source of uncertainty: can the other party be trusted both to provide the information needed without withholding crucial details, and can it be trusted not to spread information unduly to some third party that should be left out of the loop? Here, too, the familiarity with the processes involved is intuitively linked to the methodology the organisation will choose to use. If the process has been proven to yield good results in the past and if the dialogue partner has a proven track-record of keeping both the work and the information shared contained, there is a far better basis for playing around with the format and perhaps expand the collaboration to new and previously untested areas than if there is no established trust and if either party cannot be certain of how the other will behave. Trust thus allows for more flexibility and informality – more openness – which yields a potential for a dynamic response to new situations, whereas a lack of trust means both parties are more likely to rely on strictly regulated and fairly rigid patterns of interaction – more closed-ness. It is worth making a clear distinction here between a trust in the collaboration partner and the work process that makes that collaboration possible, and a trust in the actual outcome. It is the former that is the more interesting factor, since it implicitly carries with it the trust that the outcome will be the best the other party could muster – both accept that, in the end, there are no guarantees and mistakes can and will be made, but no one is deliberately trying to sabotage the work or just free-ride on the efforts of others. Conversely, a lack of trust rather tends to invoke the feeling that without such guarantees, maybe it is better to forego any collaboration at all, or at least to strictly regulate what the expected outcome is supposed to be. Looking back at the defining ideal-type characteristics of opened and closed behaviour in Figure 2, the degree of trust is trivially mapped to the degree of freedom afforded for either party to deviate from the

strict, closed approach. At particularly high degrees, not even a consistent outcome might be required, although it is likely that this might lower the level of trust the next time around.

If we blur the lines between the different causal boxes and concepts of the overarching model, and introduce more complex interdependencies as far as what causes what, there is another important trust issue at hand that relates to how knowledge needs are being handled. Perhaps unsurprisingly given its name, trust is a key component in the previously described notion of empathic knowledge. Part of being able to leverage that knowledge is the ability for one actor to tell another that, no, they have actually misunderstood the issue and that there is a much better framing or explanation of what is going on. While it may seem like such differences in opinion would be a source of uncertainty, I would argue that it rather strengthens the confidence of someone who asks a question if the respondent can articulate exactly how and why the question is malformed. Trusting the other party to make such corrections in one's assumptions allows an actor to ask more bold or "stupid" questions without the fear of being ridiculed or dismissed. This, in turn, allows them to gain a better and broader understanding of the issue and allows any ambiguities to be cleared up without guesswork. In other words, if there is a familiar process of questions, counter-questions, clarifications and – *only then* – answers, one further source of uncertainty is, if not removed, then at least reduced in potency. The informality of the exchange increases, as does the flexibility in the kinds of problems that can be brought up. Such trust becomes even more important if we muddle the concepts further and also mix in the use of second-order knowledge. If someone merely acts as a knowledge broker between an organisation and a third party, trust in that broker and the processes s/he employs in finding and selecting someone who can answer the organisation's question is paramount. Otherwise, there is the sneaking suspicion that the third party will be cherry-picked or have some unknown or unwanted agenda, and that the knowledge broker is rather taking on the role of a gate-keeper who filters out far more relevant parties to unduly promote personal favourites. It then becomes a question of how far that trust and that familiarity with the process can extend, both conceptually and in practice: should it be assumed that the third party rides on the broker's coat-tails as far as both go, or are we now back to square one with this new collaboration partner as far as anticipating processes go?

So much like how we have the identification paradox where MESO-knowledge contaminates the causes of crises, there is a similar, if smaller contamination where MESO-knowledge affects how an organisation anticipates the process of working with other actors. Whereas the identification paradox very directly inflates (or deflates) the uncertainty element in a crisis, it rather acts on the trust element of process anticipation, and in both cases the relationship is such that it reinforces what is already in place. Just like how poor MESO-usage can worsen a crisis, which in turn makes an organisation close in on itself and become even

worse at using its MESO-knowledge, the same poor MESO-usage can cause trust issues, which in turn causes the organisation to close in on itself to the same result. Conversely, good usage leads to less crisis-inducing uncertainty and more trust, both of which let the organisation stay in an opened mode and keep using those MESO-knowledge skills.

However, even if we remove the cross-contamination of MESO-knowledge and trust, and indeed even if we remove trust as a whole as an issue, the problem with acting through intermediaries remains. Irrespective of whether the process has worked to satisfaction in the past, the fact remains that one more link in the chain has been added, and with it comes an external actor that implicitly gains veto power over the proceedings. This should not be perceived as any kind of assumed malice in the intermediary, but rather as a realisation that, for whatever reason, the connection can be severed outside of the control of the two parties who are talking to each other. The foreign-policy and transnational domain is a particularly clear example of this phenomenon in that domestic agencies often have to go through the national foreign office to conduct business abroad, and even if this is the simplest of rubber-stamp affairs, there is always the chance that the stamp is missing that day, or that some other foreign-policy consideration currently takes priority within the foreign office. Even though the process itself might not have changed, political consideration might suddenly have made it a sensitive matter to let an agency talk to its counterpart in a particular nation, at which point the closed-behaviour response of demanding a strict adherence to the regulations is very close at hand.

This kind of political intrusion may become more common as cross-border collaborations on an agency level start to grow inside various international communities, but such disruptions are still a *best-case* scenario for how well organisations can anticipate processes in the arena. Organisations that do not already have that kind of connection have even bigger problems. Foreign policy and collaboration is still often seen as a high-level political issue that is to be decided centrally within the government, and the policy arena itself is circumscribed with its own set of rules and prescriptions as far as what constitutes “correct” behaviour and diplomatic finesse. As such, the foreign office can easily take partial ownership of any and all matters that have any kind of international aspect to them, even though the intended interaction is between two very similar issue-specific agencies that may share a similar organisational culture and knowledge-base simply due to the subject matter they both are involved with. Even when the similarities are small, they will still have a shared connection to a common problem area and have at least some common ground to speak from, whereas the generalist intermediary – in this case the foreign office – shares none of these characteristics and may not have a full understand of what is at stake. In order to ensure that this three-part communication does not turn into a game of Chinese whispers, a level of rigour needs to be maintained that might not otherwise be present in

the day-to-day operation of either of the organisations involved, which means they once again fall back onto a much more closed behaviour.

So far, the anticipation of process has been described in extremes and the effect of those extremes has been described as relative movement towards opened or closed behaviour, but what could be considered the normal state? Here, the thesis takes the very pragmatic, almost trivial approach, that the normal state for any organisation is one of no surprises since they are set up to always be able to handle that normalcy. From this base state, it can only ever really be surprised to different degrees depending on how far it is required to deviate from the processes it normally uses. This section has described seven key deviations:

1. The requirement to engage with a different organisational culture.
2. Ambiguities in how the collaborative or co-operative process is meant to work.
3. Uncertainties about the information content and value.
4. Mistrust in the collaboration process.
5. Mistrust in the problem formulation.
6. Mistrust in knowledge brokerage.
7. The requirement to go through a communication layer that lacks the necessary subject-matter knowledge, e.g. a generalist intermediary.

The severity of each of these deviations can obviously vary, and the effects of that severity and how it could be measured will be a matter for the methodology chapter to discuss in greater detail. For now, it is sufficient to identify that these are causes for some kind of “procedural surprise” to occur, and as the preceding discussion has demonstrated, they all in one way or another also cause organisations to close in on themselves. Thus we finally arrive at the last of the hypothesis of what happens when an organisation is forced to limit, adapt, or otherwise suddenly adjust its regular problem-solving processes due to a need to interact with outside actors:

Hypothesis ii: Unless already anticipated and incorporated in how the organisation interacts with outside actors, a sudden presence of an externally enforced process will thus push organisations towards a more closed behaviour.

While the processes have not explicitly been described as ‘external’ so far in this section, it is worth including it expressly in the hypothesis to encapsulate the fact that all the relevant processes involve the interaction with an external actor in some form. While it is conceivable, if a bit odd, that an organisation might be surprised by its own internal work-flows, such an event lies beyond the scope of this thesis for two reasons: one is the overarching research question of how external factors, specifically, cause behavioural changes in the organisation, and the other is that the observed effects are externally oriented – that is, how well

the organisation is able to make use of all that external knowledge. Keeping the inputs and the output on the same level makes it conceptually easier to separate these kinds of changes from ones that have internal causes, such as learning and deliberate organisational design. Such causes can obviously have external causes of their own. For instance, learning is often conceptualised as a response to a changing environment, but at that point we are at least one step removed from the organisational behaviour, and we are also talking about processes that are far slower and more deliberate than what is of interest here.

Chapter 3: Methodology

In order to test the validity of the three hypotheses set up in Chapter 2, this thesis will do a structured focus comparison of two case pairs: the 1993 Waco siege and the 1996 Montana Freeman standoff on the one hand, and the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami and the 2006 Lebanon evacuation on the other. This chapter will describe the how, where, and why of this examination, including a description of the general method structured focus comparison and why both the cases and the theories used were selected; an operationalisation of all the relevant concepts for use in the upcoming analytical sections; a method for falsifying the hypotheses, including a discussion on the consequences of the cross-contamination between some of the units of analysis; and finally a discussion on the selection and value of the empirical sources.

3.1 Structured focused comparison

George & Bennett (2005) use the term 'structured focus comparisons' to label one particular general method for case studies for the purpose of theory development. In essence, it entails asking the same highly specific set of questions to the empirical material of two or more cases and comparing the answers this yields. The fact that the set of questions does not change between the cases is what makes the comparison structured. There is no attempt at tailoring the question to the empirical material, but rather follows a structure that is prescribed by the theoretical framework. The comparison is focused because the questions asked only deal with the specific topic to be studied, perhaps even as a subset of a larger theoretical construct. Material that is not germane to the questions is simply left by the wayside, or at best noted as interesting details that might warrant further studies in the future.

The method requires a specified problem and research objective, which does not only consist of a simple question to be answered but also a categorisation

of the study into one of the more general research goals described by Lijphart (1971). This study falls within the category of a plausibility probe: it attempts to demonstrate the validity of a number of theories and hypotheses that have not seen any previous rigorous testing. In this case, the reason for the lack of such testing is that the hypotheses build on a new reading of existing theories. The MESO-knowledge concept is essentially a new cut through a pre-existing literature on organisational knowledge, where the author rejects the customary focus on tacit and explicit knowledge and instead identifies a secondary pattern of knowledge use and of interactions between knowledge holders. As described in the previous chapter, the question then becomes what there is to explain this usage, which expands the study to also cover a larger issue of organisational behaviour. However, as is often the case even in literature that specifically studies organisations, it is a fairly impenetrable unit of analysis unless studied very closely from the inside, which necessitates a level of detail and of access that would be counter-productive for the larger-perspective questions that arises from this new conceptualisation of knowledge. Instead, to keep things manageable and to be able to speak in more general terms, the organisation is mainly treated as a black box with a select few observable characteristics that are hypothesised to influence the output and which are themselves influenced by a two specific external stimuli: crises and surprising alternations in work processes.

Furthermore, George & Bennett prescribe a set of questions that need to be answered for the method to yield useful results. What is the phenomenon to be studied? How is the phenomenon to be explained? What theoretical framework(s) will be employed? What aspects of existing theories will be used? Is the theory sufficiently specific for the type of study that is being attempted? What are the dependent and independent variables, and how will they vary or remain constant in the study? What cases will be used and why – how do they fit into the overarching goal of the study? (George & Bennett 2004:77ff) While some of these questions have already been answered to some extent, in particular the question of which theories are being employed, the rest of this chapter will answer the remaining questions.

3.1.1 *Theory selection & alternative interpretations*

The question of what theories and frameworks will be used has effectively been answered already through the reasoning that leads up to the hypotheses as described in Chapter 2. However, it is still worth clarifying exactly why *these* particular theories are used rather than some plausible alternatives, while also reiterating the main research question and overarching goal of the thesis.

The foundation for this study is Koraeus' (2007) literature overview of the knowledge management (KM) field and attempt to (re)integrate it with the crisis management (CM) literature, which yielded the core concept of MESO-knowledge as an alternative perspective on the mechanics involved in the SECI

process. The overview also included a couple of brief case studies to determine whether these new knowledge types were purely theory-based constructs or if there was any empirical evidence to support their usefulness as practical analytical tools as well. However, the cases also demonstrated that there was a distinct difference in how the MESO-knowledge skills were used, which immediately led to the question of why this is the case.

The origins of the concept of MESO-knowledge has to a large extent dictated the theories to be used to fully formalise the mechanisms involved. The KM literature is an unavoidable component since it is the foundation for MESO-knowledge and provides a vocabulary and a context in which to describe these new knowledge types. The reason to combine this literature with existing CM theories was because they have shared roots in March & Simon's (1958) and Cyert & March's (1963) conceptualisation of the organisation as well as in the subsequent literature on organisational learning. The learning literature would be an immediate candidate for alternative hypotheses on how organisations change in response to a changing environment – after all, that is the core idea behind the notion of learning – but it ends up being unsuitable because it deals with long-term changes in an organisation's structure or shared belief systems. What is of interest for this study is a far more immediate change in how the organisation interacts with other actors. While it might be possible to describe the kinds of changes that are the focus in this study in terms of learning, it would require doing violence on many of the key assumptions that go into that literature, such as how quickly and how deeply organisational change can happen. Organisational learning is a fairly reasoned, deliberate, and introspective process, whereas the phenomenon described by the framework established in this thesis is intuitive, instinctive, and outwards-facing.

While this choice in the target for our analysis might disqualify organisational learning as a hypothesis, the question still remains why the closely linked crisis management field gets to be included. Again, part of this is to maintain the genealogy of the original MESO-knowledge conceptualisation, and part of it is because the field – for obvious reasons – helps us define and describe the context of a crisis as an external factor that might trigger a change in behaviour. But that only really shifts the question to why that particular context is chosen. Also, if the CM theory is so suitable, why is it that Cybernetic Theory is introduced and given such prominence in describing the connection between crises and organisational behaviour? For the first part, crises offer a convenient and reasonably self-contained context where an easily identifiable event creates a rapid and distinct change in the environment, which if the organisational behaviour changes in response to the environment should throw that altered behaviour in sharp relief. Crises are quite simply helpful both for finding suitable cases and for providing a best-case scenario for mistakes or a worst-case scenario for doing well, depending on what kind of assumptions one wants to test.

As for the second part, CM theory only really defines a specific context – it largely leaves it to other theories to describe how that context affects different actors. Boin et al. (2005), for instance, focuses on leadership and decision-making and posits five key tasks that a decision-maker needs to accomplish in order to achieve some vague measure of “good crisis management”. Exactly how the characteristics of a crisis affects the decision-maker’s ability to perform these tasks is left for other theories to describe. For the purpose of this thesis, the focus lies in the application of knowledge, which as described in Section 2.5 translates into an attempt at reducing or managing the uncertainties inherent in crises. Cybernetic theory offers one approach to this problem, but it is far from the only one to do so. Chapter 2 already mentions other strategies and heuristics for coping with uncertainty such as naturalistic decision-making or the use of analogies. Indeed, Steinbruner himself uses naturalistic decision-making as a starting point for his theories – but the advantage cybernetic theory offers is that it posits two different modes of operating when trying to deal with these complexities. This provides us with a clearly defined range of options for the individual, whereas the other theories tend to only offer some vague notion of “good” or “bad” use of their particular heuristic, and little to no description of the *non*-use of those modes of thinking. Since the goal here is to be able slot together a complex context that is defined by its uncertainty with two distinct modes of organisational behaviour, a theory that describes two strategies for coping with complexity and uncertainty is exactly what the doctor ordered.

Finally, for the influence of anticipation on behaviour, that particular connection is left without additional theoretical backing. While it also deals with uncertainty and complex interdependencies, which would make it a candidate for applying even more cybernetic theory, doing so would only really mean that the same characteristics are tested for twice with an implied assumption that it will somehow yield different results that we would be able to separate into two distinctly different causes. It would certainly simplify the study and analysis – two answers for the price of one – but this would also be sloppy and dishonest. So instead, the core logic that uncertainty can yield a more rigid behaviour is retained, but conceptualised and described in new and different terms that let us test for it separately.

3.1.2 Case selection

What these decisions about theory give us is a set of distinguishing features that we would like to see in our cases. We want variation between crisis and non-crisis and we want variation between anticipated and surprising processes being forced on the actors involved. Hopefully, we will then see corresponding variations in openness and closed-ness and in MESO-knowledge usage, although this cannot really be a guiding principle in what cases we pick. The best scenario would obviously be if we could isolate each and every one of these variations

and leave everything else the same, meaning the same actor in the same political context dealing with the exact same kind of problem and still, hopefully, picking different hypothesised solutions.

Unfortunately, reality is not that kind, especially when it comes to providing useful empirical material. A key problem with both the crisis context and the process anticipation is that we are dealing with a normal situation and a deviation from that norm, and that normal situations have a nasty habit of not creating any empirical artefacts for us to find. Crises make great headlines and become subject to numerous in-depth studies; non-crises do neither of those. Likewise, organisations fumbling with new processes create disruptions that leave traces behind whereas everyone doing what they have always done just forces report-writers to come up with *something* interesting, however unrelated, to put into the yearly review.

As such, one of the crisis pairs picked for this thesis can almost be called opportunistic: the FBI's handling of the Montana Freemen is probably as close to an (initially) highly publicised non-crisis as we can hope to get, and it offers the extraordinary benefit of already coming with a *very* similar parallel case that in every way epitomises both the theoretical and the intuitive understanding of a massive crisis. Crisis research is almost notorious for not having enough non-crises as points of contrast to all the often unique cases that *can* be found and studied, and that uniqueness in and of itself has historically created some problems for the attempts to generalise any conclusions made. With the Waco and Montana cases, we have a pair of events that very distinctly *are not* unique. Many of the actors, even down on an individual basis, are the same, dealing with the same kind of problem under similar time frames and with similar causes and initial constraints. Where they differ is in how the organisation in question chose to behave and how the event played out in the end. Where the Waco siege only escalated further and further into becoming more of a crisis, the Montana standoff was slowly but surely defused and effectively ceased to be a proper crisis long before the actual event saw its final resolution. That is not to say that the Montana case is somehow extraordinary in how it turned out, but rather that it is a rare case of success that still made waves. Like many agencies in the field, the FBI has an internal saying that their failures get all the attention and their successes receive none (*cf.* Kessler 1993), and this is where Montana sticks out from the norm and provides enough material to allow for a comparison.

The tsunami and Lebanon evacuation pair ostensibly offers a similar dynamic. While the Lebanon evacuation does not particularly qualify as a non-crisis, it is still often presented as a case of successful crisis management, and like the Montana case, it has a similar parallel case that has become the textbook example of *un*successful management. Again, we have almost the exact same actors being involved in two events only a few years apart, where many of the problems were the same. At the same time, while the degree of crisis does not differ nearly as much as between Waco and Montana, the tsunami and Lebanon cases differ in how the actors had chosen to organise their collaborative efforts. So what we have here

is instead a difference in anticipation of processes – specifically that everything was new and surprising during the tsunami, whereas in the Lebanon case, those surprises had been analysed, learned from, and at least to some degree formalised into new procedures that clarified the work order for everyone involved. The tsunami/Lebanon pair also provides a different organisational context from the Waco/Montana pair in that the former involved collaborative efforts between domestic actors on an international arena, whereas the latter was a single lead actor in a domestic actor performing its single lead-actor role in a domestic case, which allows for an analysis of how these contexts in and of themselves may influence the process anticipation.

That said, it should be noted that the Waco/Montana pair was part of the initial attempt at conceptualising the MESO-knowledge concept and that to some extent, the outcome is already known before the analysis even begins, which raises the question of whether it is a valid test of the variables or not? However, the aim of that initial study was merely to see if there was any analytical value and use to the newly invented knowledge types, and if anything, the conclusion that there was is what validated an urge to look deeper into these cases to try to see exactly *how and why* these differences in knowledge use came about. The addition of the tsunami/Lebanon pair is then an attempt at generalising those findings and see if a similar pattern can be found in a case pair that demonstrate the same kind of similarities between the events. The imperfection of dealing with a completely different set and type of actors in a completely different political context is just something that we have to accept when dealing with real-world events that are not (and cannot) be replicated in a lab environment. Rather, that difference can and should be used as an opportunity to say something about the impact of the environment on our variables and on our units of analysis. As luck would have it, that kind of comparison is already a part of the larger research question that this thesis aims to answer.

What is missing in all of this to make the comparisons complete and to really isolate the variables in the hypotheses is a case pair with no crisis involvement at all, but with variation in the anticipation of process. Even more ideally, such a pair should be easily comparable to a pair where the degree of crisis is instead held (reasonably) constantly high – the Swedish cases being the ones that most closely resemble that requirement. Unfortunately, as mentioned, non-crises are hard to come by in and of themselves; non-crises that exhibit a very particular kind of external stress even more so; and ones that happen to involve the main actor(s) of an established crisis pair perhaps impossibly so. Until such time that this very specific pair of events be discovered, we will simply have to make do with what variation we can eke out from the four cases discovered so far and try to at least get some sense of what variation there is between them. In addition, the four cases selected do offer some other variation that will be worth revisiting during the concluding discussions. Notably, we are comparing different policy arenas: domestic law enforcement on the one hand, and international politics on

the other, which may have an impact on what kind of problems and solutions are presented with the actors that are studied. This distinction also cuts along different layers of government – on the one hand a specialised and operation-focused agency, and on the other hand a central ministry in charge of a wide array of issues on a policy and political level. Again, this difference will most likely create variation in what kind of issues have to be handled, and which therefore demands some further scrutiny. Finally, and as has already been alluded to, we have a couple of very classic before/after pairs of events, where learning is very likely to have happened from one instance to the next and this is also worth discussing in terms of how that may impact how these events were perceived and handled.

3.1.3 Sources & critique

The empirical material for these comparisons comes primarily from official reports on the events and on the accompanying efforts to manage them. In the Swedish cases, the sources consist of public inquiry reports and after-action reports from the government, from many of the involved agencies and, in the case of the tsunami, the official report by the commission set up to analyse the management of the crisis. The Lebanon case is further supplemented by media sources to highlight a side of the crisis that is not dwelt upon by the official reports, namely the criticism raised against the evacuation effort. The handling of the tsunami was unquestionably a target for criticism, and indeed all official reports focus on improving on the numerous mistakes made. On the other hand, and as the empirical presentation and subsequent analysis will demonstrate, the reporting on the Lebanon evacuation follows a narrative of almost complete success, this in spite of the criticism raised at the time. The discrepancy is noteworthy and, since we are trying to evaluate how much of a crisis the event was, also worthy of closer scrutiny. In the US cases, the sources consist of official reports from the Justice Department, the House Oversight Committee, the Government Accountability Office as well as numerous books written by members of the FBI teams and of expert groups that were either brought in or left outside as part of the crisis management efforts.

In both case pairs, there is a distinct difference in the availability and quality of the material between the first, less successful, case and the second, more successful one. The difference between Waco and Montana is particularly startling. The former was one of the biggest and most traumatic law-enforcement disasters prior to 9/11, whereas the latter quickly petered out into a nearly forgotten non-story. It is telling that when searching through news archives, sites like the (at that time) recently established CNN.com websites had very clearly reserved space for daily large exposés and daily reporting on the situation in Montana, should it ever evolve into a new Waco. Instead, the daily event calendar stops a week or two into the stand-off and is only very sporadically updated even though events actually do occur. The standoff simply ceases to be the kind of headline-grabbing crisis

many were expecting. Its equivalent in the Swedish case pair exhibits similar, if not quite as drastic, characteristics. In the Swedish case, there was a far stronger vested political interest in showing that the stark criticism levelled against the government and the key agencies after the 2004 tsunami had had an effect and that the management of this second case was successful. However, that also coloured the kind of reporting that was done. The official reports do not offer the kind of in-depth and detailed day-to-day accounts of who contacted whom that we can find in the tsunami reports, and only shorter paragraphs of mainly internal self-critique are levelled in the reports from a handful of the agencies.

The supposedly successful cases are in other words still under-reported, much as what one would expect. After all, this is exactly why successful cases for study are so hard to find. Since these are two sister cases to two very spectacular failures, however, there is still enough material there to start an investigation. The Montana case is, unfortunately, most prominently preserved in the form of rather self-congratulatory articles, chapters, and entire edited volumes from researchers who had been shut out from the efforts at Waco but who were allowed to participate in the FBI's expanded crisis team in Montana. These books, while detailed, therefore have a tendency to focus on their particular favourite topic and to inflate their personal importance in the proceedings. As general accounts of the chronology of events, they are all consistent with each other and with the far more sparse official reports, but some of the details and motivations should only ever be considered the personal opinions of the authors rather than established fact or official policy within the crisis management team. The tone in the books dealing with the Waco siege, in particular, tends to be highly critical to the point of sometimes being outright hostile against the ATF, the FBI, and the legal system in general, in some cases because the authors had personal connections to some of the victims of the siege

That is not to say that the other cases are without bias. The first official report on the Waco siege was widely regarded as a complete white-wash of the whole affair and spawned many additional reports from other committees to try to bring more clarity to the matter (cf. Dennis 1993; Danforth 2000; HCoGR 2000). Likewise, the political pressure to have a successful resolution to the Lebanon crisis has generated an official narrative in the reports that tends to gloss over numerous shortcomings in the operational execution of the crisis management – details that now only really survive in a scattered media narrative. In general, there is an unfortunate imbalance here between both the individual cases and the two case pairs as far as the politicisation angle goes. The tsunami as an event was “just” a natural disaster, but the Swedish government's handling of that situation quickly escalated into a full-blown and long-lasting political crisis, if nothing else because it was the central political leadership that was seen to fumble the management of the crisis. This political problem was still around, and still being worked on, by the time the Lebanon war broke out, once again involving the same central political leadership, and thus making that crisis inherently political

as well. As we will see, the actual crisis management in the Lebanon case was therefore to a high degree a matter of political messaging, maybe *even more so* than an actual operational problem to be solved. This can be contrasted against the FBI cases, where the Waco siege certainly had a political angle to it in that it was a case of the federal government possibly overstepping its authority and trampling on citizens' constitutional rights. Also, in the aftermath it became a congressional matter where the attorney general came under fire. Even so, the FBI itself was and remained an ostensibly non-political agency, and by the time Freeman standoff happened, the political establishment kept its distance, at most communicating its wish that the bureau did not repeat the same mistakes it had made three years earlier. The same issues of "the large government" being at odds with "the small citizen" were still at play, and there were political actors around to try to take advantage of that perceived clash, but the event itself still had nowhere near the same level of politicisation as the Swedish cases, since the political level simply was not directly involved.

Fortunately for this thesis, the nature of the questions that will be asked to investigate the hypotheses is such that this kind of bias is of little consequence. It does not matter to this particular model what the actual practical outcome of any of the cases were or who takes the blame (or glory) for that state of affairs – only that there is an account that demonstrates the context of the events; the interaction patterns (again, not necessarily the outcomes) between the different parties; and how the involved parties are situated in a larger societal context. Similarly, sources for some of the historical background can without a doubt be considered heavily biased – the time line for the Lebanon War is most handily found at the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs. While Israel has unquestionably been part of the conflict, and has a clear interest in presenting the war in a pro-Israeli perspective, this bias should have no significant impact on the veracity of what that source is used for: the large strokes of what key events happened on which days, and of how the border dispute had escalated over the preceding years. These broad strokes are only needed to put some context to how the Swedish government reacted to the escalating conflict. This is not an inquiry into the war itself, nor into the conflict at large.

3.2 Operationalisation

To reiterate once more, the aim of this thesis is to create an analytical framework for studying the dynamics of organisational permeability to external knowledge. It does this by building a causal model for how well an organisation can make use of MESO-knowledge, ultimately depending on how it is being buffeted around by two specific external factors: crises and the imposition of external work processes. The framework sets up three core hypotheses to describe these relationships:

- i) Organisations will fall back on well known, prescribed, and preferably consistent problem-solving procedures when subjected to the stress of a crisis. Crises will thus push organisations towards a more closed behaviour.
- ii) Unless already anticipated and incorporated in how the organisation interacts with outside actors, a sudden presence of an externally enforced process will thus push organisations towards a more closed behaviour.
- iii) The degree to which an organisation is open or closed decides how well and how willingly an organisation makes use of external knowledge. An organisation that moves towards increased closed-ness will thus lose its ability to apply its MESO-knowledge.

All in all, the hypotheses set up four variables that are to be studied in a structured manner: whether or not there is a crisis; whether or not the organisation has anticipated the work processes involved in handling a specific issue; whether the organisation is open or closed; and whether or not it makes use of MESO-knowledge. Whereas Chapter 2 described the theoretical connections between these variables, this section will go into how we should go about finding answers to these questions in the empirical material.

3.2.1 *Crisis or non-crisis*

The crisis definition used in Section 2.5 gives us a basic structure for what we should look for in the material. Is the situation characterised by a high degree of felt uncertainty? Is there a sense of urgency? Are there any perceived threats to critical values? As straight-forward as this may seem, the problem with this definition is that it is deliberately subjective, which has two main methodological consequences. The first is that we must always define our subject – *for whom* is it (or is it not) a crisis? – and then ensure that we either keep this subject constant or that we take particular care to note when we change perspectives. In particular, it means that a crisis may evolve in scale, not because the event changes but because more and more actors start to perceive the event differently. While the chosen cases make the subject reasonably self-evident, it is still good practice to explain exactly why this or that particular subject is the one to focus on. The second consequence is that we have to use expressions of feelings as our input, and this can be notoriously difficult to find in the empirical material.

The best-case scenario is if there are direct statements from the chosen subject to the effect that the situation is confusing, that time is of essence, and that the stakes are high, but we cannot always expect to find these. Should such expressions be missing, we instead have to look at behavioural cues such as whether or not the subject keeps changing their mind about what the actual problem is, or intently tries to find out what on earth is going on and refuses to properly define the problem until more information is available. Does the subject try to force a

timely resolution, or is the approach more measured or even lackadaisical and things are allowed to take however much time they need? Are there any particular issues that the subject focuses on as requiring special attention or protection, or is it more a case of trying to resolve an issue for the sole sake of resolving the issue – not because the issue will have any particular follow-on effects?

As discussed in Section 2.5, it is important to note that all three characteristics need to be in effect for it to be an actual crisis. Uncertainty and values at stake are not a problem if there is all the time in the world to resolve those issues, and uncertainty and time pressure do not particularly matter if nothing is at stake – a mistake has no tangible consequences anyway. And if there is no uncertainty, then time pressure and value conflicts no longer matter because the solution is already clear – at most, there might be some issues with implementing it in time.

An interesting conflict that might occur is if statements and behaviour do not match: if the subject expressly states that time is of the essence, and then very obviously drags its feet or vice versa. In such instances, actual behaviour takes precedence over statements on the basis that the statements may be pure rhetoric, whereas the actual actions taken will more closely reflect what the subject is actually feeling.

With the parameters defined as they are, this becomes a purely binary variable: either it is a crisis, or it is not. For the sake of the empirical analysis, such a course distinction will not cause any problems, but for the discussion about inferences of causality, one issue to resolve is how large an effect this binary state of the independent variable will have in the dependent variable at the other end. At the same time, and this will be discussed in more detail later on, there is the problem of the identification paradox where we might have a feedback loop from what is supposed to be a dependent variable – specifically the use of MESO-knowledge – that changes the perceptions of one or more of the defining characteristics of the crisis.

3.2.2 *Anticipation of process*

The second independent variable is also binary: does the subject anticipate the processes or not? While this could also be treated as a subjective variable, this thesis will not only do so if the case specifically calls for it. Instead, it will be determined on the basis of whether or not the studied actor is forced to interact with parties or deal with questions that are not part of its regular or formal workload. In other words, for every interaction with collaborative partners, is this collaboration something that occurs on a regular basis or something that has been formally and explicitly regulated in laws or formal instructions or internal operational procedure documents? If it is not, then it is labelled as unanticipated and the subject is presumed to be surprised.

The exception that might call for specific treatment is if there are explicit statements in the material to the effect that, even though the subject *should* be familiar with the processes, they had no idea that any such instructions existed. In

other words, they failed to perform as ordered. Conversely, if there is no particular reason why the subject should know of a particular process, but claims to have pro-actively investigated and settled the matter beforehand, it might warrant a closer examination to see if this can be confirmed by other sources and if, indeed, they did follow to the letter what should have been an unfamiliar procedure.

This latter possibility would be the process-anticipation version of the identification paradox: where the use of MESO-knowledge alters the particular circumstances that are supposed to be the driving factor in the model.

While it is conceivable to operationalise this variable as a sliding scale – perhaps by seeing how large a portion of the external processes are surprises compared to how many are not, or by doing an in-depth analysis of exactly how much time is being spent on familiar vs. unfamiliar procedures – doing so in this case would create more problems than it solves. For one, it creates an imbalance against the binary value of the crisis variable: how much surprise is a full-on crisis worth in terms of altering the behaviour of an organisation? It is an apples-and-oranges comparison that only serves to muddy the waters. For another, treating it as a sliding scale creates a similar kind of signal-to-noise problem as with crises, where a small change in anticipation may coincide with a small change in behaviour, and we incorrectly interpret that as a strong correlation (of two already very difficult-to-measure variables) rather than as just noise on both ends. With a binary variable, we at least have the clarity of having a full signal or no signal, and can then discuss changes in the behaviour from the perspective of having established that there is unquestionably some kind of input, and what this might mean for any variation we see in the dependent variable.

3.2.3 Open or closed

The question of whether an organisation is opened or closed is a bit trickier. To begin with, as the previous chapter has established, this is really an ideal-type kind of definition and in reality it will very clearly be a sliding scale. A first step towards using it as a sliding scale is to allow for variations in the three operating characteristics described in Section 2.2.3: principle, instrument, and preferred outcome. In other words, a completely closed organisation that starts to allow for informal interactions rather than rely on strict regulations has made a move towards being more open. As the research question and hypotheses for this thesis have been formulated, we do not actually need to measure the exact degree of openness or closed-ness; we only need to be able to observe relative changes. As such, the example of a change towards informal interactions is sufficient for our purposes to say that the organisation has altered its behaviour on the open-closed spectrum.

While this relieves us of the need to measure the exact value of the different characteristics, we are still left with a need to be able to observe changes in one direction or another for any of them. If all three change in the same direction

at once, we could certainly label this as a *strong* change, but strictly speaking, such detail is not necessary for our purposes other than to resolve the eventuality that one characteristic changes in one direction and another in the opposite one. Should that happen, we will for the time being categorise it as not changing the openness or closed-ness, but it will warrant a more detailed examination in the comparative discussion. Perhaps such a self-cancelling change is the result of one of the independent variables changing in opposite directions and we can connect each of the changed characteristics to a specific one of those variables.

As shown in Figure 2 on page 32 the '*guiding principle*' characteristic can vary between the extremes of regulation and informality. In the material, such a variation can be signified by demands that some party or other strictly adhere to protocol when addressing someone or conversely that the normal rules of formality should be skipped for the sake of expedience. The choice of wording in this definition is very deliberate as "informal" is a term in common usage to describe how interactions happen. However, for it to matter here, it must be used to describe interactions that we should otherwise suspect to be (or which are expressly described as being) highly formal – again, we are looking for a relative change, not a specific state. Another indication that the informality increases is if more people are included than normally would, especially in matters that might otherwise be considered sensitive. Even if they do not have the required security clearance, someone might sit on vital information that is best extracted over the phone or over a cup of coffee than in a formal memorandum. Or for a change in the other direction, perhaps gag orders are issued to maintain full control over the message and only through official, vetted channels.

Next, the '*instrumental work flow*' characteristic can vary between rigidity and flexibility. What they mean in particular is the way in which work is prescribed to be done: according to standard operational procedures (SOPs), which would signify a rigid organisation, or if things are done on a case-by-case basis, which would fall into the more flexible category. Changes between these two can be identified through measures such as reminders that a specific SOP exists and should be used; if the specific SOP was already in use, the reminder would be unnecessary, and the fact that it will now be enforced is a move in the direction of more rigidity. A change in the other direction might instead be signified by express orders to ignore more obtrusive rules for the time being and to focus on getting the job done at any cost. This communicates a willingness to step away from normal procedures and to instead adapt the work to suit the situation, which pushes the organisation towards the flexibility end of the spectrum.

Finally, the '*preferred outcome*' characteristic can vary between consistency and dynamics. This is perhaps the most difficult one to find referenced directly since the *preferred* outcome would obviously be that everything always follows the template of what the organisation wants, even the outcome that also precisely matches a dynamic environment. It is highly unlikely that any official statement would express a preference for inconsistent information. Even so, the question

here is whether interactions with other parties generate output that strictly adheres to format, even if something is lost in the translation, or whether the information gathered is considered worth the extra effort required to make it fit with the organisational needs. Movement along this axis can be signified by such actions as setting up exceptionally broad information gathering mechanisms and instituting special analysis units to sift through the increased inflow of data, or by doing the opposite and streamlining and strictly screening the information channels to a select few, trustworthy sources. The act of putting gatekeepers into place can be a bit ambiguous here: on the one hand, they are a way to filter and sift through that increased volume of information for particularly valuable nuggets of information, but on the other hand, they can also act to ensure that only “correct” information passes through to the organisation. It cannot be determined beforehand what the gatekeepers will do, but their use *does* indicate some kind of movement in either direction and they are thus something that is worth looking for.

Individually or put together, these characteristics can yield the result of indicating that the organisation is opening up or closing down (or remaining the same, if nothing particularly changes). As mentioned, there is the potential for a “...but” to be appended in case multiple characteristics change at once in opposite directions, in which case a discussion and closer comparison with the input variables will have to be done to determine what is actually going on. And of course, the expectation from the hypothesis here is that if either a crisis or an unanticipated process is forced upon the organisation being studied, it will move towards a more closed behaviour. Should both happen at once, it seems logical that the move should be more pronounced than if only one happened, which is why it is still valuable to keep track of exactly *how* these characteristics vary from one case to the next. Here, more than with the level of openness and the degree of crisis, the choice to make it a binary variable can become problematic. For one, we have three components that may or may not match all the way through, which raises the question of how we should classify an organisation that exhibits, say, two ‘closed’ characteristics and one ‘open’ or vice versa? There is one, methodologically ugly, but pragmatic solution hidden away in the fact that we are looking for trends in our subjects: does the organisation *tend towards* openness or closed-ness? With the question formulated like that, we can grudgingly accept slightly more indecisive answers along the lines of “it is more open than closed,” and tick the ‘open’ box for our evaluation purposes. This still leaves the edge case where an organisation scores all three characteristics as being either on the open or the closed end of the spectrum in one case, but only two of them in another. In both instances, we would classify the organisation the same, yet that slight move away from the extreme may still be noteworthy.

This dilemma of choosing between clear answers, with reasonably clear indicators behind them, yet still wanting to be able to capture nuance, is simply inherent in the ideal type comparison and is not something that we can solve here and now. For the moment, we will have to be satisfied with having an

analytical tool that gives us those clear answers, and we will have to leave the potential for nuance as a matter of closer scrutiny if that analysis yields surprising or contradictory results.

3.2.4 MESO-usage

The final variable is the organisation's use of any or all of the MESO-knowledge skills. One potential stumbling block here is that we need to separate the *collection* of knowledge from the actual *use* of said knowledge. For instance, just because an organisation starts to frantically do inventory of its knowledge base does not mean it is actually using meta-knowledge – it just means it is trying to collect it for potential use later. The usage itself would rather be expressed when, as the original Polanyi definition suggests, that knowledge is “actionable”; that is, when it generates an activity or a specific guiding decision. In terms of evaluating the variable, it is still worth noting when collection takes place since it at least indicates an *intent* – if time is short or if the situation changes, maybe the knowledge cannot be put to good use in time. However, that is more a distinction to be used in the later discussion, and in particular when we eventually want to bring learning back into the mix, but for the purpose of determining whether an organisation successfully uses any kind of MESO-knowledge, it does not get a full pass.

For meta-knowledge, the collection process is, as already mentioned, mainly a matter of doing an inventory of what knowledge already exists in-house. Do they ask around to see if anyone happens to know anything about the issue? The actual use of this kind of knowledge is expressed when there are instant reorganisations or creations of special working groups across departmental and hierarchical boundaries. This must be something that is task-specific and directly related to a knowledge need – simply establishing a central command group to shorten decision times and speed up information sharing does not qualify. Calling in stand-by pools and, even more so, hiring consultants are edge cases. On the one hand, the simple fact is that this knowledge does not exist inside the organisation and the action falls more into the category of “knowing how to find out more” – i.e. second-order knowledge – but on the other hand, it indicates a ready awareness of one's own knowledge limitations, which certainly qualifies as meta-knowledge. In the end, it becomes a judgement call: are the external experts being called in because it is known that they are the right people for the job, or are they called in because it means more can bang away at the problem of figuring out what the actual problem is? If it is the former, then it is partly an expression of meta-knowledge, with a bit of empathic knowledge mixed in since the organisation already “knows who” to ask; if it is the latter, then it is purely second-order knowledge at work.

In general, this demonstrates the main methodological problem with MESO-knowledge. By very definition and design, one knowledge type hooks tightly into the next and has its own internal feedback loop. Knowledge about other people's abilities also increases the awareness of one's own knowledge gaps; people found

through the use of second-order knowledge can go on to be the later subjects of empathic knowledge, and so on.

Therefore, the collection process for empathic knowledge is pretty much indistinguishable from SO-knowledge use, at least in the short term. With a longer perspective, only those contacts that are actually retained and maintained after use qualify as proper instances of E-knowledge collection. Someone who is brought in once and never heard from or bothered about again does not fulfil the requirement of trying to understand the knowledge pool and knowledge gaps or any kind of reciprocal usefulness there might be between the two parties. Empathic knowledge *use*, though, is a bit more distinct. This expresses itself through the decision to consult specific parties regarding specific topics. The reciprocal act of telling someone that they have misunderstood an issue and are asking the wrong questions is a very clear-cut example of empathic knowledge in action. Technically, the same holds for unsolicited inquiries of another confused-looking organisation that needs help with a particular issue, but this generally requires the asking party to initially be uninvolved with what is going on, and it is therefore unlikely to be the main subject of analysis in most case studies.

Second-order knowledge, finally, can be collected in two main ways: either blindly by guessing where someone who knows something might be found and following up various leads, or purposefully by asking established contacts. As such, it could also be seen as a very specific case of empathic-knowledge use, where the question is “whom would you recommend?” And as already mentioned, SO-knowledge use is pretty much identical to E-knowledge collection in that it involves reaching out to a new party to query on some poorly understood topic. A slightly more passive example would be to make a general open call for support in various networks and fora in the hope that someone you had not connected with before will be able to answer. The use of intermediaries exists as a mix of these two strategies, where the party in need of help uses someone else to sift through such interest groups and to approach a likely candidate, and only then does the first party try to get help from whomever was found in the process.

As with the intermediary open/closed-variable, we are now dealing with a sliding scale of use. At one end, we have absolutely no MESO-use whatsoever, and at the other end, the knowledge-gathering machine is firing on all cylinders. The problem here is that it is not necessarily the case that a “high score” is better – if the required knowledge can be found inside the organisation through the successful use of meta-knowledge, the most trivial of uses have just happened and yet the knowledge problem is solved in full. Conversely, even if an organisation is searching high and low, it might still not find what it needs and in spite of being highly competent at all three skills, it is still left helpless. Granted, unless something completely unprecedented and unthinkable happens, the latter case is probably a bit unlikely. Sooner or later, *someone* can be found that can identify the problem, but since one of our independent variables is a time-sensitive crisis,

this scenario will probably express itself in the shape of an organisation running out of time to solve a critical problem.

At any rate, we now have the dilemma of treating MESO-usage as a binary variable and such a setup can be very sensitive to having even feeble attempts show up as something much bigger than they really were, or treating it as a sliding scale of some sort and somehow reconcile the issue that less can be more and that there is such a thing as overkill. For the purposes of this thesis, and when considering that this variable will be coupled with the intervening open/closed-variable that measures a relative change, the author has decided to go for a middle way: to set up a binary distinction between “good usage” and “poor usage” (the latter including no usage at all) and to make a qualitative argument based on the indicators mentioned above as to where the subject should fall.

The immediate question then becomes, what qualifies as “good” usage and what qualifies as “poor”? This will be answered by querying the material on whether or not, through the actual use – not just collection – of MESO-knowledge, the subject for analysis could acquire knowledge that was critical, not just helpful, to solving the issues at hand. If such usage took place and critical knowledge found, it will be categorised as good. If either or both is not the case, it will be categorised as poor. Again, both are required – simply stumbling over critical knowledge by chance does not qualify, nor do fruitless searches, no matter how earnest.

3.3 Expected outcomes

Given the case selection, the nature of those cases, and the variables of the model used here, we should already now be able to make some predictions of the results – hopefully the closer analysis will bear those predictions out.

In the FBI case pair, we match a crisis with surprising processes against a non-crisis where the FBI willingly and knowingly adopts new processes along the way. This would suggest that we are looking at the agency going from a very closed behaviour at Waco to a very open one in Montana, and consequently that it will make poor use of MESO-knowledge in the former case and good use of it in the latter.

In the Swedish case pair, we likewise have a first case where the organisation in question is in a crisis and has to deal with unanticipated processes, but we now match that against a second case that is *also* a crisis, yet where the processes for solving it have been established before-hand, and should come as no surprise. On the whole, then, we should see a similar shift from a closed behaviour in the tsunami case to an open one in the Lebanon evacuation. This time, though, the difference should be smaller than in the FBI cases, which may or may not rub up against the limitations of the analytical tool. Likewise, we should expect better MESO usage in the latter case than in the former, but again to a smaller degree than we expect to see in the FBI cases.

Comparing across the pairs, there is little reason to expect anything of significance to come out a comparison between the “failure” cases – Waco and the tsunami – since both should present the same full-crisis/no-anticipation characteristics and the binary nature of those variables offers no real room for differentiation. Comparing the “successful” cases of Montana and Lebanon, however, may yield some insight, since we now have a variation in the how much of a crisis the two events represent, whereas the anticipation of process should be equally high in both. However, here too, the limitation of using binary variables may come back to haunt us as, although we would expect slightly more openness and slightly better MESO usage in the Montana case than in the Lebanon one, it is uncertain whether the analytical tool allows us to capture any such distinction.

Beyond these outcomes linked to the model, we may also expect a number of different variations between the cases and pairs, some of which have already been discussed. For instance, we should expect that learning has taken place between the failure and the success case in each pair, but it is too early to say exactly what has been learned and how that may impact the evaluation of our variables. We may also expect politicisation to be a bigger factor in the Swedish cases than in those involving the FBI since the former involves a central ministry and numerous leading politician and the latter does not, but again, we cannot yet determine what – if any – consequences this will have for the modelled relationships. Finally, we might expect that the difference in subject matter and policy arenas, and indeed in the general institutional situatedness of the main actors being studied will make a difference in exactly what type of crises and processes they will come across, but again, the actual outcome from these empirical differences in terms of what the model is out to describe is hard to predict.

3.4 Falsification

So if those are the (many) criteria for answering and fulfilling the hypotheses, what is needed to prove them wrong? In short, not much. Should any of the expected outcomes prove not to be the case, the link between the variables either needs to be saved through closer scrutiny, or it must be considered void. It should be mentioned that all the enumerated variables are sufficient, but not necessary, for the hypothesised change in the next link in the chain, at least as far as the independent and intermediary variables go. In other words, just because there is no crisis or no surprises does not mean that the organisation might not close up for some other, as of yet unexplored reasons. However, if the opposite happens – if we have a crisis or an unanticipated intrusion of new processes without a corresponding move towards a more closed behaviour, Hypothesis i and ii, respectively, fall.

In both instances, the “sufficient but not necessary” criterion combined with how we only study and impose circumstances that create a change in one specified direction, means that we can only say something in the case of an input failing to have the correct response. We do not yet have any mechanism

that would explain how organisations become more open, other than that they should be *relatively* more open under normal circumstances than when under duress. Should a case occur which seems to falsify either of these hypotheses, finding such a mechanism would be the only possible way of saving the model: something would have to exist that can positively cancel out the negative move presumably created by the duress. Doing so would also require the much more complex work of establishing exactly how much more closed organisations become from varying degrees of duress, and exactly how much they open up again from whatever new circumstances are introduced.

A similar connection exists between the intermediary open/closed variable and its dependent MESO-knowledge variable, with the added complication that there is no immediate correlation between quantity of MESO-usage and quality of MESO-usage. So on the one hand, this means that Hypothesis iii is not necessarily falsified if we simply observe an increase in closed-ness without a reduction in MESO-usage. It is entirely conceivable that there is a kind of “usage buffer” that is lowered as the organisation closes up and that we are simply not observing it when the knowledge is used to its fullest extent. But on the other hand, it means that if we see the exact opposite of what the hypothesis predicts – a drastic increase in MESO-usage quality that coincides with a drastic reduction in openness – not only is the hypothesis very much in question, it would also be that much harder to save by introducing new circumstances. Such circumstances would not only have to compensate for the reduced supposed buffer, but also increase the actual quality beyond its previous bounds at the same time.

3.4.1 *The identification paradox, trust feedback, and issues theory critique*

A complicating factor in all of this is that we have two feed-back loops between the MESO-knowledge use and the crisis and anticipation circumstances. In practical terms, this can be both helpful and harmful. On the helpful side, good MESO-usage can drastically reduce the uncertainties of a crisis in its early stages and keep an organisation from slipping into the more closed behaviour that will further put a damper on its efforts, and possibly even diffuse the sense of crisis altogether. Likewise, it may help the organisation predict processes that are likely to come into play so they can be studied and internalised before the fact, thereby drastically reducing the surprise factor. Also, as discussed in the previous chapter, properly applied empathic knowledge can smooth out the insecurities of being faced with an unfamiliar process by having a second trusted party guide the organisation through the ordeal, at which point there is no need for either of them to fall back into a regulatory and formal mood of just following the rules to the letter. On the more negative side, poor MESO-usage might *increase* the same stress factors. For example, the wrong people are consulted, which generates an even more confused picture of what might be going on, or the person who deals with the formal contacts between organisations might have done so in quiet for years and now, no-one in a decision-making position even knows that there are formal rules for so.

In theoretical terms, these feedback loops complicate matters a bit as far as providing clear evidence both for and against the hypotheses are concerned. Even though things actually proceeded as expected – a crisis made an organisation close itself and stop asking question almost entirely – a single lucky shot in the form of the exact right question at the exact right time, even though it was the only one ever asked, might have been enough to bring enough clarity to transform the whole thing into a non-crisis. Instead of having yet another example of a case that fits the mould, we have a non-event that no-one ever hears about or bothers to investigate. Or it may give off the incorrect appearance that the one lucky question was an instance of the organisation remaining open and dynamic and in full MESO-usage mode, quite contrary to the predictions of the model, which would suggest that the model is false.

The major weakness of the model as it stands is the still somewhat unclear and far from fully correlated relationship between the intermediary open/closed-variable and the dependent MESO-knowledge variable. The tolerances between how the two vary are quite possibly loose enough to allow the feedback loop to take effect – in both a positive and a negative direction – that the entire situation changes contrary to or in spite of the assumed mechanisms. In the development of the model, it was been suggested that maybe the intermediary variable should be taken out or redefined in terms of the dependent variable; that open/closed behaviour for all intents and purposes *is the strict equivalent* of good and bad MESO-knowledge. However, the author feels that this would trivialise the point of the thesis; instead, it is better to identify the behaviour as separate from the skills an organisation possesses already at this stage rather than to, inevitably, (re)introduce it later on. In essence, this model harkens back to the initial organisational theory idea of adapting and adopting pieces of the model of the individual onto an organisation as a whole: that organisations have cognition and learning and knowledge and pathologies in all of them, very much apart from, but still analogous to, how individual cognition and learning and so on works. In a similar vein, this thesis applies what is effectively a model of stress-induced clumsiness onto the organisation. As outside factors create all kinds of distractions, the organisation falls back on a kind of primal or rote behaviour and loses the ability to use more complex skills.

3.5 Generalisation and limitations

One final question that needs to be considered is how well we can generalise from the answers provided by this analysis. Given the low number of cases and the gaps in what variations they let us isolate, the immediate answer is unfortunately that even if the hypotheses are not falsified, the degree of generalisability is fairly low. The model will have shown some resilience, but it would require some pretty strong links between observed cause and effect to allow us to guess that it will hold true if we start expanding the selection to include more complex

or less starkly different cases. Nevertheless, such an outcome would offer fertile ground for trying to refine the model and get rid of some of the methodological roughness that comes with this initial version. It may be that, while it would not stand up well to a broader case selection while still using its current binary variables, we might see the same tendencies if we allow for more finely gradated inputs and outcomes. Testing (and perhaps even improving) the generalisability from the current model would then be a matter of methodological refinement, in particular in terms of being able to differentiate different degrees of crisis and different levels of expectation and surprise with new work processes.

One important question that is left almost completely unanswered here is whether crisis and anticipation combine, reinforce each other, or potentially even cancel each other out. It may be the case that it is the most negative of the two types of pressure that determines how the organisation behaves; that, if it got caught deep in a crisis, the anticipation of process will not make any difference because the crisis alone is enough to effect a closed behaviour, and vice versa. Or it may be the exact opposite: that the absence of one type of pressure acts as a relief valve of sorts, making the other far less relevant. Perhaps, if every process is properly anticipated, an organisation can maintain an open behaviour even when faced with the most disastrous of crises. Or maybe it is a simple compounding effect: one type of pressure is as bad as another, but combined they can close the organisation down further than just one on its own will. Given the case selection for this study, *something* may be gleaned on this topic in the comparison between the two “successful” cases, but since there are so many other contextual considerations – the aforementioned differences in policy areas, situatedness, politicisation and so on – that may pollute the results, we cannot in good conscience make any broader general statements from that pair alone.

By contrast, the open/closed spectrum, and the MESO usage, both have some built-in degree of freedom between their respective extremes already, but both also require less coarse values on the independent variables – crisis and anticipation – to really let us say anything about how much more (or less) pressure is needed for the organisation to close down. At the same time, if we go outside the strict confines of the analytical methodology described here and tentatively start assigning different degrees of closed-ness and of MESO usage, using their respective sub-characteristics to assign some kind of “score” to both, we might already at this stage begin to study the link between those two – that is, Hypothesis iii – in more detail. It is still debatable whether we can draw any more general conclusions from this study alone, but that one segment of the model is at least slightly more ready for further testing than the links between crisis and closed-ness, and between anticipation and closed-ness.

Chapter 4: The 1993 Waco Siege

As the millennium was coming to a close, tales of approaching apocalypse (be it through societal upheaval, technological breakdown, or divine means) were on the rise. In Christian denominations, the concept of millenarianism – the notion that after a thousand years of toil and struggle, a new utopian era would begin – had gained prominence as an actual new millennium was approaching, and as a result, activity in groups subscribing to this belief was on the rise as well. One such group was the Branch Davidian of the Seventh-day Adventist Church – commonly shortened to just the Branch Davidian – that in 1993 came to clash with a number of federal agencies in a case that significantly altered the course for law enforcement for many years to come. Some parts of the event were still being litigated some 20 years later, and the handling of the case became a poster-child for governmental abuse, a never-ending source of theories about conspiratorial cover-ups, and even a rallying cry for domestic terrorism.

4.1 Background

In spite of its name, the Waco siege took place in the Elk community, some 14 kilometres outside of Waco in Texas, and lasted for 51 days. It was the culmination of a year-long investigation into allegations raised at the local Branch Davidian of illegal weapons modification, drug manufacturing, and endemic child abuse. In May 1992, a UPS package addressed to the Davidian compound had come undone and been revealed to contain grenade casings, black powder, and weaponry. The discovery prompted the UPS to contact the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF), who started looking into the matter and set up a surveillance post in a neighbouring house. While the Branch Davidians had indeed bought and sold many guns as a small business to raise money for the sect and although all these trades could be traced to legal deals, the investigation led the agency to believe that the group was secretly and illegally modifying many of the guns for

its own purposes. The gun parts obtained would easily allow for the conversion of legal civilian versions of assault rifles into unlicensed fully automatic military versions, classified as machine guns under U.S. law. This suspicion was bolstered by witness accounts from neighbours about hearing automatic gun fire from the Davidian ranch (DoT 1993:17ff, 37ff; Reavis 1998:33ff).

The investigation also came up with infrared surveillance footage that purportedly suggested that the Branch Davidians were running a methamphetamine lab inside their compound. There was some evidence to support that such activities had taken place in the past: a witness report from a member who had left the group six years earlier suggested as much, and the group had indeed handed over lab equipment to the local sheriff at around the same time, but the vague infra-red hot-spot was the only recent hint that a lab still existed (DoT 1993:44ff). The evidence was still determined too weak to be included in the search warrant the agency later obtained. Even so, the combination of firearms illegally modified for automatic firing and of suspected drug manufacturing made the compound a perfect target for the on-going War on Drugs. The ATF therefore started training for a possibly hostile incursion into the compound and obtained limited support from the U.S. Army at nearby Fort Hood and the U.S. Army Special Forces out of Fort Bragg (DoT 1993:81, 211ff; Reavis 1998:122ff; HCoGR 2000:81f). In mid-1992, reporters at the Waco Tribune-Herald had also started their own investigation into the activities and religious underpinnings of the Branch Davidian. One of their conclusions was that the group's leader, Vernon Howell – or David Koresh as he now called himself – was building a cult of personality that allowed him to engage in polygamy with every female member of the group, including girls that were not yet even in their teens. The reporters had interviewed former members of the group who claimed that Koresh often boasted about having sex with under-aged girls and that he had dictated that children not even one year old should be flogged (England & McCormick 1993; Hall 1995; Gallagher 2000:99f).

By February 1993, the Tribune-Herald was ready to publish its scathing indictment of the abuse within the group, but was approached by the ATF to delay the publication until after the ATF had concluded their own investigation and performed a raid on the compound. The ATF agents were vague about exactly what was going to happen other than a preliminary date for a raid, which was later revised twice (DoT 1993:67ff; Reavis 1998:39ff). The pre-existing media interest in the group, however, contributed to the ATF's decision to increase its preparedness for media involvement. While the agency itself did not initiate any further contact, it was clear that local media would take a huge interest in the raid, especially since the planned Tribune-Herald article series included a plea for the authorities to step in and deal with the matter. Indeed, the rumour of the raid had begun to spread and the local television station KWTX became particularly interested in capturing the event. Although the ATF had not disclosed a final date for the raid, it was clear from its interaction with the newspaper that

the agency would prefer it to be before, or at least in close conjunction with, the publication of the first part of the article series. The final ATF preparations had also left behind clues that were quickly picked up by both the paper and the television station: hotel bookings for over 150 agents, emergency medical services being put on standby, helicopter transports being booked, and – straight out of the book of law enforcement clichés – large orders of coffee and doughnuts had been placed. On ATF's part, as part of the media preparations, a decision was taken to equip some of the agents with cameras for the purpose of capturing media footage as opposed to document evidence (DoT 1993; Reavis 1998:32f).

On the morning of February 28, 1993, the 76 ATF agents at Fort Hood were ferried to Waco. Roadblocks and observation posts were set up on the roads leading into the compound, and a dozen media representatives were starting to circle the outskirts of the area. On his way to meet with his colleagues, one of the KWTX camera men got lost and had to ask a local postman for directions to the compound. It turned out that it was actually within visual range from where the two men met, and in their conversation, the camera man revealed that he was there to cover some sort of big raid that was going to happen very soon. When the postman sped down the road towards the compound, the KWTX reporter wondered if maybe he was a member of the Branch Davidians, and this was indeed the case (DoT 1993:82ff). Had the Branch Davidians not long since found out that they were being investigated by the ATF, this chance encounter finally revealed that a big confrontation was only moments away.

4.1.1 The Branch Davidian of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

The Seventh-day Adventist Church (SDA) is a protestant Christian denomination that was established in 1863. The “seventh day” refers to the movement’s belief that Saturday is the seventh day of creation and thus the day of the Sabbath. It is itself an off-shoot of the 1830:s Millerite movement that held that the advent of the Second Coming of Christ was near – specifically that it would happen some time during 1843–44, finally settling on October 22, 1844. When the promised date came and went without a Second Coming in sight, an event later called the Great Disappointment, the movement lost its momentum and rapidly began losing followers (Bromley & Silver 1995b:44; Pitts 1995:21; Reavis 1998:51ff). Among the remaining believers, there was a split between those who believed the date itself was wrong and those that believed that error lay in the interpretation of what was going to happen. In the latter camp, there soon emerged an idea that what the date was referring to was not the actual return of Christ, but the beginning of his final phase of heavenly atonement and that the actual cleansing of the Earth that many had been expecting was yet to come. It was from this belief – that the advent of the Second Coming is drawing ever closer – that the Adventist Church was born. The key surviving tenant from the Millerite movement is still that the Second Coming and the scourging of the Earth are real

events that will take place at the end of Christ's millennium-long reign of heaven (Seventh-day Adventist Church 2009). This specific belief makes the Adventist Church among the most clear examples of a millenarian sect (Bromley & Silver 1995b:44; Anthony & Robbins 1997:272).

In 1930, an Adventist Sabbath school teacher named Victor Houteff published what he called "a call for reformation" where he outlined a number of points where the Church had become lax in its interpretation of the Bible (Pitts 1995:24f). Instead of getting the reformation he wanted, Houteff was "dis-fellowshipped", but his ideas had still found some fertile ground within the church. In 1934, they had grown strong enough that an official hearing was held to determine the reasoning and validity of Houteff's claims, after which his teachings were formally labelled as false. In response, Houteff's followers established the distinct Davidian Seventh-day Adventist Church (DSDA), so named because they were dedicated to the goal of restoring the biblical kingdom of David. One of the main goals of the new church was to determine the identity of the 144,000 people mentioned in the Book of Revelations who would survive judgement day – 12,000 from each of the twelve Jewish tribes. The DSDA was formally organised on March 12, 1934 and began searching for a place to locate their headquarters. Just over a year later, they purchased a lot of land outside Waco and named it the "Mount Carmel Center" after the place where Elijah built an altar to God (Bromley & Silver 1995b:46; Pitts 1995:25). In 1955, Houteff died during a campaign to spread the Davidian belief, and after a brief power struggle, his widow Florence took control over the Church and began to assert her interpretations of her husband's teachings onto the church followers (*cf.* Pitts 1995:26ff; Reavis 1998:58ff).

Before long, however, Florence Houteff made a break with her husband's teachings of preparation and instead made a firm prediction that a 42-month period described in the Book of Revelations would take place between 1955 and 1959, ending on April 22, 1959 (Bromley & Silver 1995b:49). This prediction and the focus away from Victor Houteff's original teachings was soon challenged by other Davidians, in particular by Benjamin Roden, who claimed to have received revelations from God that he was the Church's true leader. When he was rebuffed by the Church leadership, he went off to found the *Branch* Davidian organisation as a separate group from the main DSDA (Bromley & Silver 1995b:49ff; Pitts 1995:32f; Reavis 1998:61f). As with the Millerite predictions, the date Florence Houteff had predicted came and went, and when the promised events failed to materialise, the church fractured (Pitts 1995:30ff). Among those that did not outright leave the DSDA, many joined Benjamin Roden and his newly-founded Branch Davidian. In 1962, the remaining organisation still led by Houteff disbanded and the assets were sold off. The Branch Davidian took this opportunity to acquire some of the Mount Carmel property and (re)established themselves there. Benjamin Roden died in 1979 and leadership of 'The Branch,' as he had

decided to call the organisation, passed to his wife Lois, who started to inject a decidedly feminist interpretation into the group's teachings – a development that met with some resistance among Branch members (Pitts 1995:35ff; Reavis 1998:63ff).

In 1981, Vernon Howell joined the group as a musician during their services. A year later, he claimed to have been received the gift of prophecy and, with the permission of Lois Roden, started teaching his own visions and interpretations of the Bible (Anthony & Robbins 1997:272; Reavis 1998:27ff). Lois' son George Roden, already at odds with his mother's alteration of the Branch's tenants, saw Howell's teachings and Lois permissiveness as further erosions of the true path and the matter came to a head when George ejected Howell and his followers from Mount Carmel at gunpoint. In 1985, the Howell faction set up camp in Palestine, Texas, some 150km away from Waco. Howell also travelled to Israel, where he claimed to have had a revelation identifying him as the modern king Koresh (Cyrus the Great of Persia) and as God's tool in the re-establishment of the kingdom of David. The revelation caused him to change his name to David Koresh (Reavis 1998:74ff, 93ff; Gallagher 2000:84, 91f). A year later, Lois Roden died and control over the Branch Davidians formally passed to George Roden but his support had waned since Howell's departure, whereas the newly-renamed Koresh who always had Lois' support had managed to build his congregation. In 1987, the conflict between the two once again ended in an armed confrontation, this time with Roden fleeing the compound with two minor gun-shot wounds (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:14f; Bromley & Silver 1995b:52ff; Reavis 1998:78ff).

In 1989, George Roden murdered his roommate, who had claimed to be the true messiah, and was declared legally insane. Roden was sent to a mental hospital and lost ownership over Mount Carmel due to a huge tax debt. Koresh and his followers managed to raise the capital required to take ownership over the compound. On moving back in, they found evidence of a methamphetamine lab operated by the people who had rented the property from Roden since the 1987 confrontation. The equipment was handed over to the local law enforcement and removed. Finally in charge of the Branch Davidian at the original Davidian site, Koresh began proselytising his own brand of adventism, proclaiming himself the Lamb of God who would interpret the Seven Seals of the Book of Revelation (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:14f; Pitts 1995:37; Reavis 1998:81f).

Koresh's beliefs revolved around an intricate reading of the Bible suggesting that the apocalypse was near, and that he was the only one who could see and understand the signs. The Branch Davidians were among the people who would be saved, but were also destined to fight against the forces of evil in the final confrontation. In fact, a conflict with the forces of Babylon was one of the signs that one of the Seven Seals had been broken, and one of the more common associations with these mythical forces was all forms of official government. Giving in to these forces would mean not only the damnation of themselves,

but of all humanity, as well as the failure of the prophesied 144,000 to earn their place in heaven (*cf.* Scruggs *et al.* 1993:2; Tabor & Gallagher 1995:52ff; Anthony & Robbins 1997:268, 275; Reavis 1998: 102ff; Gallagher 2000:83, 86ff; Wessinger 2000b:91ff).

One important peculiarity with the Branch Davidian under Koresh was its many Jewish influences. The SDA itself provided some of these, such as the Saturday Sabbath and an adherence to kosher laws. The DSDA, in turn, added a focused on, and a crucial importance of, the Jewish tribes, since descendants of these tribes would supposedly be saved during the Second Coming. Koresh himself seemed to have introduced even more elements that he picked up during his travels in Israel, such as the observance of passover. All in all, the many layers of added, splintered, and re-focused beliefs and teachings from the protestant roots makes the Branch Davidian belief system similar, but distinctly different from “schoolbook” Christianity (Reavis 1998:49f Gallagher 2000:86f). On top of this, Koresh’s own prophecies, readings and Bible interpretations added a complex layer of interconnected textual references that were distinctive to the hundred-odd people living at the Mount Carmel compound. At the same time, Koresh allowed breaches of some of the rules, especially for himself, and the first Herald-Tribune article quoted him as saying he was probably the biggest sinner of them all. Unlike the other members, Koresh was allowed to drink beer and eat meat (*cf.* England & McCormick 1993; Gallagher 2000:89f).

Among Koresh’s edicts were also his proclamation that God had given him alone the right to have numerous wives, and that for all intents and purposes, all female members capable of producing offspring belonged to him. With parental consent, children as young as 14 could be legally married at the time – a circumstance that was easy to arrange in the close-knit group – and according to Koresh’s “House of David doctrine”, he was supposed to father 24 children as in his restoration of the mythical kingdom (*cf.* Scruggs *et al.* 1993:16; Bromley & Silver 1995a, 1995b:63ff; Reavis 1998:112f). These facts quickly became the source of many rumours in the surrounding community, and not only sparked the 1993 Waco Tribune-Herald exposé, but also the 1992 investigation by the Texas Child Protection Services (TCPS). While many former group members were willing to provide stories about child abuse, statutory rape, and indoctrinations into forced marriages for the former, the TCPS investigation failed to uncover any hard evidence to support the charges, since all the women ostensibly had official or common-law husbands in the group. In the aftermath of the 1993 siege, one of the bigger sources of contention as far as the government’s involvement with the group was whether or not these accusations had any bearing on how the case was handled. The witness reports mainly came from former members who had a reason to hold a grudge against Koresh and the official investigation turned up empty, but on the other hand, it is suspected that the lack of evidence was more due to the Branch Davidians covering for Koresh than to the abuse not taking place (*cf.* Scruggs *et al.* 1993:215ff; Wright 1995b:83ff). While the Herald-Tribune’s article called for the authorities to intervene to stop both

physical and sexual abuse of under-aged children, the case had already been dealt with and the ATF did not have the authority to investigate these kinds of allegations. It was therefore never germane to the decision to raid the compound (*cf.* England & McCormick 1993; DoT 1993:157ff; Ellison & Bartowski 1995; Wright 1995b:86ff).

The combination of these beliefs made the group – who was already reasonably well-armed and who had already seen two gun-related altercations take place on its premises – shift its focus even further towards the preparation for outright warfare (Anthony & Robbins 1997:272f; Gallagher 2000:89). One member was a federally licensed dealer in firearms, and ran a gun business, ‘The Mag Bag’, which provided the group both with additional income and with legitimately obtained weaponry (DoT 1993:126ff; Reavis 1998:37f). It was a Mag Bag shipment that eventually alerted the UPS and the ATF to the amount of weapon parts being shipped to the group. The weapons bought and sold, including assault rifles and .50” calibre rifles, were legal to own as long as they were semi-automatic, whereas unreported and unlicensed fully automatic conversions would have rendered the same weapons illegal. The fact that weapons existed and were in use in large quantities around the compound was therefore never a great secret or surprise – only the legal status of some of them were occasionally in question. The same neighbour that provided the ATF with a witness report of automatic and heavy-calibre gun fire at the compound had previously made a similar report to the local sheriff, who had investigated the matter but found no evidence of wrong-doing.

During the siege, all of these things became stumbling blocks for the FBI efforts. The peculiarities of the Branch Davidian religion made the negotiators fail to understand or outright miss many of the religious references Koresh used. The potential for continued abuse of the many children trapped in the compound was a key issue that had to be resolved. The amount and style of armaments at the group’s disposal was a constant threat to anyone nearby. The biggest problem by far, however, was that in the minds of the devout Branch Davidians, the ATF raid had already amply confirmed Koresh’s interpretation of the government as the Babylonian enemy that they could not yield to – the FBI was cut from much the same block (Anthony & Robbins 1997:274f; Gallagher 2000:86, 89, 92f).

4.1.2 The Federal Bureau of Investigation

Established in 1908 as the Bureau of Investigation (BOI) and renamed the Federal Bureau of Investigation in 1935, the FBI is among other things the principal agency investigating violent federal crimes. It is a curious mix of both centralisation and a distributed work-load, with its headquarters located in Washington D.C., many of its specialist functions located in Quantico, Virginia, and 56 field offices spread around the country with each holding significant local control over the cases they handle (Kessler 1993).

It should be stressed that the FBI has fundamentally been a crime-fighting agency. Its preparations, strategies, tactics, personnel decisions, and scientific preference have all focused on the preventing, investigating, and solving crime. While terrorism was among the list of crimes it was tasked to deal with, the presumed motivations of such actors was still either political or monetary, and commonly supported by foreign countries. Domestic terrorism was and motivations outside of this spectrum were not issues it had commonly come across, and even then, a terrorist is a form of criminal at heart. Millenarianism and a perceived fundamentally *moral* conflict between the law of the land and religious laws was not something the FBI had to with on a daily basis during the 1990s. Even so, there was a precedent in the form of the 10-day siege at Ruby Ridge in August 1992 (Pitcavage 2001). Here, a member of the Aryan Nation, Randy Weaver, had been involved in an altercation, first with the ATF and then with the U.S. Marshal Services (USMS) near his cabin at Ruby Ridge. The FBI Hostage Rescue Team (HRT) was called in to deal with the barricade situation as Weaver's family took shelter in the cabin. But a near-complete lack of analysis of what had caused the incident, combined with very loose rules of engagement, led to a disastrous mismanagement of the situation. The episode ended with one USMS deputy, Weaver's son, and Weaver's wife dead. In addition, the courts cleared Weaver of all wrong-doings at Ruby Ridge, leaving his initial rejection of the court system and failure to appear before a judge – the reason the USMS got involved to begin with – as his only crime.

Not even a year later, the FBI employed a special Crisis Management Program (CMP) that significantly short-cut many of the structures normally seen on the organisational chart. The stated purpose of the CMP was to “preserve life, and to enforce laws over which the FBI has jurisdiction” (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:114). In such cases, a *Special Agent in Charge* (SAC) was established, who would answer directly to the FBI director and deputy director. The directors would assign specialist teams to the SAC from the various divisions within the agency, but as the title suggests, it is the SAC would be in charge of these teams in the field. The allocated resources would be combined into a coherent crisis management team.

In the Waco case, the team consisted of a negotiation team supported by the Critical Incident Negotiation Team (CINT), the FBI Hostage Rescue Team, and an FBI Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) team. In addition, numerous logistical support and legal counsel teams were involved, and an investigation team was made available for when the situation was resolved (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:149ff). The SAC was supported by three assistant SACs to allow for shift work and to let one of the assistant SACs consistently be the outwards contact and handle daily media briefings. The FBI headquarters also provided liaisons with the armed forces to obtain information about the weaponry the agents were facing, but also to provide transportation and special equipment. In particular, in this case there was a concern that some of the larger-calibre weaponry the Branch Davidians possessed would easily defeat any protection that the FBI

agents and vehicles had (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:123). The involvement of the armed forces could be somewhat problematic since the Posse Comitatus Act of 1878 prohibited the use of military personnel for the purpose of law enforcement (*cf.* Revis 1998:122ff). This was solved by the U.S. Army providing nine unarmed, but suitably armoured M2 Bradley fighting vehicles, as well as two M1A1 Abrams main battle tanks and five M728 Combat Engineering Vehicles (CEVs, which were essentially WWII tanks equipped with demolition tools rather than guns).

The FBI's involvement at Waco was sparked by the ATF's initial raid. The violent response from the Branch Davidians had left five ATF agents dead and twenty wounded, which meant that this was now a case of deadly force being used against federal agents as well as a major violent crime – both of which fell within the purview of the FBI. However, already from the start, the agency had misgivings. One of the assistant deputy directors declared the task of the SAC as inherently difficult since the agency entered the case “backwards” – the preservation of life and enforcement of laws that the CMP is set up for had already been unsuccessful once and the agency was there to “salvage a failed tactical effort” (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:118).

To complicate matters further, the initial ATF raid was already a combined effort between numerous law enforcement agencies, and with the FBI on the scene, they were multiplied even further. In total, some 370 people from eight different agencies had to be coordinated: the ATF, the U.S. Customs, the Waco Police Department, the McLennan County Sheriff's Office, the Texas Rangers and DPS Patrol from the Texas Department of Public Safety, the U.S. Army supporting both the ATF and the FBI, and the Texas National Guard. All this on top of the nearly 700 FBI personnel that were directly involved, either locally or in nearby field offices (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:10, 228ff).

On location at Mount Carmel, the FBI set up a team of 25 negotiators, initially working in one day shift and one night shift, but later reconfigured for three 8-hour shifts (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:124ff). Their FBI's main guiding principle was one of waiting and of communicating a number of rules of safety to the Branch Davidians to ensure that they would not engage in any kind of behaviour that would lead to the loss of life. The negotiators also employed a number of themes in their communication: appealing to the parents of the children who had been released at various stages to come out and join them; assuring that no-one who came out of their free will would be harmed or mistreated; demonstrating a concern for the safety of everyone involved as conditions within the compound deteriorated; driving a wedge between the leaders of the group in the hopes that, if Koresh would not lead people out, someone else would; and flattering Koresh's sense of importance by implying that he could use the media sensation to spread his word. The negotiators also decided on a strategy of “stress escalation”, explaining the increasingly harsh measures the FBI would use if the Branch Davidians remained defiant, as well as the use of sleep deprivation tactics to soften their resolve (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:126ff).

The negotiation team and the SAC also had access to a number of accredited subject-matter experts that had worked with the agency before, many of which were tied to the National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime (NCAVC). These were all experts in fields that were classically connected to law enforcement: behavioural scientists, psycholinguists, threat assessment psychologists, forensic psychologists, psychiatrists, and MDs (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:155ff, 179f). A few non-associated experts on religious matters also approached the agency and offered their services, but the focus of the agency was to establish a criminal profile of the main actors involved. The experts therefore aided in the formulation of negotiation strategies, in establishing profiles on the motives and motivations of the group leaders and their followers, and in determining whether or not there was a risk for cult-like mass suicide (*cf.* Hall 1995).

The HRT was a special unit within the FBI that was always on stand by to be deployed into highly threatening situations (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:144ff). At Mount Carmel, the HRT provided inner perimeter security by setting up razor wires and sniping posts at key locations around the compound, and also observed and monitored what was happening inside the compound, using thermal imaging and night-vision devices to track activity at night-time and to a limited degree inside the confines of the building. The HRT commanders quickly came to the conclusion that the visibility from the compound and the flimsiness of the structures would make a direct assault impossible without putting lives at danger on both sides, much as the AFT raid had already proven (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:144ff).

Finally, the role of the SWAT team was to provide an outer perimeter around the compound and ensure that no-one could enter or leave the area without being apprehended (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:18f, 148f). However, there were concerns that the distinction between the SWAT team's "outer" and the HRT's "inner" perimeter was not always clear and that there seemed to be no planning for and insufficient coverage in case of a large-scale break-out attempt. Similarly, there were some friction between the tactical elements – HRT and SWAT – and the negotiation team. While the latter had chosen a more diplomatic approach of dialogue and reasoning, the former tended more towards intimidation tactics and an openly aggressive stance. The negotiators were also often left out of the loop on what the SAC and the tactical commander were planning, which on numerous occasions resulted in the Branch Davidians making concessions to the negotiators, only to be met by physical retaliation efforts that had been planned in advance by the tactical element. Conversely, the HRT observers were very careful not share their tips when they had spotted something, such as the location of heavier weapons, since this gave them an advantage in being able to plan around this placement, whereas the negotiators would point out to the Branch Davidians that these weapons had been spotted and that this would be seen as dangerous and provoking behaviour on their part.

Some of the mismatches between the negotiated results and the FBI response were even a direct result of the negotiators' own advice on strategy. Not everyone

felt that the sleep deprivation tactic was constructive, and the SAC employed a number of tactics to step up the stress escalation strategy without warning to either the negotiators or the Branch Davidians. (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:139ff).

Outside of the FBI, the Justice Department (DoJ) took a close interest in the case. The ATF raid took place only a month into the new Clinton administration, and many high offices had not been manned yet. The new attorney general (AG) Janet Reno would not arrive until March 12, and in the mean-time, an acting AG had been assigned from the Bush transition team. The acting AG was therefore mainly involved in the decision to borrow armoured vehicles from the U.S. Army, which at first caused some concern for the White House until it was made clear that it was a purely protective measure and not for use in offensive engagements.

The DoJ had no major involvement until early April, when the FBI started formulating a plan to bring the siege to an end (Reavis 1998:264f). It is indicative of the FBI methodology that up until this point, the managing of the crisis was handled on the SAC level, and only when the far more elaborate and cross-departmental scheme of using military vehicles to inject large amounts of CS tear gas into the compound was devised did the situation warrant that the plan was cleared with the DoJ and properly signed off by the FBI director. Up until that point, the attorney general relied heavily on the observations of her deputy assistant AG, who travelled to Waco and Mount Carmel to get a sense of what was happening on the ground. The final plan was first devised and proposed by the crisis management team to the FBI director. He agreed that it was a good plan and that he would take the matter to the attorney general. On April 12, the AG was briefed on the CS gas insertion plan, and had to be convinced numerous times that *action, of any type at all*, was needed. Only when the senior FBI officials could explain that waiting was no longer an option was she willing to discuss the plan itself. In particular, the AG was concerned that the use of gas would have an adverse effect on the children still at the compound, and the concept of “gassing” everyone inside had some nasty connotations (Reavis 1998:264f). The FBI brought in military personnel to describe the difference between this imagery and the use of a non-lethal tear gas. Eventually, the plan was deemed safe enough for the attorney general to brief the president and, satisfied that there was no other safe option, the order to proceed went down the chain of command from AG to FBI director to SAC. The next day, the plan was put into practice.

4.2 Chronology of events

After almost a year of investigation, observation, and planning, the ATF starts to get ready to act against the Branch Davidians. However, their activities have not gone unnoticed. An observation post at Mount Carmel was established under the cover story that the agents are students at a local college, but their age and possession of new large vehicles make it a flimsy cover at best. (DoT 1993:33, 51; Reavis 1998:67f) One of the agents is tasked with getting inside the compound

to learn more about the layout and the potential presence and location of guards, and starts attending bible readings held there by Koresh. On Sunday morning, February 28, he makes a last visit to gain some final intelligence about the current situation on site. Meanwhile, a member of the Branch Davidians working his morning postal route has a chance encounter with a cameraman from the local KWTX television station who is looking for “Rodenville” – an old name for the Mount Carmel Centre that has lived on ever since the Roden family took over the compound. The cameraman has been looking for roadblocks, not knowing that the ATF only establishes them at the moment a raid starts specifically to avoid early detection, and thinks that since he has not seen any, he must be miles off. Yet, in reality, the compound is just a kilometre down the road, visible from the intersection where he has stopped (DoT 1993:84f; Reavis 1998:44f).

Upon learning why the cameraman is out there, the Branch member drives off towards Mount Carmel to warn the rest of the congregation. The cameraman sees nothing out of the ordinary and back-tracks to a nearby store to call his news director, and is told to go back to the intersection where he thought he had gotten lost and wait to see if something happens. When he returns, the roadblock he was expecting has been put into place and he proceeds to set up his camera. At the compound, the postman arrives in the middle of a biblical discussion between Koresh and the under-cover ATF agent and informs Koresh that the agency is about to perform a raid. Fearing that the raid might start early or that he might be caught inside if he lingers, the ATF agent excuses himself and leaves to report his final findings, but not before Koresh wishes him good luck and states that “the time has come” and keeps repeating “they’re coming” while spying out of a window (DoT 1993:89; Reavis 1998:71ff).

4.2.1 February 28 – The ATF Raid

The report that the Branch Davidians know of the raid spreads quickly among the assembled ATF agents, but the decision is made to go ahead. The agents board the trailers that will take them from Waco out to Mount Carmel, and a helicopter team departs to make a number of diversionary low-altitude fly-bys over the compound. Before they can execute the diversions, however, they take fire from within the compound and have to divert to a nearby field for emergency inspection of the vehicles (DoT 1993:95f). The raid has begun and it is already too late to warn off the approaching trucks full of agents.

As the first trailer pulls up on the compound driveway, Koresh appears in the main doorway to ask what is going on. The first agents out identify themselves and state that they have a search and arrest warrant, at which point Koresh slams the door shut. Reporters who have followed the trailers to the compound but stopped at the main road have just had time to set up their cameras as gun fire erupts from within the building. The Branch Davidians are firing out at the agents through the closed front door and front windows. Teams moving up to enter

the building come under heavy fire and two of the ATF vehicles sustain direct hits to their engines, making it impossible for the convoy to leave. One team attempting a rooftop insertion into the building receives incoming fire through the flimsy outer wall. Two agents are killed instantly, one receives multiple gunshot wounds before he can roll himself off the roof, and two more are momentarily stuck on the upper floor of the building. A third agent is also shot and killed while providing covering fire for the roof insertion team from the ground. The fourth and final ATF fatality happens at the front of the compound as an agent scrambles for cover from the gunfire (DoT 1993:96ff; Reavis 1998:156ff, 162ff).

Inside the building, one Branch Davidian member frantically calls 911 and is transferred to the Waco Police Department. The deputy that responds at first fails to communicate with the caller, who soon hangs up, but the deputy calls back to the number recorded by the 911 system and finally manages to reach the member who placed the original call, and then attempts to put him in touch with the ATF. Unfortunately, the ATF liaison has turned his radio off and the deputy's radio call is answered by a different agent. Afraid that future calls into the compound will fail, the deputy does not hang up to let the ATF make a call, and instead a very literal game of telephone evolves that leads nowhere. Soon after, Koresh places a call to the same deputy on a second line, leaving the deputy to juggle three different lines of communication (Reavis 1998:167ff). Meanwhile, the ATF agents scramble to find a number for a line into the building and after many attempts, including having to scream at the Branch Davidians to pick up the phone in the middle of the intermittent gunfire, a direct line is established. It takes several minutes of negotiation to reach a cease-fire, and some 90 minutes after the gunfight started, the shooting finally ends. The agent who managed to roll off the roof can finally be retrieved and is still alive in spite of the barrage he has sustained, the fall, and the subsequent bleeding. In total, 20 ATF agents are wounded from gunfire and another eight have sustained other injuries from trying to move around during the fighting. Among the Branch Davidians, three people are killed directly by the ATF. Two more are "mercy-killed" by other members of the group as their wounds are regarded as too severe to be handled. In addition, four more Davidians have been shot, but without lethal or life-threatening consequences, among them David Koresh (*cf.* DoT 1993:102ff; Scruggs *et al.* 1993:24; Wessigner 2000b:57).

As the ATF recovers and evacuates its dead and wounded, the perimeter they intended to set up falters. Three Branch Davidians who were hiding out at the nearby Mag Bag warehouse manage to take a car to a house close to the compound as the separate team originally tasked with executing a search warrant at Mag Bag aborted their mission as the shoot-out started. In the afternoon, as the three try to enter the compound from the rear, they are discovered by an ATF team and a second prolonged gunfight ensues. In the end, one of the Branch Davidians surrenders, one is killed, and the third manages to escape but is later

found and arrested. (*cf.* DoT 1993:111f; Scruggs *et al.* 1993:25; Reavis 1998:190ff; Danforth 2000:2).

During all of this, the negotiations between the ATF and Koresh continue, but higher up in the organisation, a decision is made to call in the FBI HRT which specialises in these kinds of delicate hostage-barricade situations (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:21ff). The San Antonio field office handles the region Waco belongs to, so the SAC is called in from there and arrives in Waco in the early evening with a contingent of local FBI agents. The SACs of the Oklahoma City, El Paso, and New Orleans offices are also called in to assist. Before control can be handed over, however, the negotiation efforts yield their first results: at 9 in the evening, two children are released from the compound and, an hour later, two more. In return, Koresh is allowed to have his teachings broadcast over radio, and CNN conducts a telephone interview with him. After that, the still limited negotiation team starts to worry that this free access to the media might hurt future negotiation efforts (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:26, 130; Tabor 1995:263; Reavis 1998:200ff, 222ff).

4.2.2 Negotiations

On the morning of March 1, the Treasury Department formally decides to let the FBI take over the situation, and the FBI SAC takes charge on site. This finally allows the full HRT to be called in, along with representatives from CINT. The acting attorney general briefs the president on the matter and receives the general policy directive to negotiate until the situation is resolved and to advise the president if a change from a negotiated to a tactical solution is deemed necessary. The acting AG passes this directive on to the FBI director, and from there on to the SAC who uses it to establish some preliminary rules of engagement: avoid gunfire if at all possible, unless there is a threat of immediate bodily harm (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:27f).

During the first day, a series of conversations are held between the negotiators and Koresh, leading to the release of another 10 children. However, the concern from the previous evening is acted upon and all other lines in or out of the compound are cut off – Koresh can now only communicate through the negotiation team. When he discovers this during the early evening, Koresh becomes agitated and starts to make implicit threats against the lives of the remaining children (Tabor 1995:264; Reavis 1998:144ff, 215ff). His agitation is compounded by the sight of the FBI's borrowed armoured vehicles moving in on the compound to set up a more secure inner perimeter. It takes two hours, but the negotiators finally manage to calm Koresh down and he promises to let more children leave. Two are released at 8.27pm, and two more at 11.05pm (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:29f).

As the final message of the day, Koresh makes it clear to the negotiators that suicide is not something they are planning since his followers have to be alive to spread his message to the world. He also promises that everyone inside is

willing to come out if a taped recording of tone of his speeches is played nationwide. The FBI starts preparing for the mass exodus and contacts the Christian Broadcast Network (CBN) to arrange for the tape to be played. During the night, as a demonstration of good faith, two more children are let out (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:30f).

To aid their efforts, the negotiators call on the services of an old FBI consultant – a UCLA professor of forensic psychiatry. He arrives in Waco the next day and begins to sift through the vast documentation on Koresh and the Branch Davidians (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:160f). Also on the next day, the agency has prepared expedient legal processing and medical care of the people coming out, and a deadline is set for 1pm. Early in the morning, the Branch Davidians call to confirm that the tape is ready and that four more people were coming out – two children and two elderly women, one of which will bring the tape – and this happens a few minutes later. On inspecting the tape, the FBI determines that it does not contain an agreed-upon passage stating Koresh's intent to surrender, so one is recorded over the phone. The tape is then delivered to the CBN and another station, KRLD, that also agreed to broadcast the message. Meanwhile, Koresh begins discussing the number of people who will actually come out so that the reception can be properly scaled, and a few minutes before the deadline, a headcount of 43 men, 47 women, and 20 children is delivered to the negotiators (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:31ff). Half an hour later, already past the deadline, Koresh calls to ask for a stretcher to be delivered to the front door, which the negotiators agree to, and yet another half an hour later, the stretcher is brought into the compound.

Although the deadline has come and gone, and while the tape is being broadcast, the two parties are still discussing the logistics of the surrender, and the Branch Davidians have now decided that they will come out in groups of two or three, organised by Koresh's second in command, to facilitate the reception (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:34ff). Two hours past the deadline, the vehicles the FBI has called in to handle the mass of people are in place, but the word from inside the compound is that everyone is taking their time to say goodbye to Koresh. Two more hours pass, and now Koresh is said to lead the congregation in prayer. Yet another hour later, the group's second in command calls the negotiators to start preaching to them, but is soon interrupted by an increasingly impatient negotiator and is asked to proceed with the agreed-upon exit from the compound. He soon calls back with a message from Koresh that God has told him to wait for a sign. The negotiations continue from 6pm to midnight, but without results (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:36f; Reavis 1998:218ff). The previously consulted forensic psychiatrist renders the judgement that it is highly unlikely that Koresh will leave the compound willingly and that it is more likely than not that he has a suicidal streak that can easily manifest itself as a suicide pact within the congregation if he manages to manipulate them well enough (*cf.* Hall 1995). Moreover, Koresh's political beliefs as a pro-gun extremist might clash with the continued presence of the ATF – the agency specifically established to control and curtail pro-gun

extremism. While the ATF is on the scene, Koresh's conception of a monolithic government body will mean that the FBI will be painted by the same brush and that he will never negotiate in good faith with – much less surrender to – any associated agency. Further research suggested that not only can Koresh not leave, but he will also resist anyone else leaving. Such a loss to a manipulating personality would mean losing power, and is an unacceptable outcome in Koresh's belief that this was a fight between the forces of good and the ATF "devil." (*cf.* Scruggs *et al.* 1993:160ff; Anthony & Robbins 1997:275). The following day, the psychiatrist leaves the negotiators with a number of action points that might help their efforts, such as flattering Koresh's ego by acknowledging his world view and suggesting that he would win the confrontation even if it was fought in a court of law.

On March 3, in spite of the disappointing previous day, the attempts to enact the agreed-upon plan continue. A news broadcast reports that the two women that had previously left had been charged with attempted murder, which caused some confusion with the negotiators and consternation with the Branch Davidians. Looking into the matter, the FBI finds out that the report is correct, but it contacts the U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) to explain how this will hamper their efforts (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:36ff). A deal is made where the two women will instead merely be held as material witnesses, and this outcome is communicated to the Branch Davidians. During the day, the negotiators are also advised by a psychiatrist from the University of Louisville on how to interpret Koresh's renege promises – can they be used as an argument in future negotiations and does it say anything about his intentions to surrender at all? (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:159)

Beyond that, the day is characterised by further preaching by Koresh to the negotiators. It is worth noting that the first official report by Scruggs *et al.* describes both this conversation and the one the previous evening as "rambling" and "making little sense", with some conversations being labelled as "bible babble" (*cf.* Scruggs *et al.* 1993:36, 39ff, 38, 39, 70; Tabor 1995:266ff; Reavis 1998:220). Nevertheless, in exchange for letting him preach to them, Koresh agrees to send out one boy and his puppies in the late afternoon. The only other break is when a nurse among the Branch Davidians is allowed to report on the status of the wounded inside the compound as well as the state and nature of their wounds.

4.2.3 Stalemate

March 4 proceeds in a similar manner, Koresh's preaching is supplemented by an attorney within the congregation who launches into a rant about how God's laws and U.S. law are in conflict and how the nation is in a state of decay. Early in the morning, another child is released, and after nearly a full day of preaching, Koresh promises to send out one more the following morning, which occurs (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:41, 43, 49).

That small victory aside, the FBI has a bad day. The FBI is informed that one of the girls released on March 2 had carried a note to her sister stating that, by the time the note reaches her, the girls' parents will be dead. The agency further learns that one avenue of increasing the pressure on the group, cutting off its water supply, is essentially useless since the compound has its own water supply that cannot be controlled from the outside. Finally, Koresh's preachings take a darker turn as he explains how he has been preparing to do battle against the U.S. government since 1985 (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:42ff).

The negotiators receive another brief from the UCLA psychiatrist, stating that a rational approach will most likely not work against Koresh. Rather, the negotiators need to appeal to his narcissism and delusions of grandeur (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:166f).

The day after is characterised by constantly failed bargaining. On numerous occasions, various people inside the compound ask for favours or concessions from the FBI, who in turn respond that they can have what they want if they let more people out (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:53ff). In each instance, the trade is rejected by the Branch Davidians. Koresh also introduces a new element in his preaching, stating outright that he *is* Christ. March 7 passes in a very similar pattern with an offer of favours including milk for the children and access to the media, and once again the trade against people leaving the compound is rejected (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:57ff). Koresh now offers a new deal for surrender: if the FBI can find a negotiator that can prove him wrong about the Seven Seals, he will come out. Outside the compound, the FBI is approached by a team of religious scholars who offer their services in trying to decode Koresh's ramblings, but they are turned away (Tabor 1995:273; Reavis 1998:253f). The next day's efforts are a bit more constructive as the Branch Davidians are allowed to briefly venture outside to bury one of their dead and receive six gallons of milk. They also send out a video tape showing Koresh's wounds and in return receive a number of pre-recorded messages from family members over the phone (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:59f; Tabor 1995:265f; Reavis 1998:225f).

On March 9, the FBI turns up the pressure. The negotiators actively try to drive a wedge between Koresh and his right-hand man, with little to no result. In the middle of the night, the power to the compound is also cut, which causes Koresh to refuse all further negotiation until it has been restored (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:60ff, 129; Reavis 1998:260ff). In the mid-morning, the power is restored so the Branch Davidians can watch an FBI news conference about the siege, and later in the day, the agency responds in kind to the previous day's video from inside the compound, this one showing the released children playing and being happy. The Branch Davidians respond by saying that it mainly looks like the children are allowed to misbehave. One of the women also calls to complain about her wounded finger and is asked to come out to seek medical attention, but refuses to do so (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:62; Reavis 1998:228f). An FBI forensic psychologist is brought in to review the video tapes released from inside the

compound and to comment on Koresh's psychological make-up. The conclusion is that Koresh is very similar to a con-artist with a strong narcissistic streak. This view is largely shared by a retired RCMP psychologist, who also calls Koresh's mode of behaviour "self-directed, manipulative, and [indicative of] a hedonist" (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:170f).

The next day follows the same pattern: the electricity is cut during the night due to the stalemate and is restored in time for the FBI news conference. A new video tape is sent into the compound, this time containing pleas from family members on the outside begging the Branch Davidians to come out (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:62). Two attorneys claiming to represent the Davidian leaders present themselves to the FBI, but since no-one on the inside has requested representation, the attorneys are not allowed to contact anyone in the compound (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:68; Reavis 1998:251ff). On March 11, a glimmer of hope is seen as the FBI received word that at least three people will come out the next day, including the wife of the man who was shot while returning from Mag Bag and who had already sent out her children on March 1. Another brief spot of hope is a mention that Koresh is listening to a radio show about a "shooting star" called the 'guitar nebula' (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:64; Reavis 1998:262f), and that Koresh sees this as a sign. The negotiators hope that he will take this as the sign he mentioned on March 2, but Koresh soon dismisses that notion.

As promised, one of the women comes out the next day morning, as does one of the men later in the evening (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:64ff). Two more people will supposedly also leave, but they fail to appear and instead promise to leave the next day along with another woman. The released woman hints to the negotiators that more people *want* to leave but that Koresh has a hold over them. Her reunion with her son is also videotaped and the tape is sent inside the compound in the hope that it will inspire more defections. Beyond that, the day is characterised by unresponsiveness on the Branch Davidian's part, which they blame on technical problems with their telephones that the FBI technicians are unable to confirm. A physician is also called in to diagnose the wounded people inside over the phone, and as with previous discussions on the topic, his suggestion is that the people come out to receive treatment, which they decline. The day ends with the SAC deciding to once again cut the power to the compound to establish that the FBI is in control over the Branch Davidians' earthly lives, which causes some concern among the negotiators (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:67). Some of them believe that the Davidians will perceive this as being actively punished for cooperating with the FBI and letting people leave.

March 12 also marks the first day in office for the new attorney general, Janet Reno, who gets briefed on the events so far and then decides to send her deputy assistant to Waco to gain a sense of what is happening on the ground (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:65).

The following day, March 13, the cutting of the power is used as further evidence by the Branch Davidians that the government is really just out to get

them, and that although they had considered letting some people leave, they have now instead decided to remain defiant (*cf.* Anthony & Robbins 1997:270, 275; Reavis 1998:261ff). The FBI respond the next day by remaining largely passive in the communication with the group and instead wait for the Branch Davidians to call them (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:68f). The two exceptions are when the two people who had left on March 12 are allowed to call into the compound and explain how they have been treated fairly, but their message is rebuked as a betrayal by the Koresh. The pressure tactic for the night is to flood the compound with light to disrupt the Branch Davidians' sleep.

During the next couple of days, the contact between the two parties is sporadic. On the 15th, negotiators meet with two Branch Davidians face to face in the compound yard in a positive atmosphere, but attempts to recreate similar meetings during the 16th and 17th are refused by either Koresh or his second in command (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:70ff). Instead, Koresh asks to be put in contact with a religious scholar he had heard on the radio before the FBI cut the power to the compound. This was an interview with one of the scholars that had contacted the bureau a week earlier, and just as then any direct contact is denied. However, the FBI allows a tape recording of the interview to be brought into the compound (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:186; Tabor 1995:274). The FBI once again tries to communicate the benefits of giving up by sending in pre-recorded messages from relatives, and the same messages are later played over loudspeakers to ensure that no-one inside can withhold or censor what the group members heard. A similar tactic is used on the 18th as the phone conversations are universally hostile to any idea of accepting offers from the agency, at which point the same offers are repeated over loudspeakers (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:73; Reavis 1998:227ff). In the meantime, the negotiators receive a memorandum from an FBI-affiliated expert in post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSD), who has studied the children that have been released up until this point. The interviews suggested that the young girls had been subjected to unusual sexual practices, and that the children believe their parents are already dead. The interviewed children talked about wires and explosives and the memorandum concludes that there might exist a final plan for how the confrontation will end.

Over the next couple of days, the FBI sees a couple of smaller triumphs. On the 19th, a package of legal documents arrives that address some of the concerns the group had expressed during previous conversations (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:74f). The USAO sends a letter promising not to seek forfeiture on the compound. The attorneys of Koresh and two other leading members send letters and information about the ATF warrants, and the CBN and a theologians send letters and recordings discussing various religious topics. In response, the Branch Davidians promise to send several people out, probably during the following day, but two men leave already the same evening. The next day, the promise that lots of people would come out very soon is repeated (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:75ff). On the 21st, a total of seven people come out while Koresh spends most of the day in another of his rambling discussions on religion.

As with the power cut on March 12, there is a sharp disconnect between the large number of people leaving the compound and the response from FBI's tactical element. For example, the FBI decides that they need to clear one side of the compound from obstructions, and proceeds to bulldoze the area. Once again, there are concerns among the negotiators that this gives the perception of punishing the group for letting so many people leave (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:77ff). Nevertheless, they call into the compound to explain what is about to happen and why, and they the hope that the Branch Davidians will accept the reasoning. As the day progresses, the negotiators urge the group to send out more people, but get the response that Koresh is sleeping and that nothing can be done without his permission. They receive positive signals from many of the people inside who wish to communicate to their relatives that they will see each other soon. In the evening, a decision is made to play loud music over the loudspeakers throughout the night. In response, the Branch Davidians state that due to the sound terror, no-one will come out. A little later, the loudspeaker malfunctions and remains silent through the night (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:79).

The following week, matters remain largely at a stand-still. During the nights, loud music is played and the compound is bathed in bright light. The assault is also made more personal by calling Koresh a liar and a coward during news conferences. The argumentation from the Branch Davidian side centres on religion and the flaws of the human justice system, whereas the FBI makes increasingly strong demands that groups the size of 10–20 should come out at once (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:79ff). While promises to that effect are made, they are never fulfilled. The period is also fraught with technical issues. On March 23, one person leaves, and is the only person to do so for a long time (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:81). On two occasions, the phone lines go down and new ones have to be established – one of the breakdowns are blamed on the FBI's use of armoured vehicles to clear out the area next to the main structures of the compound, and that in doing so, they have accidentally cut the direct line lying on the ground (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:84ff).

As March draws to a close, the only real change is that the attorneys of Koresh and his second in command get more directly involved in the case. On March 29, the attorneys are allowed to call directly into the compound for a discussion with their respective clients (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:91ff). The outcome is a planned face-to-face meeting the next day, which becomes a cause for concern among some of the law-enforcement agencies involved. Their fear is that the attorneys will provide tips on how to ruin evidence critical to the investigation, but the SAC is more concerned with keeping the negotiation process alive and allows the meeting. It takes a while to figure out the logistics of not providing the Branch Davidians with a potential hostage, while at the same time conforming to Koresh's wishes to not let anyone leave the compound. Over the course of five meetings in three days, the attorneys become increasingly frustrated with the process; they explain to the negotiators that for every demand fulfilled, Koresh

will just come up with a new one, and that he refuses to discuss any kind of surrender (*cf.* Scruggs *et al.* 1993:91ff; Reavis 1998:255f). The UCLA psychiatrist once again contacts the negotiation team and echoes the fear from two weeks earlier that the inconsistent messaging between the HRT and the negotiation team, and even within the negotiation team itself, might be the reason behind Koresh's increased obstinacy.

A second psychiatrist is also consulted, who comes to the conclusion that there are no signs of psychosis in Koresh's behaviour – he is acting in a rational manner, but his rationale rests on a basis of faith rather than fact and his beliefs are not merely delusional (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:166f). At the same time, the psychiatrist describes the belief as thoroughly self-serving, which in relation to the risk for suicide suggests that Koresh would ultimately be more willing to sacrifice others rather than himself. The previously consulted PTSD-expert offers a second memorandum regarding the family structures inside the group. He concludes that the children have a confused idea of what a family is, with Koresh as the only clear “father”. They also express a deeply engrained siege mentality, where the compound is the only place that can offer them safety from the evil world outside. An analysis of the video tapes sent from the compound yields a similar conclusion, with the addition that the Koreshian father figure is also a source of deep-seated fear (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:172f).

4.2.4 *Planning the end*

On April 1, Koresh's attorney finally reports a promising break-through. Koresh has promised to lead his people out of the compound after they have observed passover, which means either April 2 or April 10, since there is some confusion over exactly which dates for passover the Branch Davidians use (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:94f). At the same time, the attorneys have advised their clients to only contact the FBI to discuss the matter of surrender – everything else should be handled through them. The SAC disregards this and tries to maintain contact with the people inside the compound. The question of which dates apply for passover is answered the next day when the second in command calls the negotiators to explain that Koresh is currently too weak to move and that they will not leave until passover is over regardless. On April 3, a Saturday, the attorneys once again try to extract a definitive date from their clients but are told that, since it is the Sabbath, only spiritual matters can be discussed – a conversation the attorneys decline. Instead, the meeting takes place on the 4th, and is described as “very productive” (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:96f), but still incapable of producing an exact answer for when passover will happen. Later during the day, however, one person leaves the compound. A final minor input from the religious-scholarly community is made when a number of taped radio discussions on the topic of the Davidian world view is passed to Koresh. These debates are between the scholars that he had earlier heard and requested to be put in contact with, and

their radio appearances have in part been made for just this type of occasion (Tabor 1995:274ff).

Between April 5 and April 7, very little happens as the Branch Davidian claim to be observing passover, and they only phone out to complain when the agency once again play loud music and distracting noises over the loudspeakers (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:97f). On the 7th, an incident occurs when someone exits the compound and mills around the courtyard. The HRT responds by throwing two flashbang³ grenades at the individual, who retreats inside. Koresh calls the negotiators to inform them that passover will last another 7 days, ending on the 14th⁴, but does not confirm that the end of passover will necessarily mean that the Branch Davidians will come out (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:98).

During April 8, there is no communication between the two parties except for a brief phone call to the second in command among the Davidians, who confirms that everyone will eventually come out but also that there will soon be a surprising turn of events. The next day, he calls ahead to say that he is going to hand over a letter from Koresh and does so in the late afternoon. Later in the evening, the second in command appears outside the compound a second time, this time unannounced, and becomes the target of a another flashbang grenade (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:99ff). He returns inside and calls the negotiators to berate them over the incident. At the same time, a second man enters the compound courtyard and is also flashbanged. After this incident, the Branch Davidians leave their phone off the hook and no further contact can be made. The day after, a second and third letter from Koresh is delivered to the agency, but it turns out that the third one is just a copy of the first letter from the day before. Meanwhile, the HRT begins to install concertina wire around the compound to limit the movement in and out of the area (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:102ff). Yet another flashbang incident takes place on the morning of April 11, but the day at the compound is otherwise uneventful, as is the next day. The letters are studied by a psycholinguist at Syracuse University, who concludes that they exhibit a rampant paranoia, and also a strong self-aggrandising streak making it less plausible that Koresh would consider suicide. Instead, his self-described martyrdom is to come, if at all, at the hands of an enemy, and he is just waiting for the assault that will allow that to happen (*cf.* Scruggs *et al.* 1993:100, 174ff; Tabor 1995:276f).

Away from Mount Carmel, however, other things are brewing. At this point, it has become clear to the SAC that strategy of waiting is not paying off. The compound is well-supplied, with its own water supply and large stores of fuel

3 A flashbang or stun grenade is a non-lethal device that emits a bright flash and a loud bang in order to disorient a person. The light temporarily blind the person and the noise deafens them and causes a temporary loss of balance as the fluids within the ear are displaced.

4 In 1993, the Jewish passover began on April 6 and lasted until April 12. In the diaspora, passover is occasionally observed for 8 days, which would have it end on April 13.

and food, so starving the Branch Davidians out will hardly work (cf. Anthony & Robbins 1997:276; Reavis 1998:265). At the same time, as the ATF raid demonstrated, a frontal assault would simply be too dangerous for all parties involved. Instead, a plan starts to take shape to use CS gas⁵ to debilitate and drive the congregation out in the open (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:101ff, 261ff). Inquiries are made with the armed forces and with law enforcement agencies elsewhere that have experience with the gas to see if it would be suitable for this purpose. The plan is to use the CEVs that the FBI has borrowed from the U.S. Army to tear holes in the compound walls and to inject large clouds of CS until the Branch Davidians simply cannot stand it any more. Information about the pieces of the puzzle are assembled and the plan starts to take shape on April 9 and the plan is presented to attorney general Reno on April 12 (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:263ff). Her answer is not immediate, and the question of why no other option longer exists takes up most of the debates of the day. In addition, questions about the safety of the gas are raised. How will it affect pregnant women and children? What are the long-term effects? What are the odds of the Branch Davidians injuring themselves and how are these odds affected by the use of the gas? A suggestion is made to bring in military expertise for a future meeting to answer some of the more technical questions (Reavis 1998:264ff).

Tuesday, April 13 sees the first communication directly from Koresh in a long while, as he preaches to the negotiators for five hour straight (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:104). The only concrete information the negotiators can extract is that he is still waiting for different orders from God. His attorney also tries to contact him but is rebuffed on the grounds that it is Sabbath. The next day is the passover ends, and the attorneys contact their clients to see what this means for the continuation of the siege. They report back that Koresh is working on a manuscript describing his interpretation of the Seven Seals and that he will not leave until the work is finished. He estimates that it will take 14 days to complete all seven parts, and has given the attorneys a final letter to convey that makes the same point (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:105). Beyond that conversation, no progress is made in the negotiations, and activity during the next few days is still very low. The talk of a manuscript is seen by the FBI as yet another delaying tactic, and a sign that the negotiations are not being productive (Tabor 1995:276).

Another flashbang incident occurs on April 15, and only sporadic conversations take place between the negotiators and the Branch Davidians (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:106). On the 16th, Koresh claims to have finished the part of his manuscript that deals with the First Seal (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:107). The 17th

5 CS gas is a cyanocarbon-based aerosol “tear gas” used for riot control. It derives its name from the initials of its inventors, Ben Corson and Roger Stoughton and was developed as a less debilitating, shorter-lasting, less toxic, and generally more controllable alternative to the previously available CN and CR riot gasses..

sees one last person leave who had managed to sneak into the compound three weeks earlier. The Louisville University psychiatrist is brought back in to render a judgement on whether Koresh, based on witness reports, might suffer from any kind of nervous disorder that might affect the negotiation process. He answers the query the next day by saying that, based on the “very fragmentary information” (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:160), it is indeed a possibility, and that such an affliction would make it difficult to create any kind of continuity in the communication and would also make the person *highly* unsuitable to have around any kind of weaponry.

Meanwhile, in Washington D.C., further meetings are held between the DoJ and the FBI. Medical and military experts are brought in to answer the attorney general’s questions, as well as questions about whether the gas is flammable and might cause a fire. Slowly but surely, the AG’s initial mental image of a “gassing” of the compound is replaced by a more technical understanding of the use of CS gas (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:107, 274ff; Reavis 1998:264f). In fact, technically, it is not a gas at all, but an irritant powder suspended in an aerosol liquid. Nor is the event itself intended to be nearly as dramatic as the first impressions may suggest. Instead, it is a slow process that can require several days of increasing pressure to finally drive the congregation out of the compound. The question is also raised whether the FBI is needed at the scene at all, to which the agency representatives respond that the Branch Davidians have already proven to be highly dangerous and that local law enforcement will most likely not have the technical and tactical abilities, nor the equipment required to contain the group (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:267ff). A drastic solution such as walling the place up is downright infeasible, and an army cordon is not allowed under the Posse Comitatus Act. The HRT is really the only available option, but it cannot stay locked up with this one case forever. A similar question is raised during a meeting the next day, and the FBI representatives point out that long-term endurance is already becoming an issue, so the matter needs to reach a conclusion in the near future.

April 16 sees a rumour spread that the attorney general has disapproved the plan the FBI has presented, but this turns out to be a slight misunderstanding (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:107f). She is simply not fully convinced yet and has not made any decision in either direction. Instead, she asks for supplementary material on the negotiation progress and on the state of the people inside the compound. The execution of the plan is also deferred at least until after the week-end, to ensure a greater access to emergency medical services should something go wrong. Saturday, April 17 is spent reviewing the analyses and recommendations by external experts on what has and has not worked in the negotiation process (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:07f). The UCLA psychiatrist reiterates his belief that the ATF presence has had a deleterious effect on the team’s efforts, that the agency has engaged in mixed messaging towards the Branch Davidians, and that a negotiation is no longer likely to resolve the situation (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:175f). A report from a threat assessment consultant and an FBI profiler states that it is likely from

the communication received that Koresh is setting a trap for the agency, and that he will not come out willingly. It also states that there is a distinct threat of a break-out attempt, in which the FBI agents could be faced with adults with lethal intent carrying a child in one arm and a weapon in the other (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:176f; Tabor 1995:277).

The FBI rules of engagement and the chain of command are also debated. The AG wants to be sure that the FBI will back off if children are being used as human shields, and the FBI wants to make it clear that on-scene command is handled exclusively by the SAC. The AG certainly has the authority to dismantle the operation entirely, but cannot control matters on the ground. With these points clarified, the attorney general approves the plan and a date is set for the following Monday – April 19 – and the order is handed on down to the SAC in Waco (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:107f).

On April 18, the FBI starts preparing for its final raid on the compound (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:108f). Arrest warrants are obtained for almost every adult person still in the compound, charging some with crimes and holding the rest as material witnesses. The vehicles that remain around the compound are removed, which compels Koresh to call the negotiators and complain about how his personal possessions are being towed away. The negotiators try to use this as a final bargaining chip but are met with no success. In Washington D.C., the attorney general briefs the president about the plan to end the siege, thereby fulfilling the acting AG's promise from March 1 to advise the president of any significant changes in strategy.

4.2.5 April 19 – The FBI raid

At 6am, the plan to insert CS gas into the compound is put into motion. The two borrowed CEVs start moving towards the main building to inject the gas through long nozzles mounted on booms at the front of the vehicles. Meanwhile, a negotiator calls into the compound to inform what is about to happen: that gas will be continuously inserted into every part of the compound, that the FBI will stay outside, and that everyone has been ordered not to fire their guns. When the Branch Davidian who answers the phone hangs up, the message is relayed over loudspeakers to anyone within earshot. The Branch Davidians are advised to come out with their hands up and to surrender to the awaiting authorities (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:110, 286ff; Reavis 1998:267f).

As soon as the CEVs get close to the buildings, they start taking fire from within the compound. This gives the FBI free reign to insert the gas, and aside from using the CEVs, the HRT fire CS gas grenades – so-called “ferret round” – through windows using hand-held M79 grenade launchers. Over the course of the morning, the CEVs take several trips to fill up on more CS gas, each refill taking roughly an hour. During the lulls, the negotiators keeps repeating that the Branch Davidians should surrender and come out, and that no-one will be

harmed. At 6.41, a telephone is thrown out the front door, possibly as a signal of willingness to communicate, but the lines have been cut and a connection can not be established. Three hours later, the telephone is retrieved back into the compound (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:111, 289ff).

At 12.07, after six hours of near-continuous gassing, three fires are observed within the compound. They quickly flare up and catch on the wooden structure of the joined buildings. The holes ripped open in the walls by the CEVs to pump in gas also allow for more air to flow through the structure, further fuelling the flames (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:111, 295ff; Reavis 1998:270, 274f). Five minutes later, three full-scale fires are raging around the compound and the negotiators broadcast a final plea to Koresh to let people out of the building before it is too late. At 12.16 a man is observed trying to escape the building through a second-story window. Agents rush in to help, but he tries to wave them off, refusing their help. A few minutes later, he finally yields, jumps down and is surrounded. In the next ten minutes, another seven people attempt to flee the fire – one tries to run back inside when she sees the FBI vehicles, but is intercepted and dragged to safety by an HRT agent. One of the people escaping the flames is carrying the first chapter of Koresh's manuscript (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:112, 298ff; Tabor 1995:278). Around 12.25, agents report hearing deliberate "systematic" gunfire – people firing weapons rather than loose rounds cooking off in the heat (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:112). No-one outside of the compound reports receiving fire at this time, however, so it is believed to be the sound of the remaining Branch Davidians shooting each other and/or themselves.

Fire trucks arrive at the scene at 12.34, but the risk of coming under fire is deemed to great to allow them close to the building (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:112). Not until 12.41 does the fire fighting start. At 13.10, the ninth and last person to escape the inferno emerges from the building. In the end, 75 people die inside from burns, smoke inhalations, gunshot wounds, knife wounds, and blunt trauma (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:314ff; Reavis 1998:275f).

4.3 Aftermath

The exact cause of the fires that ended the siege remains hotly contested and has been the source of endless conspiracy theories and accusations of governmental abuse. The same holds true for the reasons why so few of the Branch Davidians escaped from the fire – here, too, outlandish suggestions exist about how some agents were firing on fleeing group members and forced them back into the building. While none of the sources on the matter can be considered unbiased, most of the forensic evidence – especially regarding the spread of the fire and the fact that it springs up at three different points at almost the exact same time – as well as witness reports from the survivors point towards its being started by the Branch Davidians themselves (*cf.* Scruggs *et al.* 1993:300ff, 330ff; Reavis 1998:139ff, 146ff, 273f; HCoGR 2000:5ff). However, from a crisis management

perspective, it is interesting to note that the attempts at seeking closure with the episode were continuously thwarted by repeated revelations of the FBI failing to report the use of equipment that could have contributed to the fire. In almost all cases, the probability of the equipment having any significant effect is vanishingly small, especially compared to the official scenario, but it is enough of a seed of doubt to allow the guesswork to run wild. This failure at the very tail end of the crisis management greatly increased the life-span of the crisis.

Another revelation in the wake of the fire was that CS gas does not react well to fire. The aerosol part that makes it a gas is itself lightly toxic, but above all, it is broken down into carbon monoxide in the body – a gas that in and of itself will lead to carbon monoxide poisoning, and which is already a deadly threat during fires. The tear agent, on the other hand, comes in the form of a dry powder – hence the need to mix it with an aerosol part – of the cyanocarbon family. In other words, it contains a cyanide variant that, when burned, it can produce hydrogen cyanide (HCN). Hydrogen cyanide, in turn, is perhaps more famous for its use in gas chambers, as a pesticide, and as the reactive agent in Zykon B. The only saving grace is that a fire that would reduce the CS into HCN would most likely also destroy the HCN itself. Nevertheless, some of the bodies recovered from inside the Mount Carmel compound showed injuries and bodily contortions that are consistent with cyanide poisoning (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:314ff). It is unclear whether this side-effect was known by the planners of the FBI raid, and it is even more unclear whether it was a contributing factor to the outcome – all deaths were attributable to other injuries, and it is uncertain what amounts of the gas were present at the time the fire started since almost an hour had passed since the last insertion.

As for the initial cause of the crisis, the subsequent crime scene investigation revealed that, if the February 28 barrage had not already answered the question, it was now beyond any doubt that the Branch Davidians had possessed numerous illegal firearms. In total, 305 firearms were found at the scene, of which over 30 were assault rifles converted for automatic firing. Nearly 2 million rounds of ammunition had been cooked off in the fire and a further search uncovered a veritable arsenal of Kevlar helmets and vests, pistols, rifles, shotguns, gas masks, chemical protection gear, and even fragmentation hand grenades and rockets (Scruggs *et al.* 1993:308ff).

4.4 Analysis

The Waco siege is a watershed moment in U.S. law enforcement, not just for the FBI, but for almost all of the agencies involved – perhaps even more so for some of the *non-law-enforcement* agencies. The involvement of the Texas National Guard was sensitive in and of itself, even though it is technically allowed as long as it participates under the authority of the state governor, but the involvement of the U.S. Army as a support function to the FBI was a matter

that could potentially be in breach of the Posse Comitatus Act of 1878. In the aftermath, this became a sore point among critics, and no matter how well the FBI and the army had taken care to ensure that the latter would not be in breach of the act, the symbolism of the FBI using army facilities and army vehicles in the training and execution of the final assault was lost on no-one. For local and state agencies, the siege was a large and long-lasting drain on resources, and also became a publicity problem as their presence was increasingly entangled in the federal agencies' handling of the situation. Nevertheless, their public image and legitimacy was less at stake, partly because they were mostly doing their regular job in the background – keeping the roads clear and ensuring that no outsiders interfered with the on-going law enforcement process – but mostly because they were not part of that group of federal agencies that had descended on the Davidian farm. For some on-lookers, this was a literal David-and-Goliath struggle, and the means and methods employed by the federal agencies only further reinforced this perception – a notion that spurred future clashes between those agencies and anti-government groups in the following years. It is not a coincidence that the 1995 Oklahoma bombing was targeted against the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, nor that the bombing happened on the two-year anniversary of the fiery end to the Waco siege, or that another very similar siege between the FBI and an anti-government group would start in Montana, almost to the day three years after the Waco siege started. The Davidians were far from alone in their perception of the ATF, FBI, and U.S. Army as the proverbial overwhelming forces of Babylon, who wanted to stamp out the efforts of the put-upon Christian underdog. It is in this perception that both this and the later Montana stand-off has their roots, and why they both caused so much problem for the agencies involved (*cf.* Gallagher 2000:93f; Pitcavage 2001:966).

Between all these agencies, groups, outside participants, and all their respective perceptions and issue areas, the Waco siege offers almost every imaginable form of crisis to the point where it requires some finesse to even begin to explain exactly *which* Waco crisis one might be talking about. The ATF's bungled raid that set the stage for the siege is an operational crisis in and of itself; the FBI's final assault is another one of a fairly similar nature. The legal and political aftermath, with its various twists and turns, new revelations and incriminations, and accountability debates ranging from lowly FBI agents all the way up to the Justice Department and the White House, is a classic case of a lingering crisis for almost the entirety of the federal law enforcement. The consequences it had in terms of the aforementioned Oklahoma bombing and Montana standoff also marks it as a long-shadow crisis, reverberating well past the turn of the millennium. The siege itself can also be seen as the culmination of a creeping crisis where the FBI, in particular, but also the federal government in general, had continuously failed to notice or respond to the growing millennialist movement. Ruby Ridge in 1992 was an early example of this crisis bubbling over into direct confrontation, and the Montana Freeman standoff can reasonably be considered at least the beginning of the end.

With all that in mind, it is important to re-emphasise exactly what is being studied here: the FBI's negotiation effort, picking up where the failed ATF raid left off and ending with the bureau's own attempt at a raid on the compound once it was deemed futile to try to continue those negotiations. In particular, it is the dynamics between the negotiation team, the Special Agent in Charge (SAC), and the various subject-matter experts that guided and advised on the overall strategy for the siege that are of interest. This excludes a closely related, but equally interesting dynamic that happened just above the FBI, at the ministerial level, involving the FBI director, the attorney general, and representatives for other federal agencies. Here, too, attempts were made to gather the intelligence and knowledge needed to make an informed decision about how to proceed, what resources were needed, and how to coordinate the use of those resources so as to minimise the danger and harm to everyone involved – including the Davidians. Ultimately, it was at this level that the fateful decision to go ahead with the gas insertion raid was made, and the attorney general in particular found herself in the spotlight in the ensuing accountability process. Her attempts at sourcing and grasping knowledge could be an entire chapter of the saga in and of themselves, but the main interest here is how the FBI dealt with the same problem – it was FBI's efforts at acquiring knowledge about its opponents and about what tactics might work against them that informed the attorney general's decisions, as well as the decision made by the SAC on site.

At the same time, it is important to dispel a common misconception about the FBI efforts at Waco. In particular when discussing the case in relation to the 1996 Freeman standoff, it is often said that what made Waco such a disaster was the bureau's unwillingness to engage with religious scholars. As the time line below shows, this is not entirely accurate. Indeed, Drs. Arnold and Tabor were among the first scholars to engage with the FBI, and also made efforts to directly reach David Koresh during the siege; their participation is sporadic, but consistent throughout the crisis (*cf.* Scruggs 1993:186; Reavis 1998:253ff). So the engagement was there, and the problem was rather one of assumed relevancy or simply not having the SAC's ear. In addition, there were dissenting opinions within the FBI effort itself, with the negotiators – though frustrated – believing that some progress is being made, whereas the Hostage Rescue Team (HRT) favoured a tactical option to forcefully bring the siege to an end. Over the course of the crisis, these two sides of the bureau were often at odds, at times even working at cross-purpose, with the HRT's intimidation tactics directly contradicting or undermining the confidence-building efforts made by the negotiators. As time passed, the SAC also increasingly favoured the HRT approach, which meant that any later-stage progress made by the negotiators was not valued all that highly. That is not to say that the negotiators were all that successful to begin with. Docherty (2001) describes the effort as being fundamentally confused in terms of what actually motivated the Davidians, and that the logic behind the negotiations missed the point from the very start. The negotiators used a standard tit-for-tat goal-oriented

rationale. For example, if the Davidians released a “hostage,” they would earn some concession that would alleviate their stressful situation – more food or water or perhaps a phone call to someone on the outside. The problem was that there were no hostages, and that the Davidians’ rationale was *value*-oriented, rather than one of attaining short-term goals for themselves. Surrendering a member of the group to the apparent Babylonian horde waiting outside meant one more soul damned and lost, and no temporary relief or luxury could ever outweigh such a loss of the moral values that bound the group together. At the same time, any attempt on their part to explain this value mismatch was dismissed by the FBI as “bible babble” or as Koresh trying to maintain the grasp over his cult followers.

This is perhaps where a religious analysis, interpretation, and mediation between the Davidians and the FBI might have helped: to explain the shared Davidian value system to the FBI, and how it had a long history in the sect and it was not just something tied to Koresh as an individual. And conversely, to try to explain to the Davidians how the FBI’s goals did not in practice threaten or contradict the core values of the group. However, any such message was thwarted by the negotiators’ starting assumption that the Davidians were just like any other group they would come up against and that the goal-based concessions they would offer a regular hostage-taker – release a hostage and you might receive reduced sentencing, for instance – would work against them. This assumption was then further reinforced by a set of scholars who did not need to explain their perspective to them; who already thought in the same sociological, psychological, and criminological terms that the negotiators were used to, and who subscribed to the same goal-based logic. More than that, these familiar scholars were certain that their analytical frameworks were more than sufficient to untangle the rationale behind the Davidians’ behaviour, and that religion would not be a factor that markedly altered that rationale. Thus the conclusion was that, while some of the biblical allusions and religiously coloured language might need to be explained by a theologian, their contribution would not really be needed to understand the underlying logic of the Davidians’ statements.

It is also important to note that the FBI was not exactly idle in trying to find different angles to understand, convince, and pressure the Davidians. As the time line shows, multiple efforts were taking place at once, at least early on, and at least to begin with, family members were occasionally allowed to directly interact with those still inside the compound (*cf.* Scruggs *et al.* 1993:194ff; Reavis 1998:230ff). At the same time, the time line demonstrates the reluctance on the FBI’s part to involve anyone they had not picked themselves. The religious scholars had already started their analysis before approaching the FBI on March 7, and were rebuffed (*cf.* Tabor 1995:264ff, 273; Reavis 1998:253f; Wessinger 2000c:22f). They continued to offer support and became indirectly involved through the Davidians’ attorneys and through the April 1 radio show, but were never allowed to take an active role in the negotiations. By the time they were requested by the Davidians, and other experts suggested that they might offer some insight into the matter, the end of the siege was already being planned.

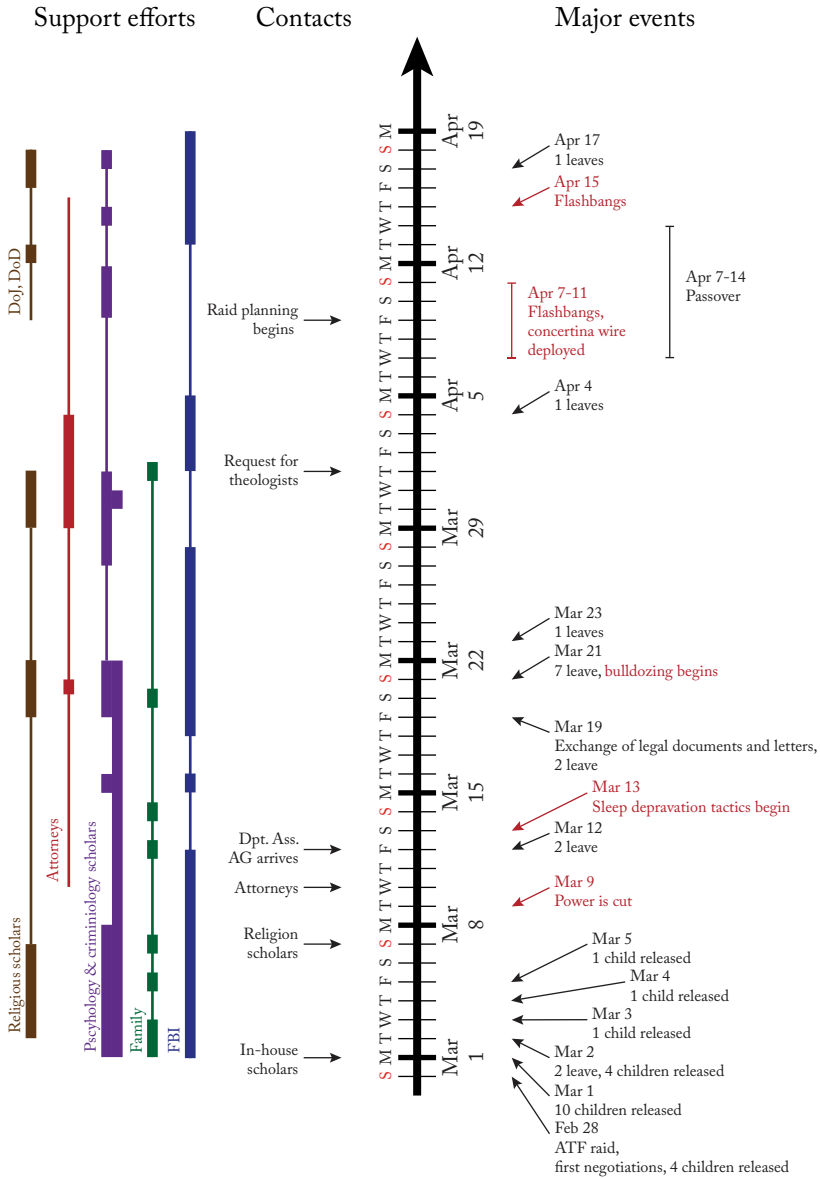


Figure 6: Timeframe for events and interactions during the Waco siege

Similarly, the attorneys themselves were kept away from the proceedings for several weeks. The first introductions were made on March 10, but no real contact was made with their clients until two weeks later, and they were not part of the negotiation effort outside of a week-long period in late March and early April (cf. Scruggs *et al.* 1993:91ff; Reavis 1998:251ff, 255f).

Table 2: Expert interactions during the Waco siege

Date	Expert	Role	Duration
March 1	Dr. Park Dietz and Pete Smerick	Analysis of Koresh's mental health; Evaluation of negotiation efforts thus far.	3 days
	Bruce D. Perry, M.D. Ph.D.	Analysis of the mental and physical health of the released children; Analysis of group dynamics based on children's testimony.	2–3 weeks
March 2	Dr. Phillip Arnold and Dr. James Tabor	Analysis of Koresh's statements; Framing the siege as a religious dispute rather than a hostage situation.	5 days
March 4–8	Pete Smerick and Mark Young	Analysis of Koresh's mental health; Implementation of negotiation tactics	1 day per memo
March 15	Dr. Roger Bell	Analysis of Koresh's mental health; Implementation of negotiation tactics.	1 day
March 19	Dr. Phillip Arnold and Dr. James Tabor	Analysis of Koresh's statements; Building confidence among the Davidians.	3 days
March 27	Dr. Bill Austin	Building confidence among the Davidians and Framing that religion is not an issue.	1 day
March 28	Dr Bruce D. Perry and Joyce Sparks	Analysis of the mental and physical health of the children still on the compound and the potential risks for them.	4 days
March 29	Dr. Phillip Arnold and Dr. James Tabor	Analysis of Koresh's statements; Building confidence among the Davidians.	3 days
March 30	Dr. Robert Wallace and Dr. John Fredericks	Knowledge brokerage and Framing by suggesting the use of eschatologists rather than theologians	<1 day
April 9	Dr Antjony J. Pinzotto	Analysis of Koresh's personal motivations.	1 day
	Dr. Joseph L Krofcheck and SSA Clinton R. Van Zant	Analysis of Koresh's letter to judge his motivations and level of threat towards law enforcement agents.	3 days
April 14	Dr. Murray S. Miron	Analysis of Koresh's letters to determine his intentions; Analysis of the chances for successful negotiations.	1 day
April 17	Dr. Park Dietz	Evaluation of negotiation efforts so far; Analysis of chances for negotiations to succeed.	<1 day
unknown	Rev. Trevor Delafield	Analysis and framing of religious references.	unknown

(Scruggs et al. 1993:155–193)

4.4.1 *Organisational context*

The first thing to note with the expert line-up is that, with the exception of the religious scholars, these are all individuals who had worked with the FBI before, and who were already part of the system of advisors the bureau had in place. This choice of (close-to-)in-house expertise is at the same time both cause and effect in how the siege developed. It cannot be stressed enough that, while the whole episode is essentially one very extended law enforcement enterprise, it was really the execution of an ATF warrant. It was the ATF's attempt to search the premises that ended in disaster on February 28, and once the April 19 conflagration had burned itself out, a lot of what was pulled out of the ashes was their evidence in that investigation. The FBI was essentially handed a crisis in progress but proceeded to turn it into a crisis of their own making – one that became just as chaotic as the ATF shoot-out. The role of the FBI in all of this was to handle the crime of assaulting federal officers and to coordinate the federal, state, and local agencies. The FBI also had the expertise needed to handle negotiation and tactical insertions in a hostage-barricade situation, which seemed rather applicable to what was going on at Mt. Carmel.

We should therefore perhaps not be surprised to see the bureau use a standardised setup of both internal and external teams. This was not something the FBI itself had planned for over many months, but rather a task thrust upon the bureau due to its role and formal responsibilities in the overall system of federal law enforcement. As such, generic components meant to fulfil those roles and responsibilities were employed rather than something bespoke for the situation at hand. Only over time could it have been clarified that these were not your usual hostage takers or hostages – “could have been” being the operative modus here, since that insight never really came. It would be wildly inaccurate to suggest that Waco was a run-of-the-mill job for the bureau, but the task never the less fell within a very clear category of what the FBI does, and with that categorisation come equally clear standard procedures and tactics to be employed. Lacking options, if nothing else than because of the suddenness of the situation, the FBI followed those procedures.

It is also important to note the internal structure of the FBI effort included an SAC as the on-site head decision-maker, who was aided by three separate teams: the CINT negotiators, the HRT tactical team, and the subject-matter experts who were attached in one way or another to the FBI Academy. These teams should ostensibly be pursuing the same goal under the leadership of the SAC, but on the ground at Mt. Carmel, the reality turned out to be rather different. While each team certainly had the same goal (bringing an end to the siege) their methods for getting there varied wildly, and were not coordinated partly due to the fact that these were indeed separate teams, and partly because the SAC favoured a quick resolution, as did the more action-oriented HRT. Consequently, the negotiation effort was often considered slow and inefficient by both the SAC and

the HRT, and the CINT was occasionally left out of strategy planning sessions. The official reports unanimously point to this friction as the main cause of the contradictory and at times even self-defeating strategies employed by the two teams, where concessions to the negotiation efforts were seemingly punished by the HRT's scare tactics, or conversely when "rewards" for those concessions made the disruptions easier to endure. In spite of this scattered approach, however, it bears mentioning that both teams essentially operated on the same underlying logic. Both, in their own way, were attempting to demonstrate to the Davidians that Koresh was not in control of the situation, and that everyone at Mt. Carmel could decide on their own whether they should stay or go.

This logic was largely supplied by the third team: the FBI's in-house stable of forensic psychologists, psychiatrists, and behavioural scientists tied to the National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime (NCAVC). A handful of them were present on the scene on a couple of occasions, but most of them offered their advice from a distance, based on recordings, transcripts, and other material provided by the CINT. It is not hard to see the potential for this self-reinforcing cycle to go wrong: the negotiators, operating on their regular assumptions regarding the logic and rationality of the Davidians – one they may very well have learned from the FBI Academy experts – steer the discussions in a certain direction and get certain answers from it. These answers are fed back to the experts who, since they are *FBI Academy* experts, mainly offer a forensic and criminological analytical perspective on those answers, and base their strategy recommendations on the same – or at least very similar – assumptions of logic and rationality. The strategy then guides the negotiators further down the path they were already on, with little reason to consider any alternative interpretations or basic assumptions about their opponent. It is a head-on collision between Miles' Law and groupthink, and it is not all that surprising that the strange outside voice of theological analysis could not penetrate this closed loop. At the same time, the official reports make an important observation that those experts who actually came to Waco to observe the FBI effort all noted that the dynamic between the FBI and the Davidians deviated from their expectations – if anything, the FBI's strategy seemed to *strengthen* the Davidians' resolve and Koresh's hold over his followers. Still, this did not overly change their advice. The framing of Koresh as a conman who could be exposed and deposed from within remained, and thus the strategy of trying to weaken him in the eyes of the rest of the Davidians remained at the centre of the FBI effort. The organisational ouroboros never examined its own assumptions, and even dismissed the notion that any such examination should be necessary. Before long "all" avenues – that is, all attempts based on this problem framing and this assumption of rationality – had been exhausted, leaving a forceful conclusion the only apparent option.

Finally, it is worth mentioning the FBI's situation in the overall law enforcement system. The issue of their inheriting the crisis from ATF has already been touched upon, but remains relevant in understanding exactly what problem the

bureau was facing and how it went about addressing that problem. By the time the FBI came on the scene, the situation at Mt. Carmel was already something of a disaster, and part of that was due to the lack of coordination between law-enforcement agencies. It was therefore natural – even beyond any standard operational procedure – for the FBI to try to centralise the on-site operational management as well as the longer-term strategic planning to its own chain of command. The FBI left various peripheral matters to be handled by local and state agencies, who undoubtedly were more suited to do so because of their local knowledge, and the ATF was put on hold until matters could be resolved in a way that allowed the initial search-and-seize operation to continue. One should not underestimate the felt need to “do it better than those other guys,” especially since the ATF had already failed. It bears stressing that this transfer of jurisdiction was not just one of local and state to federal, or from one federal agency to another, but a transfer between the Treasury Department to the Justice Department. In other words, there was room and opportunity for every type of inter-departmental one-upmanship, up to and including the political level in Washington D.C. The final strategic decision-making was a straight line from the SAC to an already contentious FBI director, and a newly appointed attorney general,⁶ which created a rather curious mix of high outside political pressure, yet pressure that was internal to the established chain of command. In spite of the AG’s attempts at getting a detailed understanding of the situation and potential outcomes, it was still a rather closed group with a homogeneous perception of what the problem was, framed by the same experts and observers that informed the on-site efforts. Arguably, the individuals at this level of decision-making could only have achieved their position by being firmly entrenched within that same law enforcement logic and rationality, and with even less reason to try to include any outside opinions – after all, it was outsiders that had created the whole situation to begin with. Any such connections would rather have happened on the SAC level, but as mentioned, that level was also focused on letting the FBI deal with its specific areas of expertise, and with trying (and ultimately failing) to find a balance between HRT and CINT efforts.

6 At the time of the Waco siege, Director William S. Sessions was under investigation for misuse of FBI resources, using agency airplanes for personal travel, and using agency funding for home improvement. Attorney General Janet Reno had been appointed just before the siege started and entered office on March 11, less than two weeks into the crisis. Sessions was dismissed in late July 1993, barely half-way through his 10-year tenure at the post. (*cf.* NYT 1993-01-19; 01-22).

4.4.2 The nature of the crisis

This organisational tangle is critical in understanding exactly what the actual crisis was from an FBI perspective. The FBI, and indeed the entire DoJ, were handed a situation where ATF agents that had executed a warrant under the jurisdiction of the Treasury Department had violently clashed with an obviously armed and dangerous assailant, leaving numerous dead and wounded on both sides. The attack on federal agents was a problem in and of itself, securing the evidence sought under the warrant is another. The presence of apparent hostages, notably a large number of children, was a third. The barricaded, prepared, and largely self-sufficient position of the opposition presented a fourth obstacle, at least in terms of what tactical options were available, and as the failure of the initial ATF raid had shown, it was a pretty formidable one to boot.

Each individual issue is one that the bureau is clearly equipped to handle – there is no doubt that this is exactly the kind of situation where it is supposed to step in and contribute considerable resources in terms of equipment, manpower, and expertise. That is not to say that such an event should be considered a normal occurrence and therefore be a non-crisis by default, but rather that the bureau is expected to be a professional crisis manager specifically when facing this kind of situation.

Uncertainty

From one point of view, the whole 51-day siege is startlingly simple. It was just a matter of revisiting and repeating the same single decision on a daily basis, up until the point where the gas insertion plan was executed. In essence, it was a matter of deciding whether it was worth continuing the negotiations or if a more forceful tactical option had to be used instead. In a sense, then, the uncertainty of the siege itself ended somewhere late March or early April, when the SAC determined that the negotiations so far had not been productive. The Davidians were given a last chance after they had communicate via a team of lawyers that they would come out after passover – that is, by April 14 at the latest – and as the day came and went, the plans for the final raid were presented, debated, and eventually approved all the way up to the Justice Department level.

Before this, however, there were numerous instances where the uncertainty and ambiguity of the situation was palpable. Taking over from the ATF, securing the area surrounding the compound, and coordinating the various law enforcement agencies were mostly standard procedures, but the attempts to actually deal with the situation yielded some baffling results. As noted almost unanimously in the official reports and surviving narratives, the Davidians' defied all expectations of a hostage-barricade situation. Koresh fit the standard image of a charismatic con-man reasonably well, but neither he nor his followers responded to any of the arguments or any of the pressure put on the group to try to split them up. Their apparent irrationality made it very difficult for the FBI to predict what the

group would do or how they would respond to various negotiation or pressure tactics. While it slowly became clear that these were not hostages in any conventional sense, nor that there was a strict leader that kept everyone locked up, this insight did not particularly answer the question of why the Davidians so adamantly refused to leave. Nor did it help explain why the parents in the group would rather prefer to see their children suffer the hostile conditions inside the compound than see them safely released and cared for outside the FBI perimeter. This preference for wretched conditions made no sense and rendered many of the bargaining chips the negotiators had to play with practically worthless with no obvious viable replacement in sight. The notion that they were, from the Davidians' perspective, asking God's chosen people to surrender to the forces of evil did not come naturally to the FBI negotiators, especially since they were in the habit of seeing themselves as a force for good. And yet, this was the core misconception upon which all other uncertainties and ambiguities in the case are built. One side looked at the situation as a mythical struggle between good and evil (themselves being on the side of good), and the other side looked at the situation as a rather modern struggle between the forces of good against – if not outright *evil* – then at least a somewhat odd bunch of criminals. Neither side was able to understand the other, and neither side was able to properly verbalise their perspective.

Hence, ambiguity and miscommunication were present in almost every discussion that took place between the Davidians and the CINT. The Davidians' attempts to explain that these were the "final days" were interpreted as largely incoherent "bible babble." The FBI's attempts to appeal to empathy for suffering family members or to "expose" the Davidian leadership as frauds were interpreted as, quite literally, bargaining with the devil (a devil that was obviously duplicitous, since trusting the CINT on numerous occasions resulted in being punished by the HRT). In a sense, some of this ambiguity may actually have come from the *near* familiarity the negotiators had with the topic at hand. Many were Christians themselves and had more than a passing knowledge of the texts that Koresh were preaching to them about, but passing familiarity was not enough to spot the meaning of his interpretations and chain of logic, and how they differed from more conventional interpretations of the texts. In using textual references and allusions, Koresh added another layer of ambiguity in the communication that did not just make it difficult for the FBI agents to understand him, but also made it difficult for them to understand exactly what and *why* they did not understand. So while religious scholars would later be able to decipher much of what Koresh had said, and could demonstrate that it explained the behaviour of the group fairly well, this *near*-understanding just made that behaviour appear all the more uncertain and unpredictable to the FBI. It *sounded* like the Davidians were going to do one thing, but then they would often go off and do something drastically different.

It is also in this fundamental miscommunication that the seeds for the final catastrophic outcome can be found. The notion of a conventional hostage taker may have been dispelled fairly early on, to be replaced by a potentially even more menacing imagery of the close-knit cult held sway by a handful of leaders, and this quickly led to the worry that these cultists may choose suicide over surrendering. However, even then the assumption was made that if the situation would become unbearable enough, few would actually choose that ultimate end. The CS gas strategy was picked exactly to try to resolve that uncertainty. The intent was to trigger a primal fight-or-flight response, but without anyone to actually fight, flight would be the only available option – there would hopefully be no room to maintain the mental fortitude needed to go through with some kind of suicide scheme. Unfortunately, much like the ones that preceded it, this whole strategy failed to take into account the core belief system and rationality that had driven the Davidians this far. Not only did enough of them have sufficient equipment to protect themselves against the gas, but many of those who did not were willing to die at the hands of their brethren – the gas may have prevented mass-suicide, but it did not prevent mass-murder. This is perhaps less an uncertain outcome as an unexpected one, but it was known already at an early stage that the group possessed some protective equipment. But again, the assumption was that, ultimately, everyone inside the compound would act individually; those few with protection may be harder to get out, but those without would flee. Instead, the group cohesion from believing that a very literal army of evil was at their doorstep made everyone stay – of the few that actually did try to flee the flames when the building caught fire, more than one tried to run back into the gas and the heat as FBI agents ran up to them and tried to drag them away.

Similarly, the outcome of the gas reacting with fire might be more unexpected than uncertain. The effect was not well-known, and no-one expected the compound to catch fire anyway, especially not as a result of the Davidians apparently setting their own shelter on fire. Even so, the decision was made to add a volatile compound to the mix, and in very large quantities. Even without the fire, this alone should be considered an added source of uncertainty – doubly so when the method for insertion involved tearing down walls and ceiling panels, which further added the risk of creating air pockets or just trapping people under collapsing materials. As a riot control agent, CS gas was perhaps more chosen for its availability and familiarity than for its suitability in this particular situation. Either way, it was an attempt to trade one uncertainty for another. Hopefully, it would have a debilitating and pacifying effect, reducing the risk of harm for the agents that would eventually clear the building, but it would also ensure that the Davidians' exit would happen under wholly unordered circumstances. The building catching fire, causing the CS gas to turn into poison, and the Davidians trapping themselves in a small shelter with no escape route were not part of that bargain.

On a macro level the Waco siege is replete with uncertainty due to the ambiguities and confusion of the negotiation effort, and the technical details that the CS gas insertion plan represented. Although the uncertainty did not spike into mass confusion at any point, it was also never fully resolved, sitting instead as a near-constant blanket over the proceedings, and causing continuous misunderstandings and miscommunication on both sides. The subject-matter experts at hand did not particularly help in resolving these issues, as they stuck to their regular perceptions of the problem and modes of interpretation, even going so far as to denying that there may be some other interpretation that could resolve the ambiguities they were facing.

Time pressure

The Waco siege is exactly what it says on the tin: a siege. It is not a sudden, flash in the pan event that quickly runs its course. Not even the initial ATF raid really qualifies, since it was months in the making, and even the gunfight dragged on for over an hour. Even so, there were time pressures at play in the siege that contributed to deciding the final outcome.

First of all, there was the issue of trying to allow ATF to finish what it had come to Mt. Carmel to do to begin with, that is, to investigate suspicions of manufacturing of drugs and of illegal weapons modifications. The longer the siege dragged on, the greater the chances that any evidence would be gone by the time the ATF could be allowed inside. Less time critical, but of a similar nature, the ATF warrant called for the arrest and interrogation of key individuals among the Davidians, and with some of them wounded in the initial raid and living in squalor during the siege, there was a distinct need to ensure that they did not succumb to the conditions of the siege. Beyond those individuals and the demands of the ATF investigation, there was also the fact that a large number of individuals were trapped inside the Mt. Carmel compound, among them several children, who would unduly suffer if the situation dragged on. Finally, there was the practical matter of monetary concerns and allocation of resources. The siege had bound up several hundreds of agents and officers between the different agencies – many of them in specialist roles – as well as emergency equipment owned by the agencies involved or on loan. It was also an around-the-clock operation, which further drove up costs and manpower requirements. Beyond these efficiency and investigative concerns, there was also the matter of image, which we will return to when looking at the critical values at stake: the FBI should be seen as an effective agency, and letting a situation like this drag on forever would tarnish that image.

So even though the siege lasted almost two months, there was still a significant time pressure on the FBI decision makers. It is rather telling that some of the more drastic measures that were taken during the siege happened closely following long passages of time where there are no meaningful interaction with the Davidians.

It appears very much as if frustration builds in the lulls, and when something finally happens, the tension boils over. It would be convenient to suggest that it was these frustrated acts, mainly from the HRT, actually convinced the Davidians to respond, but the timing of events does not bear this out. Instead, there was commonly a period of silence, followed by some drawn-out negotiation where both sides make some minor concessions, and only then the bureau would enact some new repressive measures. Indeed, this pattern is a common source of criticism in the official reports, as the timing of such measures made it seem like the Davidians were being punished for complying with the negotiators.

It is tempting to employ terms from the crisis management literature such as “creeping crisis” or “long-shadow crisis,” but neither really applies here (*cf.* ‘t Hart & Boin 2001; Naraghi 2009). Those terms describe a slow onset or termination of a crisis, but Waco was simply a crisis that took a long time to transpire. Granted, Waco was *also* a creeping crisis, in how the ATF investigation ended up in a shoot-out, as well as a long-shadow crisis, in how the legal and political aftermath continued for almost a decade, but those parts are beyond the scope of what is being studied here. Instead, the way Waco was handled is better classified as an attempt to force an early termination of the crisis because the SAC had seemingly run out of viable options. There was a mounting pressure to regain *some* kind of control over the situation as opposed to just remaining reactive to the apparently unpredictable whims of Koresh and the other leaders who were negotiating with the bureau. Some of this could arguably be linked to the many false starts – or false stops, as the case might be – where a breakthrough seemed close at hand, but where Koresh, in particular, injected some new condition for the group’s leaving at the very last moment, thus delaying the promised surrender just one more week. Before long, the accumulation of all those delays started pointing to this being an almost interminable crisis, with equally interminable demands being asked by the Davidians. Having no end in sight was not an acceptable state of affairs for the FBI, and thus the decision was made that the bureau would determine the end-date itself.

Whether it was too soon or too late, or whether it would not have made any real difference, are purely matters of speculation. There is evidence to support either interpretation, but what is clear is that everything about the siege ended up being costly in terms of time. Conversing with Koresh was time-consuming due to his apparent need to explain his point of view in biblical terms and these efforts were wasted on the negotiators who ultimately did not understand the point he was making. Likewise, getting those conversations and other communications from the Davidians to the bureau’s in-house experts, and receiving an interpretation and analysis back from those experts, added additional time on top of what was already spent on the conversations. With analyses taking anywhere from a day to a week to complete, additional lag time was introduced in the way the negotiators and the SAC could respond to what the Davidians were saying and doing. The long round-trip between the negotiation effort, data

collection, analysis, response, and formulating a strategy for the next negotiation undoubtedly added to the stress of trying to find a working solution to the deadlock as quickly as possible.

Critical values at stake

As mentioned, this inefficiency in the negotiation, aside from the issue of the effort having rather paltry effects on the perseverance and resolve of the Davidians, is perhaps the most obvious issue that grated on the FBI. Its supposed expertise in exactly this kind of situation was being put to the test, and it was seemingly failing. In the aftermath of the crisis, this professional pride was highlighted as one of the explanations why the FBI effort was so fractured. Both the CINT and the HRT wanted to do things their way, and both obviously knew best. Similarly, the in-house experts were professionals of long standing, with heaps of experience from previous cases to guide them in their judgement, so obviously there was no need to add some new inexperienced theoreticians from an untested field to the mix. With all this competence already in place, it was all the more infuriating that so much time was spent achieving so little, all of which most likely increased the allure of a promised swift resolution with the CS gas injection plan. The longer the siege was allowed to drag on, the more it made the law enforcement agencies involved seem incapable of doing their job. Conversely, a swift and efficient raid would demonstrate just how capable those agencies were, when put to the test.

Aside from the slightly nebulous value of professional pride, there was also the more concrete matter of safeguarding lives and upholding the law. While certainly inextricably linked to the profession, it is never the less a separate issue and an area where the Waco siege presented a clear threat to those values, not just symbolically, but in very real and practical terms. First, there was the undeniable fact that the Davidians had fired on federal agents, killing and wounding several of them, and thus displayed a callous disregard for both lives and the law. Secondly, and as previously mentioned, there was the risk of losing evidence that was critical to the ATF investigation, and possibly even having key suspects evade capture. If the evidence was lost, or the suspects not apprehended, it could prove difficult to establish the legitimacy of the raid that got the entire siege started. The suspicion would remain, of course, but the proof would be gone. At the same time, there was a value conflict inherent in the situation since both first- and second-amendment rights were at play in the crisis. The federal government was pursuing a religious group on charges of skirting the right to bear arms. Thirdly, there was the issue of innocent lives being at risk, in particular the children being kept inside the compound. Not only was there the lingering suspicion that they were being abused by the adult members of the group, but there was also the matter of the rapidly deteriorating living conditions, as well as the risk of getting caught in the cross-fire should the situation once again turn hostile.

Again, the aftermath of the crisis tells us more of what was at stake than the crisis itself, because it was on these points that the most pointed criticism was levelled against how the FBI had handled the situation. The official reports focus on how the FBI had bungled much of the evidence collection, to the point where accusations were made that FBI agents had deliberately destroyed evidence to hide their own culpability in the final fire. As for the constitutional questions, while some evidence could be secured to support the notion that the Davidians had indeed illegally modified some firearms, could the FBI really be excused for being this insensitive to, and even uncomprehending of, the religious beliefs of an adventist group? The use of CS gas, and its poisonous effects when subjected to flames, became another key issue in the accountability process: was it known at the time that the bureau was deploying a potentially lethal chemical agent against the Davidians? And while it was understandable that the FBI wanted to protect its agents against the kind of gunfire that had repelled the ATF two months earlier, was it really necessary to employ armoured military vehicles in the gas insertion process? Likewise, was it really that important to keep the fire-fighters at a safe distance while the fire raged, or should they have been allowed to actually attempt to put the fire out as it started?

In short, the values at stake were pretty much what one might expect from any kind of hostage-barricade situation, but with the additional complication that it turned into a long drawn-out siege that defied and symbolically threatened the law-enforcement capabilities of some of the nation's premier law enforcement agencies.

All in all, then, in spite of its unconventional setup, the Waco siege definitely represented a full-on crisis for the FBI. The bureau was up against an opponent that they did not fully understand and who confounded its regular efforts at understanding them, creating an uncertainty in both strategy and outcome, as well as suffering from ambiguities in how the team could even begin to understand the situation at hand. The long duration might suggest that the FBI agents had time on their hand to resolve these issues, but too much of it was spent on a long-winded process of modifying their strategies – but never really trying anything new – based on expert feedback, as well as on a frustrating stop-start interaction with the Davidians. Meanwhile, pressure to find a solution was mounting as the costs of the siege kept rising and as the group became something of a symbol of the “little guy” opposing the big, oppressive government, especially among the increasingly popular right-wing – often deeply religious and millennialist – militia groups around the country. The Ruby Ridge incident had happened half a year earlier, but the lessons had not been identified or learned yet, and thus the siege was still a strange new beast, as were the complexities of, and peculiar mix of, values at stake. Unfortunately, one of those values that had to be protected directly contravened a potential solution to the uncertainty that arose from this new situation; that is, not allowing new, untested, “unprofessional” (meaning, with no ties to the conventional criminological core of the profession). In turn,

this meant that there was no-one around to interpret the “bible babble” the Davidians insisted on using in their communications, or to explain the group cohesion that the professionals failed to comprehend.

4.4.3 Anticipation of due process

To some extent, the processes involved in handing the Waco siege should have been entirely familiar and anticipated by the FBI, and indeed, they largely were as evident in the way the bureau interacted with other governmental bodies. Per standard procedure, the FBI took over once the federal agents from the ATF had been attacked, and the bureau coordinated the state, local, and federal agencies on the scene, eventually including support elements from the National Guard and the U.S. Army. The bureau also communicated “upwards” in the hierarchy in the proscribed manner, seeking council from the DoJ. Ultimately with the FBI director having meetings with the attorney general and representatives from other departments of the government that had become involved in the crisis. What was *not* anticipated was how the FBI worked internally, and how it had to interact with other parties at the scene.

Most notably, there was the conflict between the HRT and CINT teams, each favouring their own brand of solution to the siege and vying for the SAC’s ear, with the HRT eventually winning out. As much as the FBI had a clear and working approach to coordinating a large number of different agencies, there was no clear procedure for coordinating *the FBI itself*. This internal conflict and lack of coordination then came to colour other interactions as well. It was the HRT assault scheme that the SAC reported as the most viable option to the director, and then to the attorney general, and which required additional support from the armed forces. On the other hand, the CINT’s reliance on tried and tested NCAVC experts can to a large extent explain why those efforts so often stranded. While the bureau was approached by a number of outside experts – most notably lawyers and religious scholars – there were no routines in place, or even much in the way of general preparedness, for integrating that expertise in the negotiation effort. Quite the opposite. This was an FBI matter, and external influences should be kept to a minimum. It should nevertheless once again be noted that the FBI *did* approach some religious scholars, but only really in an attempt to find some supplementary support to the experts already in place – experts who then judged such support unnecessary. The efforts made by the external interested parties were more seen as an unwelcome intrusion into, and disruption of, the bureau’s own efforts rather than something that could potentially be integrated into that work.

The lack of coordination between the HRT and CINT has been repeated to death at this point, but still bears another special mention from the perspective of anticipation of process. The fact that the two teams so often worked at cross-purpose serves to highlight exactly how little of the FBI’s internal process could actually be anticipated by either of them. Traditionally, the SAC should

have ensured that proper coordination took place, but this did not happen. Instead, negotiators were often left out of the loop, and advice from the NCAVC experts were at times intercepted and used to argue that negotiations would not work. Without a proper arena to explain what they were doing, the negotiators had no good way of keeping either the SAC or the HRT informed of what they were planning to do, nor could the negotiators work the HRT's pressure tactics into the overall negotiation effort. While a process for keeping everyone informed formally existed, it was not followed in practice, and thus we cannot really consider it anticipated – the fact that neither team could anticipate what the other was up to comes as no surprise with this set-up in mind. Curiously enough, the two teams also differed in their approach to *ad-hoc* solutions, and this made it even more difficult to anticipate either side. The CINT stayed well away from any kind of *ad-hoc* inclusion of external expertise, whereas the HRT sought out new equipment and tactics from the armed forces, inventing the CS gas insertion strategy almost on the fly. The HRT also freely adopted pressure tactics that had been used in other prolonged stand-offs, such as the use of loud music and noises to weaken the resolve of a barricaded opponent – an idea most closely borrowed from the 1989 capture of Manuel Noriega in Panama. As an additional layer of potential confusion, the entire set-up with CINT, HRT, and NCAVC personnel being coordinated by a SAC was itself something of an *ad-hoc* setup. The teams were picked and assembled as needed, based on their areas of expertise rather than on any kind of standard procedure, much less on any notion of interoperability. The entire core crisis management team was therefore pretty much impossible to identify or anticipate on a macro level.

All in all, the anticipation of due process can only be considered very low. Of the key deviations listed in Section 2.6, the FBI team on the ground exhibited almost every one except number 7: there was no need to go through a generalist intermediary layer to communicate. Communication, when it happened, was direct and among agents with the same law-enforcement background. Based on this, there were arguably also some similarities in organisational culture since all teams were part of the same FBI “family,” which may conceivably rule out deviation number 1, but even then, the action-oriented HRT differed from the slow and methodical CINT, and both differed from the scholarly-minded NCAVC experts. Beyond that, the nature of how the crisis management group was set up, and the way different teams were afforded different levels of attention from the SAC, meant that there were ambiguities and uncertainties in the co-operative process and in the value of the information being shared. In addition, there was mistrust in the collaborative process and in the problem formulations offered by the different teams, and the knowledge brokerage was not so much mistrusted as completely absent.

4.4.4 *Organisational closed-ness*

At its heart, the FBI is a law enforcement agency, so it should come as no surprise that its daily business is one of enforcing regulations. It is meant to guarantee that due process is followed, hopefully with a high degree of consistency to ensure that no mistakes are made – that no-one is wrongfully accused or unduly acquitted. The reality may be different, but since the notion of organisational closed-ness deals with an ideal type, these lofty goals work as an initial guideline to suggest where the organisation falls on the open–closed spectrum.

Guiding principle

The FBI as it appears at Waco is very clearly one that adheres to regulation as one of its guiding principles. Arguably, this has held true almost since the bureau was founded, with agents being moulded in such a standardised form that the “g-man” has become an iconic representation of the agency as a whole. As an organisation, the bureau’s activities are controlled and regulated in almost every detail, with clearly delineated areas of expertise and a reasonably clear jurisdiction. Even down to an individual level, processes and procedures for performing the duties of the bureau are plentiful. As the case demonstrates, there is also a clear differentiation between the types of missions the modern FBI is tasked with, and between the competences that go into those tasks, to the point where the iconic image has long since ceased to be accurate. Hostage rescue is a very different specialisation from negotiation or from academic research, for instance in the areas of criminology or psychiatry. There is a common ground between all of them, but once we start looking into the specific branches of the HRT, CINT or NCAVC, we see strict regimentation of problems to be solved and methods to solve them.

The gathering of these three at Waco is a direct reflection of how the FBI perceived the problem: as one with hostages and where a heavily armed assault might be needed to free them, as one with a central leadership that could be argued with or that can be undermined by communicating with other members of the group, and as one where psychological profiling might be needed to understand the different persons involved. Each problem had a bespoke solution, and each solution had a specific team suited for the task. Again, the work was regulated and distribution among different core competences.

The pattern holds just as true if we look at the bureau and role in the overall law enforcement system, which is just as strictly categorised. Here, the Waco case provides a good example. According to procedures, the underlying ATF warrant should have been handled by the ATF when the siege ended, and the FBI would simply there to prosecute the matter of the armed assault on federal agents and to coordinate the myriad of agencies from all levels of the government. In short, the FBI should only occupy the scene of the crime while it is dealing with “its” crime, and then hand the crime scene back to the ATF. At least that is the proce-

dure on paper. In practice, the FBI ended up handing over a very different scene than the one the ATF had retreated from two months earlier. Nevertheless, it is the fundamental principle behind the procedure that is of interest to us, and that one still falls within the bounds of regulation and formality. Indeed, it was in large part this strict adherence to regulation that limited the interaction and integration of external expertise into the negotiation process. There could be no guarantees that the external experts would stick to protocol or to the established practices, so the matter was best left to the FBI's own professional cadre. In spite of the previous allusions to *ad hoc* solutions on the part of the HRT, this particular characteristic was still at play there too. The HRT may have borrowed training facilities and equipment from the U.S. Army and the National Guard, but only the FBI's own personnel could ultimately be trusted with the actual execution of the plan. Part of that can undoubtedly be traced back to the Posse Comitatus Act, which simply prohibits the U.S. Army from acting directly in such matters. At the same time, it is telling that it must specifically be the FBI, rather than any of the myriad of other law enforcement agencies on the scene, that go through the training to drive the CEVs and deploy the CS gas.

Instrumental work flow

A very similar pattern emerges when looking at the instrumental work flow of the FBI. Given the broad range of tasks that fall under the bureau's jurisdiction, one might be tempted to assume that flexibility is a necessity to get the job done, and that this would be reflected in the agency's work flow. To some extent, this bears out when we look at the setup used for the Waco siege. A mix of teams was assembled to deal with this complex issue, and the setup would change when facing a different situation. However, there still remains the fundamental problem that none of the teams were particularly well-adapted to this kind of mixing and matching. Each one of them had rigidly defined roles and specialisations, and were largely limited to fulfilling those specific functions. It was an *ad hoc* aggregation of disparate parts, not a considered or pre-planned design to meet a variety of different scenarios.

More than that, this collection of parts was, quite unsurprisingly, still rigidly adhering to the rules and guidelines for how to conduct the business of running a joint FBI operation, and this is the crucial characteristic in determining the work flow. The organisation as a whole may have included different units and departments, and the basic means and methods for combining those into a unified whole, but that is not sufficient to classify the work flow as flexible. The actual work was strictly regimented and separated between the different units, and standard operating procedures prescribed it should be done. A hierarchy existed where the SAC was exactly what the title implies: in charge, irrespective of how better suited any of the other teams might have been in determining the effectiveness of the effort put in. The Waco case demonstrates something of a

departure from the standard procedures in that the coordination and co-operation was not always done according to the plans, but if anything, this actually further highlights how the SAC maintained control of the scene. At times, the CINT was left out of meetings, because it was chafing against that hierarchy and was offering dissenting opinions and advice.

It is also telling how rigidly the FBI adhered to its preconceived notions of the Davidians as, at first a band of criminals, and later as a cult, with Koresh taking the traditional role of a charismatic conman who had tricked everyone else in the group. Over time, the FBI agents had to abandon the image of the siege as a regular hostage-barricade situation, as it became clear that those who chose to leave the compound did not consider themselves hostages. They could, and did, leave of their own free will, and had the conditions and threat level inside the compound not been as bad as they were, they would gladly go back in. At any rate, they reasoned, it was *the FBI* that was to blame for those conditions, not the Davidians still trapped inside. But even then, the FBI consistently stuck with the assumption that this was a fragile and easily fractured group, and tailored both the negotiation and the pressure strategies to suit this perception. As highlighted by the critical reports after the fact, a key reason why those efforts failed was because the assumption simply did not match the reality of the situation. The Davidians were a close-knit and immensely cohesive group with strongly held and shared core beliefs. They had no reason to disbelieve Koresh's role in the group as a spiritual leader and chief interpreter of the biblical word that bound the group together. If anything, the FBI's persistent and by-the-book attempts at discrediting him only served to prove his predictions and sermons right in the eyes of the other group members. No real effort was made to alter that strategy to match the specifics of the case, although there is something of a chicken-and-egg problem of separating cause from consequence here. Was this failure due to a closed work flow that demanded adherence to the regular problem framing and solution strategies, or were the framing and strategies chosen because the specifics of the case simply were not understood? There is an identification paradox at play here that may influence the categorisation of the FBI's efforts that cannot be easily disentangled.

Either way, though, the rigidity in the work flow is there, and even if the FBI agents could not figure out the details of the case, it was clear to them that the divide-and-conquer strategy did not get as much traction as it usually did. In spite of this, they stuck to the plan and did not try to find a new solution to that particular problem. In fact, the few external subject-matter experts that suggested a different framing were dismissed as not being relevant to understanding the situation. Instead, the familiar expertise provided by the extended NCAVC team won out – yet another case of sticking to the standard procedures and rigidly defined problem space. While part of this can certainly be explained from the standpoint of not wanting to endanger individuals who have no experience with these kinds of hostile situations, or not allowing outsiders without authorisation to

pierce through the communication black-out the FBI imposed on the Davidians, those explanations still fall well within the scope of the kind of adherence to SOP:s that points towards a rigid work flow. It is standard procedure for the FBI to fully control the bubble around a barricaded group; any gap supposedly diminishes the effectiveness of that control, and thus lessens the pressure the bureau tries to put on its opponent.

Really, the one exception to this adherence to procedures was the HRT's invention of a plan to use massive amounts of CS gas to pacify the Davidians, and to use CEV:s to insert that gas into the compound. At the same time, this is just a scaled-up version of the use of regular tear gas and of riot control vehicles with water cannons – both of which had been in use in law enforcement circles for decades. The scale and insertion methodology was simply an adaptation to the fact that they were dealing with a large, but relatively flimsy, wooden house as opposed to an open town square. The HRT was also the FBI's equivalent to the, by now commonplace, police Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) team (somewhat confusingly, FBI also had a separate SWAT team that took on a slightly different role) so their adaptation and use of this special equipment falls well within how this team is meant to operate. As exceptions go, then, it is a fairly weak one.

Preferred outcome

The discussion so far may have seemed to suggest that the FBI prefers its outcomes to be consistent. Not only is that part of the whole point of the many operating procedures in place, but it is also almost inherent in their role as a law enforcement agency: that enforcement should not in a civilised society be capricious and unpredictable. However, the preferred outcome is not just about those procedures – if it were, it would mainly just be a repetition and direct consequence of the work flow – but about the application of those procedures to solve an apparent problem. It is here that the previously discussed apparent flexibility of the FBI as a whole comes into play. It is readily apparent, even just from the teams involved in the Waco case, that the bureau recognises and is equipped to solve a wide variety of problems, each needing its own particular strategies, competences, and methodologies. In addition, the bureau is founded on the principle of making informed decisions. In its formative years, much was made of the FBI's reliance on scientific methods to secure evidence and solve crime, and as its roles and responsibilities have expanded, it has in part become an explicit intelligence agency. The entire organisation is purposefully designed to gather information to adapt to and handle complex and dynamic environments. To really confuse the terms and make a mess of the analytical tool we are employing, the FBI's rigid procedures are intended to consistently generate suitable preconditions to dynamically respond to complex problems. In short, if we clearly separate the procedures from the outcomes, the organisation as a whole should be a prime candidate for having a 'dynamics' as its preferred outcome.

Two things mar this picture, however: one is the individual teams and departments in and of themselves, and the other is the approach chosen for the Waco siege. The FBI as a unitary actor may indeed prefer dynamics, but this does not necessarily hold true for its many departments. The Waco case amply demonstrates that the bureau is far from unitary. Each of the teams involved demonstrated a strong preference for solving the siege *their* way. The parable of having a hammer and only seeing nails readily comes to mind when discussing both the HRT and the embedded subject-matter experts. The former played their part in using forceful and repressive measures at every turn, with little or no regard for how this would affect the negotiation efforts. The latter insisted on using criminological and psychiatric analytical frameworks to analyse the goals and rationality of the Davidians, eschewing other approaches as wholly unnecessary. As for the negotiators, they tried their best to solve the siege through negotiation, but they were limited in their own preconceptions of the Davidian group dynamics and of their understanding of what the Davidians were trying to communicate in their own roundabout, allegorical way. All three were stuck with trying to force a problem framing onto the situation that was consistent with their own area of expertise. Consequently, although the FBI as a whole may be considered as preferring dynamic outcomes, the efforts at Mt. Carmel were very much about trying to fit this square-peg (a tightly knit religious group) into the round-hole framing of a conventional, largely individualistic criminal gang.

It is also telling that even though the FBI was equipped, and most likely preferred, a dynamic outcome, it had no regular procedure in place to ensure that these team-ups would work. But it is up for debate whether the use of completely *ad-hoc* structures to combine these teams is an argument for or against the dynamic preference. On the one hand, this *ad-hoc*ery is not the least bit consistent with the principle of consistent outcomes, but on the other hand, it is more conducive to chaotic and unpredictable outcomes, rather than strictly dynamic ones.

In the end, however, while this represents an interesting discrepancy between the parts and the whole of the FBI, it makes no real difference for the purposes of this analysis. With regulation as its guiding principle and rigidity as its instrumental work flow, the bureau already tends towards a closed behaviour irrespective of how we classify the preferred outcome. The fact that the individual parts of the organisation tend more towards consistency, in spite of the whole tending towards dynamics, only further cements this categorisation of the FBI at Waco as being a closed organisation.

4.4.5 MESO usage

So far, little has been said on the topic of knowledge usage beyond the persistent message that there was poor communication between the different FBI teams on the scene. The reasons for this are as simple as they are blunt: very little in the

way of external expertise was used. It helps to recall that the crisis management team was not a regular structure and that each of the elements were pulled in due to a perceived need for those competences, not because they were set up to work together or had any previous interactions to fall back on. At the same time, this was a high-profile event that attracted a lot of outside attention from both professionals and amateurs among the public.

It also bears reiterating that there was still some internal consistency in these teams. They were all – quite literally in the case of the NCAVC – of the FBI school of thought, and had at least some basic training in common, as well as a reasonably consistent perception of what kind of opponent the Davidians represented. As time went on, and as the different teams had different interactions of varying length and intensity, that perception may have diverged, but the self-image of the FBI as an organisation that fights crime – that ultimately the opposition is essentially criminal – remained throughout the crisis. This may have helped a little in creating cohesion in the FBI effort, which in turn may have created a shared platform for knowledge exchange, but as mentioned on numerous occasions, the differing cultures and approaches to problem solving drastically hampered the team's ability to coordinate and maintain any kind of knowledge arena.

Meta-knowledge

The flip-side of this arrangement was a significant monoculture in what kind of knowledge was available to the different teams, and to the bureau's credit, it identified a number of areas where the special agents would not be sufficiently knowledgeable on their own. In particular, it was recognised that expertise in psychology, psychotherapy and psycholinguistics would be needed to assess the mental state and rationale of Koresh and of the Davidians as a group. The supposition was that some internal disagreement between the group leadership and its rank and file could be found and exploited, as was often the case with other criminal groups. There was also a perceived need for medical knowledge to assess the health effects and risks of the wounds that a couple of the Davidians had sustained – including Koresh. In addition, as conditions deteriorated, the risks for the children inside the compound, in particular, had to be determined and their state monitored to decide whether more direct action was needed sooner than planned. As the final CS gas assault plan was coming together, medical knowledge would also be needed to determine any health risks from exposure to the gas. Finally, and somewhat contrary to the prevailing narrative of the crisis, the FBI did indeed identify that some kind of expertise on the topic of religion, theology and cults would be needed in order to make sense of the innumerable biblical references and allusions that the Davidians used in their communication with the outside world.

All in all, this was a pretty fair assessment of the gaps in the FBI team's knowledge, and a solid ground upon which to build good meta-knowledge usage.

The problem is that, while these needs were acknowledged, there were not treated equally. The knowledge that was already familiar and related to the bureau's every-day work was heavily favoured over truly new and strange knowledge, like anything related to religious matters. This familiarity is evidenced by exactly whom was approached to fill those gaps. The psychologists, psychotherapists and medical doctors involved had all worked with the FBI before – some were already directly attached to the FBI Academy or even specifically to the NCAVC. As meta-knowledge is not just a matter of doing the initial knowledge inventory, but of taking action based on that inventory, these measures only go half-way. Going back to the basic definitions of the terms, the information of what's missing is still just information, and it needs to be *actionable* in order to qualify as actual knowledge. The fact that the FBI chose not to look very far – a matter that will be discussed more in the section on empathic knowledge – somewhat diminishes the value of the meta-knowledge usage in this case, as does the evaluation that very little new and unfamiliar expertise was actually needed.

It is clear that the focus lay on finding expertise that fit with the pre-existing problem framing, rather than on figuring out whether that framing was accurate and if there was some underlying knowledge gap that could lead the whole effort wrong. While an attempt *was* made to establish whether a religious perspective could be a worth-while addition, this attempt was perfunctory at best, and ultimately shut down by the experts that had already been found and who judged themselves entirely capable to handle such a seemingly trifling detail too. As previously mentioned, what we have here is a fairly standard identification paradox. The FBI agents were not knowledgeable enough about the problem they were facing to identify exactly what kind of problem it actually was. Consequently, they were incapable of properly evaluating the answers they received when they asked the available experts for advice on the matter.

Empathic knowledge

As a direct consequence of the meta-knowledge gaps, there is little in the way of empathic knowledge usage during the Waco siege. As mentioned, the FBI did not look very far afield to find the experts that were included in the effort, and we might even question to what extent they should be considered “external” to the bureau to begin with. They were approached because they had established credentials with the FBI already, having worked at the FBI Academy, at NCAVC, or through some other consulting work for the bureau. For the most part, their fields of expertise were ones that had been part of the agency tool kit for many decades – psychological profiling being perhaps the most obvious example. As such, none of these consultations really fulfil the qualification of the FBI trying to figure out who knows the answer to some otherwise unintelligible question. All the questions the bureau might have had, had already been formulated in such a way that they could be understood with the knowledge that was readily available.

Similarly, any interactions between the three FBI teams on the scene do not really qualify as empathic knowledge usage either, in part because it was all internal to the bureau and did not cover the identified knowledge gaps anyway, but mostly because the friction between those teams meant that very little knowledge was exchanged between them to begin with. Ideally, the HRT scare tactics would be informed by any agreements the negotiators had made with the Davidians, and both those efforts would be informed by the profiling and assessments made by the NCAVC team and their associated scholars. Instead, the scholars mainly just confirmed the framing that the negotiators had already assumed, and the CINT and HRT efforts were continuously at odds with each other. All three had the same essential framing of the situation, all of them informed by the same FBI schooling, and all of them finding that there were not really any critical questions left unanswered.

That is not to say that there were no opportunities to realise that such questions did indeed exist. The FBI was approached by numerous groups and individuals who offered up their assistance and expertise in service of the agency. Since they all lacked previous credentials, and the FBI lacked the know-how to assess their trustworthiness and usefulness, all such requests were routed to the established group of experts. Invariably, the answer was that the offers were not worth the bother either because the source was questionable, or because the expertise was not deemed relevant to the problem at hand. Notably, a small team of religious scholars approached the FBI to help interpret Koresh's biblical allusions "live" during the conversations between CINT and Koresh, but they were turned away per the standard procedure for such negotiations. They also tried to communicate with the Davidians indirectly through a local radio station, and through their lawyers, but whatever they gleaned through those exchanges remained on the outside of the FBI effort. The indirect communication at least had the effect of making the Davidians aware of the team, and consequently the Davidians asked the FBI negotiators to get in touch with them as these were seemingly people who understood the group's religiously coloured language, and who might help the FBI understand it too. The negotiators allowed the communication to continue in a limited fashion, but made no real effort to include it in their own approach to the negotiations.

This can only really be seen a *direct rejection* of an empathic knowledge use case. The negotiators were more or less directly told that these scholars had knowledge that would help the FBI understand the situation, but based on their own assessment and backed by the experts they already had at hand, they concluded that this knowledge was unnecessary and unhelpful.

Second-order knowledge

That episode can also be seen as a rejection of a second-order knowledge usage: it was a recommendation regarding where to go to find out more, but it fell on

deaf ears. It is somewhat ironic that the Davidians themselves almost acted as knowledge brokers for the FBI in the bureau's attempts at understanding the Davidians. At the same time, it is perhaps not surprising that this offer was refused by the FBI, seeing as how it came from their opponent in the conflict, and also seeing as how they had already been rejected for other reasons as described earlier.

As mentioned, the prevailing opinion was that there were no unanswered – or at least no unanswerable – questions, and consequently, there was no apparent need to engage in anything that might be classified as empathic or second-order knowledge usage. This state of affair was further solidified by the fact that the individuals who might have had the outside connections to introduce and explore new problem framings and new approaches were all too wedded to the prevailing perception of the Davidians as traditional criminals and Koresh as a consummate con-man to make any use of those connections. Rather than acting as knowledge brokers, the scholars that had been approached came to take on the role of mind-guards in the groupthink-like dynamic that evolved within and between the FBI and the subject-matter experts.

In a sense, we find a second layer of identification paradoxes here: part of what gave rise to this dynamic was the fact that the scholars themselves had the same problem as the FBI agents had in identifying how well (or how poorly) they understood the rationale behind the Davidians' behaviour. They used their own analytical frameworks to judge competing frameworks that they were not at all knowledgeable of. The most obvious instance is how psychologists and sociologists were making interpretations of the religious content of Koresh's communications, and rather than stating that this was beyond their respective fields to analyse or opine on, they interpreted it as inconsequential, if nothing else because their respective analytical tool kits were not fit for that particular purpose. Unfortunately, the established narratives of the cult leader and con-man were *close enough* to let these experts conclude that a theological analysis would not yield any useful insights, and thus their recommendation was that the FBI should not waste any time pursuing that line of inquiry. In addition, it is impossible to determine after the fact whether it actually *would* have made any difference, at least without resorting to hypotheticals and counter-factual reasoning. What can be said, however, is that these recommendations ensured that the strategy was never put to the test, and that Koresh's theologically based logic and rationale was never challenged.

All in all, then, the MESO-usage record of the Waco siege is pretty poor. There were some solid foundations to be found in the initial knowledge inventory, but the bureau did not act upon that awareness. Consequently, there were significant gaps in the organisational meta-knowledge. The most glaring, and potentially most critical missing pieces were deemed largely irrelevant to the task at hand, and there was no perceived need to figure out who else might fill in that missing knowledge. The one instance of finding out that some other party had relevant knowledge was rejected out of hand. Similarly, there was no felt need to look

further afield to find answers to any unresolved questions, simply because there apparently were no such questions. Again, the recommendation to approach a third party to highlight those questions was rejected.

In purely organisational terms, the way the teams are generally set up, and the way the FBI Academy and the NCAVC are habitually called in to help with tricky cases, both bear some superficial resemblance to a Community of Practice (CoP) that might, under other circumstances, help in identifying those needs and finding solutions to them. In practice, however, the relationship between the different units is rather one of competition than of collaboration, and the academy is – perhaps unsurprisingly – a bit too similar in outlook, framing, and subject-matter familiarity to what is already present on the scene to really be able to offer that fresh perspectives that really informs the CoP and the second-order knowledge it is meant to provide.

4.4.6 *Conclusions from Waco*

As one might expect from one of the most disastrous incidents in the FBI's modern history, the Waco siege does not paint a pretty picture of how the agency behaved or how it solved the problems it was faced with. In the aftermath, it was determined that the strategic missteps and misunderstandings of what the agency would be dealing with had been a long time coming, and that the agency culture was in desperate need of reform. It would take a while to get there – some three years to be exact, as we shall see in the next chapter. Nevertheless, this still is pretty quick when talking about an organisation of the size and complexity of the FBI. The changes were initiated and started being implemented almost immediately after the siege was concluded with the firing of the bureau director, only half-way through his term.

In terms of looking at the analytical questions, the siege can be summed up by the following:

- It was unquestionably a crisis for the principal actor.
- The processes being used *were not* anticipated for the most part.
- The principal actor *could not* maintain an open mode of operation and, indeed, it is debatable whether there was an open mode to begin with.
- The principal actor demonstrated *very few and very weak* uses of MESO-knowledge, even going so far as to actively counteract some uses.
- At least one, possibly two, negative reinforcement cycle(s) that increased the degree of crisis *can* be observed.

While there are some interesting variations in how the degree of closed-ness should be judged between the organisation as a whole and the different units within that organisation, these results are trivially transposed onto the binary states of the analytical model:

- Degree of crisis: high.
- Degree of anticipation of process: low.
- Degree of closed-ness: high.
- Degree of MESO-usage: low

All in all, this is the most clear-cut case that will be dealt with in this study. Had the variables been measured in more continuous steps, the high “scores” had been very high, and the low ones very low, to the point where Waco could essentially be considered the ideal case for the ideal type model.

Chapter 5: The 1996 Montana Freemen Standoff

Millennialist movements come in all shapes and sizes, with the only really common aspects being a belief in the fast approaching apocalypse and some kind of grounding in Christian myth and religion. That is not to say that other faiths do not have their fair share of apocalyptic or even millenarian variants.⁷ However, in the 1990s, the conveniently close connection between the rapid changes in the world, the myth of the thousand-year golden age, and the new millennium just around the corner made Christian millennialists particular reason to stir. The FBI had, perhaps unknowingly, gotten its first tastes of this in the clash at Ruby Ridge in 1992, and more clearly in the Waco siege in 1993. These became the catalysts for making the connection between apocalyptic millennialism and right-wing militias. A connection made even stronger when in 1995, militia-sympathiser Timothy McVeigh cited the government's handling of those two cases as his main motivation for his bombing in Oklahoma City. This string of events, along with the Aum Shinrikyo sarin gas attack against the Tokyo subway proved that apocalyptic cults had become a very credible threat against society and one that had to be dealt with quickly. For the FBI, in particular, the events in the U.S. represented a string of fumbled operations and a clear sign that there was a significant knowledge gap that needed to be filled, especially since the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta could potentially offer a world stage for anyone attempting a similar attack.

7 "Millenarianism" and "millennialism" are two closely related concept that both describe the belief in the coming of massive worldly upheavals, The key difference is that "millenarianism" references the thousands of things that will change and is as such not tied to any particular religion, whereas "millennialism" specifically relates to and references the thousand-year reign and second coming of Christ.

5.1 Background

In the spring of 1996, three years almost to the day after the Waco siege had started, and with the Olympic games only a few months away, the FBI once again found themselves besieging a well-entrenched opponent; this time in the farm country outside Jordan, Montana. The similarities between the Montana standoff and the Waco siege became immediately obvious. While the underlying logic may have differed, the militia movement saw the FBI as representatives of an illegitimate government infiltrated by the forces of evil. Again, the opposition was heavily armed and consisted of a large number of families – men, women, and children – which precluded any kind of immediate frontal assault. Also, it quickly became evident that the militia and the FBI did not exactly speak the same language even though the words and references were all the same.

5.1.1 *The Roundup and Jordan Freeman*

The Montana Freeman, as the group was commonly known, were a collective of families that had gathered in what they called the “Justus Township” – a play on the word “justice” and on “just us”, signifying both their isolation from society at large and their continued struggle against what they perceived as a corrupted legal system (Rosenfeld 2000:325). The group itself traces its roots back to a banking boom in the 1970s, when farmers were given ready access to large loans to increase their land ownership. It was a banking boom more than a farming boom, though, since these increased holdings did not readily translate into increased income and by end of the decade the federal interest rates were drastically increased in an attempt to fight inflation (Wessinger 2000b:161). As a result, many small farmers were now burdened with unproductive land and increasing debts. Some were able to down-size and re-establish themselves. Yet, many had no option but to sell, often to multinational or outright foreign conglomerate. Others tried to fight it out.

To understand the effects of this, we have to go back to the 1920s Christian Identity (CI) movement. Borrowing heavily on the even older British Israelite belief, the Identity Christians believe that the “Aryans” are one of lost Israelite tribes spoken of in the Bible and that they are lost because they took up residence in north-western Europe rather than in the holy land. Furthermore, this lost tribe is considered the only remaining “people of God” and that the Jewish people in particular, but extended to all Semitic people in general, have no connection to the original Israelites but are rather satanic invaders who took over the land. Thus, they believe the apocalyptic struggle between good and evil will be between the Aryans and the Jews; a belief that also supports the notion that Christ was a descendant of the true Israelites and was killed by the Jews as part of this struggle (Barkun 1997a:248, b; Ellwood 2000).

Over the years, these core beliefs seeped into a huge number of essentially racist beliefs and ideologies and the various groups that subscribe to them, from Nazis to the Aryan Nation to Ku Klux Klan (KKK). In the 1960s, these beliefs formed the basis for the Posse Comitatus movement – a loose organisation with the intent to safeguard the individual’s right against the government, as these rights were believed to be under attack from the forces of evil and in particular from Jews. This basic idea was later formalised as the “Zionist Occupation Government” (ZOG): an assumed conspiracy among Jewish bankers and lawyers to infiltrate the U.S. government and slowly but surely strip the ordinary citizens of their Common Law rights,⁸ thereby laying the groundwork for the eventual, inevitable invasion of the satanic hordes. This idea parallels and feeds from the more general “New World Order” (NWO) conspiracy theory, where some evil agent – the exact nature of which depends on the individual theory – is attempting to set up a totalitarian world-spanning state to enslave all of humanity. The supposed counters to the ZOG conspiracy range from the outright militant Christian Reconstruction – forcefully turning the U.S. into a Christian theocracy – to the obstructionist Christian Constitutionalist and Common Law movements, which refuse to yield any “god-given” individual rights and instead take a more legalistic approach to the ZOG’s incursions. Even the name of the movement itself – Posse Comitatus⁹ – refers back to the common-law principle of the individual’s right and responsibility to form militias in order to help enforce the law of the land (*cf.* Barkin 1997a:249, 251; Ellwood 2000; Kaplan 2000; Rosenfeld 2000:343; Shupe 1998). Over time, a number of these groups came to calling themselves Freemen to highlight their struggle against the oppressive government, and their view of themselves as sovereign individuals, subject only to the laws of God and the Common Law doctrines that followed from them.

This focus on god-given rights and Common Law, and the belief in a Jewish conspiracy working to strip both away, fed neatly into the farming collapse in the early 1980s. From the CI perspective, the Jewish bankers were obviously running the whole thing, handing out loans, then altering the terms, and then using the equally “Jewish-controlled” legal system to enforce enclosures and bypass the individual’s rights to own property. (*cf.* Barkun 1997a:253ff; Rosenfeld 2000:328; Pitcavage 2001:965f). In 1981, the Clark family living near Jordan

8 The “Common Law” referred to here is a central belief in the movements rooted in CI and British Israelite beliefs. While it shares, and initially took, its name with the law system that spread throughout the British empire, it is a distinctly religious law, based on the Bible. As such, it will be denoted with capital letters to distinguish itself from the common law of the common-law system in place in the U.S.

9 Latin for “power of the county/community”. The term is perhaps most commonly known through the U.S. Posse Comitatus Act – a federal statute that prohibits the use of the federal armed forces to enforce domestic policies.

in Garfield County, Montana, took a stand against this perceived incursion and stopped paying back the federal loan the family had taken in order to purchase a 960 hectare wheat farm.

Just over a decade later and some 150km away, in 1992, the Skurdal family bought a farm outside of Roundup in Musselshell County and almost immediately took an aggressive obstructionist stance against the local and state legislature. A wave of Common Law documents started flowing into the county attorney's office declaring the Roundup farm a sovereign nation at war with the invasion force of the county. A legal back-and-forth ensued but ended with the attorney resigning and with the Montana Supreme Court issuing a ban on Skurdal's access to the legal system along with a fine for mass filing spurious legal documents. The court also determined that the Skurdals had not payed federal tax, which eventually resulted in the farm being formally seized by the government and put up for sale, even though, in practice, no attempt was made to vacate the Skurdals from the property. At this time, the Skurdals were joined in their struggle by LeRoy Schweitzer, an esteemed Common Law expert in CI circuits, and later by the Petersen family.

Together, they escalated the paper conflict by not only ignoring the court order, but also teaching others how to use Common Law documents to fight the legal system and by issuing home-made drafts and counterfeit liens to property in the area. Using these drafts, they were able to take advantage of delays and unreliable processes in the banking system to withdraw money that they then used to buy vehicles and pay various legal fees (Wessinger 2000b:163ff, Pitcavage 1996). The shared perception of these Roundup Freeman was that the legal system was set up against them, and their own run-ins with the law seemed to confirm this. Thus, striking back by clogging up that system and using its own flaws against it was simply fair and just retribution. Further confirmation of the evils of the government came with the 1992 shootings at Ruby Ridge and the 1993 Waco siege. In the former, one of the main characters was Randy Weaver – an Identity Christian and a militia man – and in the latter, the Branch Davidians represented yet another form of Christian militia that claimed to be under attack from the forces of Babylon. The Davidians' interpretation of the siege was fully in line with the world view of the Christian Identity movement (Wessinger 2000b:165).

In early 1994, the Roundup Freeman and similar groups in the region took control over the Garfield County courthouse to formally set up their own local government. Presiding over the matter and acting as judge was the head of the nearby Clark family. Over the last decade, the Clarks' initial \$700,000 loan had accrued an unpaid debt that was approaching \$2 million. Consequently, the Clark farm had been foreclosed and sold by the bank, and was to be put up for auction later the same year. Having appropriated the role of judge, Richard Clark now ruled the judged who had passed sentence on the family to be in contempt of the Freeman's Common Law court, and posted a \$1 million bounty on the sheriff who was to handle the farm auction (Pitcavage 1996).

In response, the Garfield County attorney indicted the Freemen for impersonating public officials, engaging in criminal syndicalism, and advocating political terrorism (Pitcavage 1996). However, the forcefulness of these charges, as with the bank rulings, was often somewhat diminished by the lack of any means to execute them. The local police force was low on manpower and lacked both training and equipment to take on the militia men. Occasionally, short-term arrests were made for immediate infractions such as trespassing on private property and threats against county officials. In a slightly ironic twist, the Freemen's attempts at acquiring more and heavier firearms than the rifles and shotguns they already had fell through as they tried to use one of their counterfeit money orders to pay for it, and the weapons dealer took enough precautions before delivery for the deception to be discovered.

In early 1995, after one of the local Freemen in Roundup was finally successfully convicted for posting the \$1 million bounty and threatening to hang the sheriff if he was brought in, the matter was escalated further. The Freemen started making plans to kidnap the sheriff themselves and try him in an *ad hoc* Common Law court, but their planning efforts caused enough commotion to tip off the FBI. The district judge and the sheriff's office were notified, who in turn stepped up their vigilance against the Freemen. Not a day later, two of the Freemen were stopped for driving a truck without license plates, and when searched, the truck was found to contain maps over the judge's and the sheriff's offices and homes, a number of unlicensed concealed weapons, numerous handcuffs, camera and radio equipment, and nearly \$90,000 in gold, silver, and cash. This was obviously a part of the kidnapping crew they had just been informed about. A scant few hours later, three more Freemen walked into the jail where the first presumptive kidnapers were being held and demanded to be given the items found in the truck. When the three newcomers accidentally exposed the concealed weapons they carried, they too were put under arrest. Two more Freemen were waiting in a locked car outside, and when deputies approached to inspect the vehicles and their passengers, these two were also found to be carrying illegal weapons and were arrested (Wessinger 2000b:164; Pitcavage 1996).

In the end, the majority of arrests and indictments of that day failed in court due to the procedures used to search the people and vehicles. However, there was no longer any doubt that the Roundup Freemen presented a credible and active threat to the local government officials. The non-Freemen population was also becoming increasingly restless over the fact that nothing seemed to happen, although there were some early suspicions that the FBI were now actively monitoring the situation due to the many unfamiliar vehicles and individuals that started to appear in the area (Pitcavage 1996). The Oklahoma bombing on April 19, 1995 caused even further frictions. On the one hand, it demonstrated the threat of the militia movement and increased the intolerance against the militias, but it also helped in the militias' recruitment. The Skurdal family alone had taken in half a dozen new Freemen and were quickly running low on space in the Roundup

farm. In September 1995, the Roundup Freeman had outgrown their means and relocated to Jordan, joining the group that had gathered on the Clark farm. The farm was renamed the “Justus Township” and declared sovereign territory (Wessinger 2000b:195).

The reaction of the Freeman’s neighbours was hostile. They started making their own plans for acts of sabotage against the Clark farm – cutting telephone lines the roads leading to the farm – to which the Freeman responded by proclaiming that they would start travelling in armed packs to ensure their own safety. Their rhetoric against the government and legal system was also ratcheted up, threatening to shoot on sight anyone who interfered with their activities and posting even more bounty posters for the capture of public officials. Their activities had drawn a fair amount of media attention, and the Freeman leveraged their new-found fame by demanding payments to appear in interviews, and confiscated tens of thousands of dollars worth of equipment from a TV crew that had come to make a report on them. Other money-making schemes were the seminars on Schweitzer’s interpretation of Common Law and workshops on how to obstruct the U.S. legal system. These seminars had high entrance fees but still attracted hundreds of attendants, to the point where a full 30-person staff had to be employed to keep them organised (Pitcavage 1996).

The Freeman’s brazen attitude and quick growth had also made them at odds with the Militias of Montana (M.O.M.) movement, which was an attempt to organise a more formal militia in the state as a direct response to the Ruby Ridge incident. One of the six individuals arrested in early 1995 had been one of the founders of M.O.M., although at the time, his co-founder of the movement issued a statement that M.O.M. had no relationship with the Freeman. By 1996, the Freeman’s success had started to leech away members from M.O.M. and thus started to threaten the cohesion and unity that M.O.M. was founded to create. In particular, the remaining leadership found the head figures of the Freeman – Schweitzer, Skurdal, and Clark – too aggressive and confrontational in their attitude, and too strict and absolutist in their beliefs, to be a reliable party for co-operation (Pitcavage 1996).

On March 25, 1996, LeRoy Schweitzer and Daniel Petersen were travelling outside the farm to inspect a radio tower that had been installed to secure a means of communication with the outside world, should the neighbours go through with their sabotage plans. On arriving, the two were apprehended by FBI agents on numerous charges of conspiracy and threat against government officials and functions. The federal justice system and law enforcement had now become directly involved. While initially shocked by the legal antics the Freeman had been using for years and now displayed during the arraignment hearing, it became clear that the federal authorities would not be as easily shouted down as the local officials. The remaining Freeman quickly hunkered down at the Clark farm to face off against the FBI and the local community rejoiced that some forceful action was finally about to be taken. Meanwhile, the media that had

already found an attention-grabbing subject in the militia movement in general, and the Freemen in particular, started preparing for yet another Waco-style siege between the FBI and an armed opponent.

5.1.2 *The FBI after Waco*

The disastrous handling of the Waco siege was a wake-up call for the FBI. Together with Ruby Ridge, it highlighted a development in society that had received precious little attention up until this point. Both events also acted as a trigger for a distinctly U.S. brand of domestic terrorism. The militia movement was already reasonably well established and known, but the combination of basic millennial beliefs combined with these apparent misuses of government powers against individual rights caused an almost immediate and perceptible upswing in engagement and activity among these groups. Waco had further highlighted deficiencies in the agency's problem-solving procedures as well as in its crime laboratories. Crucial evidence from the Mt. Carmel fire had been misplaced or outright lost and therefore presented an incomplete picture of the events for the first round of congressional hearings (Reavis 1998:278ff; HCoGR 2000:2, 5ff). While some was later recovered and yet did not significantly alter the picture of what had happened, the negligence reflected poorly on what was supposed to be the nation's premier forensic authority. It also further fuelled the accusations of a cover-up and similar conspiracy theories, all of which fit perfectly into the narrative of the NWO and ZOG beliefs of many right-wing groups.

Even before Waco, FBI Director Sessions was being investigated for improper use of agency means – yet another deficiency in the bureau's procedures – and shortly after the siege, his position became untenable. Half-way through his tenure, he was forced to resign and was replaced by Director Freeh. This was a conflux of a number of events: the proven procedural deficiencies, the operational fiasco, the ouster of the head of the agency, a new attorney general in need of washing out the failure of her first large operation on the job, an obvious threat to society on the rise, and a high-profile international event – the 1996 Atlanta Olympics, a prime target for terrorism – was only years away. In combination, it created an environment of deep reform within the agency. This new threat needed to be analysed and methods for responding to it needed to be created.

A major source of criticism for the handling of Waco was the religious scholars who felt that they had not been let into the process to the extent where their expertise could be put to any use (cf. Tabor 1995; Tabor & Gallagher 1995; Reavis 1998:253f). While a handful had been approached for minor consultations about the history and nature of the Davidian cult, the general sense was that they had possessed the knowledge needed to decode David Koresh's rhetoric and the rationale for his actions, and that this knowledge could have significantly helped the negotiators. This, then, became the first gap that the FBI needed to fill. In 1994, two events of importance took place. First, the bureau established the Critical

Incident Response Group (CIRG), with the mission to act as a liaison between tactical elements, negotiators, and outside expertise on any given topic and in almost any kind of crisis situation. It was intended to be a knowledge nexus for both for competences that existed within the FBI, but which were fragmented across numerous divisions and geographic locales, and for competences that were too esoteric to the core mission of the agency but which could still be of crucial importance for a particular incident (Barkun 2002; Romano 1998).

In order to fulfil this mission, CIRG instituted the Special Advisory Commission that would be tasked with building a network of scholars that went beyond the standard FBI fare of psychiatry and criminology. The commission started its work in earnest in the second half of 1995 and delivered its final recommendations to the FBI in February 1996. The idea it presented was to have a core group of multidisciplinary scholars and a number of staff positions that would act as liaisons with the FBI's operational personnel in the field. In a parallel move, and to fulfil the particular need for religious expertise that Waco had highlighted, the Justice Department approached the American Academy of Religion (AAR) in 1994 to see if it could help educate the FBI and other federal agencies about the inner workings of religious groups such as the Davidians. The same year also saw a conference on the topic of the Waco siege that brought together law enforcement officials and academics to discuss various aspects of that crisis. From this conference grew the Critical Incident Analysis Group (CIAG) which became a more permanent institution for establishing, strengthening, and maintaining these kinds of contacts. The mission of CIAG was to bring together scholars and public officials, many in a decision-making role with crisis management responsibilities, and to also include a number of former or active FBI officials. Beyond just being a discussion forum, CIAG also offered the opportunity for, in particular the FBI, to "get a feel for" the other participants and to see if there were any potentially useful contacts among them for consultation in the future.

In April, 1995, the Federal Building in Oklahoma became the target of militia-connected domestic terrorism as a bomb blast killed 167 people and injured another 684 (Shariat et al. 1998). The main perpetrators listed Ruby Ridge and Waco as their motivation and claimed that the attack was a direct revenge for how the FBI had handled the two incidents. If there was any doubt about the danger of the growing militia movements, the attack swept them away. In an annual FBI meeting later in 1995, this time dedicated to the Oklahoma bombing, the first contact between the AAR and the FBI was made. The AAR representatives were soon tied to CIRG's Special Advisory Commission and later, through the contact person's shared membership, to CIAG as well (Barkun 2002; Wessinger 2000b:179ff).

What would later be called "Project Megiddo" was born out of these efforts – an extensive FBI effort to map out and analyse the many aspects of the millennialist movements, their individual peculiarities and belief systems, and the threat they posed to society and to law enforcement. The name of the project speaks

directly to the origins of this investigation. The field of Megiddo in Israel is perhaps better known under the name Armageddon – the site of the apocalyptic battle between good and evil in the Book of Revelations. Overlooking the field is Mount Carmel, from which the Branch Davidians took the name for their compound outside Waco. The final Project Megiddo report did not come out until 1999 (Barkun 2002; FBI 2002), but the lessons that had gone into it and the scholarly contacts that helped in creating it, got their first test trial in the spring of 1996 as the FBI indicted the leaders of the Montana Freemen (Barkun 2002; Lamy 1997:110ff; Romano 1998).

The recent report from the Special Advisory Committee and the newly formed connection to AAR immediately became key components in the strategy to solve the crisis. From the outside, the perception that this would be another Waco was wide-spread.¹⁰ Inside the agency, the course is clear: it must absolutely not become a repeat of the events three years earlier. Instead of coming in with armoured vehicles, sniper teams and a perimeter patrolled by agents in camouflage clothing and black uniforms, regular vehicles and the regular casual office dress code became the norm. Instead of a siege, it turned into the “Freemen Standoff”, lasting 81 days during which not a single shot was fired. There were no rifts between the tactical and negotiation efforts, and no attempts at intimidation or psychological warfare. When negotiations broke down, a critical new component of the effort was employed: the use of third-party intermediaries that did not come with the stigma – from the Freemen’s point of view – of being part of the FBI or any other branch of the government. In fact, many of these go-between negotiators were themselves part of the militia movement and adherents to some form of Christian Identity beliefs (Romano 1998; Rosenfeld 2000:334).

Even though the religious experts who had been turned away during the Waco siege were now included and contributed with their analysis of the motivations of the Freemen, by June, a type of expertise that proved crucial to the negotiation efforts came from a completely new direction. The FBI established contact with the CAUSE Foundation – a group that described itself as “an international civil rights legal foundation that defends the rights of the unpopular, the powerless, and the politically incorrect.” This description was in contrast to the Southern Poverty Law Center who listed CAUSE as a right-wing hate group (AP News 1996-06-11a; Rosenfeld 2000:334). Originally named “The Patriots’ Defence Foundation” (PDF), their current name is an acronym for the territories ruled by

10 A curious artefact left behind from these early days of the Internet was a special edition section on the CNN website. Now removed, it was apparently pre-emptively set up to offer a full compilation of daily reports and features from the expected siege. While it remained active during the entire standoff, the reports became less frequent and less detailed as time went on, as the crisis never reached the levels of drama many initially had guessed. This is also reflected in the chronology and in the source material (CNN 1996).

the “true Israelite” tribes of Christian Identity beliefs: Canada, Australia, United States, South Africa, and Europe. CAUSE members had previously acted as attorneys and legal counselors for Waco survivors and for the head of the KKK, and they were well-versed in both Common Law and the formally established U.S. legal system. This unique legal knowledge let them act as interpreters of sorts between the demands of the FBI and the demands of the Freeman (*cf.* AP 1996-06-11a; SPLC; Stormfront 1994).

5.2 Chronology of events

An immediate key difference between Waco and Montana is that in acting against the Freeman, FBI was the initiating party. The conflict between the militia and the legal system was certainly a pre-existing fact at that point, but the agency was not handed a crisis started by someone else. Instead, the bureau started its own on-going investigation mid-1995. The first federal indictment came in May 1995 in response to the uncovered plot to kidnap a Garfield County sheriff, which charged five of the Freeman leaders with conspiracy to impede government functions; conspiracy to prevent official duties with force, intimidation or threats; threats to assault, kidnap or murder a district judge; and threatening mail correspondence with the same judge (Pitcavage 1996). A second indictment was handed down in December 1995, adding seven more suspects and a charge of 51 counts of conspiracy to defraud, and interference with commerce. As a direct result, FBI had significantly more control over the situation from the very start and took the approach that this must not become another Waco. In fact, it should not even be allowed to become a proper crisis.

On Monday March 25, 1996, a nearly year-long investigation reaches its conclusion. Having identified that the Clark farm is too much of an encampment and that the combination of open terrain, almost two dozen heavily armed militia members, and the presence of children does not offer any good opportunity for a tactical assault, the FBI instead opts for trickery to get their arrests. The same terrain that offers little cover for an assault offers excellent opportunity for surveillance and eavesdropping, and the FBI start installing such equipment months before the first arrest. The FBI takes advantage of the escalating conflict between the Freeman and the locals in the area to have an undercover agent take on a job to install a radio tower a distance away from the Justus Township as a back-up means of communication for the group. As the work nears completion, two of the indicted Freeman leaders are asked to visit the site for a final inspection. They arrive together with a third man and all three are promptly arrested without any complication, the third man on a separate charge of aiding in smuggling weapons and money for the Freeman. At the same time, some 100 agents take up positions around the Clark farm, urging the remaining 10 suspects to surrender and offering everyone else free passage (CNN 1996-03-26; Pitcavage 1996; Wessinger 2000b:167ff). There are no real negotiations

between the parties. The Freemen have no interest in dealing with the FBI, who they consider an illegitimate agency representing an equally illegitimate federal government. Nor do they crave media attention after a year of having reporters trying to get the group's view on the legal escalation with local and state law enforcement. From the very start, this makes the interaction with them very different from the preaching outreach practiced by the Davidians three years earlier (Wessinger 2000b:181).

The next day, an attempt is made to hold an arraignment hearing, but the two Freemen attempt to drown out the judge with their shouting, citing Common Law reasons why the court and the charges are illegitimate and why the hearing should be held in their own country, meaning in the Justus Township. Meanwhile, the FBI agents are holding a light perimeter outside the Clark farm that mainly consists of a few observation posts and inspection points along the roads. The phone lines are cut and the roads leading directly to the farm are blocked to keep away visitors, but also to keep the media out. The bureau cites previous incidents where reporters have been ransomed and robbed as reason to keep the media at a safe distance from the Freemen rather than cut the Freemen off from having access to the media. The CIRG is activated and tasked with keeping negotiation efforts going. On site, it is explained to the militia members that only the ten members named in the two indictment from the previous years will be arrested – everyone else is free to leave. Six of the Freemen take up this offer and are indeed allowed to pass through the perimeter without incident and leave the farm (CNN 1996-03-28; Pitcavage 1996).

The response from the outside world is varied. A local bank hangs up a sign welcoming the FBI to town, and other residents of the area go so far as to say they want to see helicopter gunships and blood (AP 1996-03-27). Militia organisations from across the country speak up against what appears to be another assault on individual rights, citing incidents such as Waco and Ruby Ridge as templates for what will happen, but as their geographic distance to Montana decreases, the organisations become more and more in favour of the operation since they view the Freemen as competitors. A Militia of Montana representative merely indicates that M.O.M. will send someone to monitor the situation and say that they praise the FBI's handling of the situation. The Tri-State Militia (a loose umbrella organisation located one state over, in South Dakota) states that the Freemen's record of defrauding honest American citizens and institutions are a disgrace for an organisation calling itself "patriotic" (Pitcavage 1996). Another right-wing organisation that takes notice is the controversial CAUSE Foundation – a group of lawyers specialising in the legal defence of militia and hate-group members, especially in cases against the federal government. The foundation had already had some contact with the FBI in this capacity in 1993, when it offered to act as a mediator at Waco. After that siege, the foundation took some of the surviving Davidians as clients in the suits and counter-suits between them and the FBI. However, as far as negotiation efforts go, the bureau declines any help

from CAUSE, just as they did at Waco (Rosenfeld 2000:334, 339; Wessinger 2000b:191).

Not until Thursday, March 28, can a proper hearing be held. This time, the accused Freemen are simply held in a separate room connected via video link, and their attempts at drowning out the proceedings result in the link being muted until they stop (CNN 1996-03-28). Outside of the court room, the renowned Christian Patriot Bo Gritz, who was instrumental in getting Randy Weaver to surrender in the Ruby Ridge incident, starts discussing the need for some form of intervention to bring the matter to a close. Other militia groups talk about creating a relief mission to bring groceries into the compound (Pitcavage 1996). The next day, bail hearings are held and the two Freemen take a more subdued approach. They still claim the court is illegitimate and refuse any counsel, with Schweitzer declaring that he is on a hunger strike until a grand jury is convened (CNN 1996-03-29, 30; Pitcavage 1996).

During the week-end, Schweitzer's six-day strike comes to an end and he is taken to hospital. At the same time, one of the ten remaining suspects (one of the Clark family members), turns out to not be among those holed up on the farm as he turns himself in to the FBI from a community 150km away from Garfield County. As for the ones on the farm, the FBI states firmly that it will calmly wait until everyone comes out of their own free will (CNN 1996-03-30). A first offer of outside help is also made from a somewhat unexpected source: Randy Weaver. The bureau declines his and indeed anyone else's help, but stays true to its commitment not to turn the situation into a siege. A couple of family members to the Freemen on the farm are allowed to briefly enter and visit their relatives in the hope that this will soften their resolve (CNN 1996-03-31, 04-02a; Pitcavage 1996).

Monday, April 1, sees the arraignment of Clark, who is initially passively uncooperative to the point of not even stating his name. The outside militia support is still indecisive as a rally being held the following day to support the Freemen has a turnout of only a handful, and the M.O.M. proclaims that militia followers from other states should stay away – Montana does not need their help (CNN 1996-04-02a). Very little is said about the negotiation efforts, but the first contact is made between the AAR and the FBI, suggesting that the agency should consult with religious expertise to form a better understanding of the Freemen's motivations (Wessinger 2000b:181).

5.2.1 *The Ohs negotiations*

During the following days, Clark's hearings continued, with the militia member still being uncooperative. At the farm, however, another member of the Clark family indicates that the Freemen *will* potentially be interested in entering some earnest negotiations if they can talk to someone "higher up" than the FBI (CNN 1996-04-03, 04). Seizing on the offer, the FBI lets four state represent-

atives, meet with the Freemen in an open area on the farm (CNN 1996-04-04, Wessinger 2000b:181). This represents the first break in the negotiations since, as mentioned and up until this point, the Freemen have resisted all efforts from the FBI since the militia considers the agency as illegitimate as the rest of the legal system. The Freemen state that they will only surrender if their case can be heard in a Common Law-style grand jury of peers. The day also sees the entry of yet another Ruby Ridge alumnus. While Clark has continuously refused legal counsel in court, his relatives arranges for him to be represented by the same lawyer who got Randy Weaver acquitted, and he is also suggested as a mediator between the Freemen and the FBI although he says he will not take on this role unless asked by the agency (CNN 1996-04-02b, 04).

The negotiations continue on April 5, this time in the more private setting of a mobile home set up between the main farm building and the FBI road block. One of the state representatives involved, Karl Ohs, has a personal connection to a few of the Freemen inside, and this connection seems to pay off. The following day, a woman not on the indictment list leaves the farm with her daughter (CNN 1996-04-05, 06; Wessinger 2000b:181f). After this small victory, the week-end sees little in the way of further negotiations. Instead, the FBI's already strained relationship with the militia movement takes a hit as news is being spread that a spokesperson for the Tri-State Militia, who had offered criticism against the Freemen and praise for the FBI early on, was a paid informant for the agency (Tulsa World 1996-04-07).

With the standoff entering its third week, the Freemen still refuse to negotiate with the supposedly illegitimate FBI since the agency will undoubtedly put them before a regular judge rather than the Common Law jury the Freemen demand. Instead, they opt to talk to a journalist who is eventually allowed in to do an interview. His first attempt on the 9th comes to an abrupt halt as the Freemen chase him off their property, but he is allowed back in the next day when he is able to produce an interview from a year before that proves he has a friendly outlook towards the group (CNN 1996-04-09, 10). Nevertheless, the next day, two of the Freemen indicted for fraud decide to surrender to the FBI: the husband and mother-in-law to the woman who left the compound five days earlier. In this case, it is a combination of Ohs' efforts and the family members on the outside that convinces the two to come out (CNN 1996-04-11, 12; Wessinger 2000b:181). In response to their continued demand for a Common-Law trial by jury, Ohs also puts forward the suggestion of a "legislative forum" where the Freemen can explain their point of view to the world and air their grievances. (CNN 1996-04-15).

With ten in total having left the farm, of which two are being processed by the legal system, the rest of the week sees little progress, but that does not mean that everything is quiet. April 15 sees the only death of the standoff when an FBI agent driving an SUV along a dirt roads near the farm loses control over the vehicle, which skids off the road and rolls down an embankment, throwing

the driver out in the process. The same road stretch had seen a similar accident a few weeks earlier when a news crew rolled off the road, only without the lethal outcome (Pitcavage 1996).

At the FBI roadblock, a few outside sympathisers attempt to enter the farm to either deliver various goods or to try to act as negotiators, but none are allowed in. The bureau has more luck in other parts of the country, where a member of the Freemen organisation is stopped for driving an unlicensed car and then found to be carrying bomb parts (CNN 1996-04-17). On April 18, almost two weeks after his last visit, Ohs returns to continue his negotiations with the Freemen with no immediate results. The FBI, however, is able to show some minor judicial progress and at the same time improve its work environment as it moves into the house previously occupied by the two Freemen arrested a week earlier. The house was part of the 1994 foreclosure auction, and with the property now empty, the new owner allows the FBI to use it as a staging area in direct connection to the Justus Township.

At the same time, a bomb is found and there are concerns that various militias, in Montana and in other parts of the country, will stage new attacks to commemorate the anniversary of the '93 Waco siege and the '95 Oklahoma bombing, both of which took place on April 19. The Oklahoma bombing had already set the pattern as the date when it took place was deliberately chosen as a reminder of the fiery end to the Waco siege. Consequently, the security around the Montana operation and around FBI installations elsewhere is tightened (CNN 1996-04-18). Previously, the leader of one of nation's largest militia groups – the Michigan Militia – had made several attempts at gaining access to the Clark farm, and had suggested a “relief mission” to be executed on April 19, but when he finally arrives, he does nothing more than rail at the agents at the FBI roadblock and preach to the congregated media until they grow bored and leave (Pitcavage 1996). The only real manifestation that happens in the 19th is that militia sympathisers in various parts of the country fly the U.S. flag upside-down – a shared symbol and rallying cry meant to demonstrate the corruption of the nation and its government.

5.2.2 The Gritz negotiations

Another week passes with little change and no incident. On April 24 and 25, Ohs returns for more talks along with the state chief prosecutor, leaving only with a 19-page statement from the Freemen on why the U.S. laws do not apply. Bo Gritz and Randy Weaver also make good on their proclamation from a month earlier as they arrive to offer their services as mediators between the FBI and the Freemen. While they are not immediately let in, the FBI nevertheless spend significant time talking to the two Christian Patriot activists (CNN 1996-04-25; Rosenfeld 2000:332). Gritz is allowed to see the Freemen the next day, on April 27, trying to impress on the militia members the severity of the situation and recalling

the disasters at Ruby Ridge and Waco. He reports back that there is supposedly 22 people on the farm, although he only saw 16. Soon thereafter, one of them decides to hand himself in to the FBI. Not part of the original group, he had slipped past the FBI roadblock at an early stage of the standoff to lend support to the Freeman. He is arrested on that charge as well as on an unrelated charge of threatening state officials in Oklahoma the previous year (CNN 1996-04-28, 29; Wessinger 2000b:182).

Gritz' negotiation efforts continue on the 28th, filling up almost the entire day. He reports that the Freeman are willing to surrender if it can be proven that they and the Justus Township are indeed subject to U.S. laws rather than the Common Law that the group used to establish the settlement. The distinction between the two remains the crux of the matter. He brings out a 26-page document and a video tape detailing the Freeman's legal argument on the matter for the FBI to consider. The discussions continue the next day, with the Freeman adding the demand that they want to be given free passage to the state capital in Helena in order to present the matters before the governor and state legislature. The idea had previously been proposed during the discussions with Ohs, but the details of which could not be ironed out between the different parties. One of the families inside also receives a separate offer: if the family come out, the child custody charges against the mother may be dropped, letting the family retain some of its current cohesion (CNN 1996-04-28, 29; Wessinger 2000b:182).

On Tuesday, April 30, Ohs returns along with an special prosecutor for the state attorney general's office in a separate consultation with the group. The idea of a meeting with the legislature has re-emerged and that becomes the focus of the discussions. Before they leave, they also make the offer that, if the Freeman surrender to the FBI within the next 24 hours, the state of Montana will drop its charges against the militia members. Gritz then instead enters the compound to take over the mediation effort, but one participant expresses concern that the negotiators are trying too hard to drive a wedge between moderate and hard-liner Freeman and that this is instead creating mistrust against their efforts. This is somewhat contradicted by Gritz, who states at least one of the militia members is willing to come out in exchange for a promise that her children will not be taken away from her. Gritz also reports that, while the Freeman seem elated over the offer made by the Ohs group, it still means the Freeman would have to surrender to the very federal authorities and judicial system they dismiss as wholly illegitimate (AP News 1996-05-01; CNN 1996-05-01; Wessinger 2000b:182).

The state legislature does not express any elation over the idea of a legal forum before the Freeman have fully surrendered to the judicial system, and after a final session on May 1, Gritz gives up on trying to negotiate any kind of deal with the Freeman. The offer from the previous day about dropped state charges in exchange for surrender seems to have been interpreted by them as if the charges had effectively already been dropped. Gritz reports back that this apparent smaller victory has, if anything strengthened the militia's belief in their cause. The Freeman tell

him that “Yahweh has placed an invisible barrier around our sanctuary that no more enemies can penetrate” and he, in turn says that “I don’t see any way they’re going to deny this oath to God.” (AP News 1996-05-01; Rosenfeld 2000:327). Gritz draws an immediate comparison with the Davidians’ expressing the same idea at Waco, and, for much the same reasons, sees little chance of the standoff ending without the FBI actively going in to arrest the Freeman. He then departs from Montana and leaves the rest of the negotiation in the hands of Ohs and the state special prosecutor (AP News 1996-05-01; CNN 1996-05-02). In spite of this explicit statement, and contrary to Gritz’ interpretation, the is FBI is still mostly of the perception that the religious overtones are mainly a cover story – an attempt on the Freeman’s part to throw a thin veil of legitimacy over their actions, even if only in their own eyes. The AAR scholars, on the other hand, see this as evidence of what they call an “ultimate concern:” an issue that is so critical and overwhelming that all other matters are secondary. According to them, the key to solving the standoff is to figure out the core nature of this concern and find a way to mollify or even completely neutralise that anxiety (Rosenfeld 2000:327f, 330ff; Wessinger 2000b:5ff, 190)

5.2.3 Renewed tension

The break-down in the negotiation effort is confirmed on May 2. An offer to meet with the FBI directly is presented, but the Freeman instead opt to talk directly to the media. The Freeman deliver a letter and a video tape declaring that the bureau has no jurisdiction over them; in fact, it is not even a valid government agency to begin with. Furthermore, the group will not accept any leniency from the state legislature. Again, they reiterate that only a Common Law court of peers is acceptable or able to render any verdict over them (Wessinger 2000b:183). Instead, the next couple of days are spent in a slow escalation of preparation on both sides. The Freeman start stockpiling fire wood and set up an observation post on a ridge overlooking the area, whereas the FBI increases its aerial reconnaissance. Previously, family members had been permitted to visit for a few hours, but this week, the FBI does not allow any family members to enter the farm (CNN 1996-05-07).

Outside of Montana, a group of religious scholars connected to the American Academy of Religion start discussing internally on what they might be able to offer the FBI in way of expert advice, and they contact the FBI Academy on May 6 (Wessinger 2000b:183). The bureau responds the next day by sending over a number of questions on what the appropriate course of action might be at this point, and the scholars in turn suggest the inclusion of a handful of religious experts into the negotiation planning. The religious scholars also send over some preliminary informational material and analysis on the topic of millennialist beliefs. By May 9, a direct formal contact between the experts and the negotiation efforts is established by way of the CIRG. While the negotiators

convey the perception that the Freemen do not seem particularly religious, the scholars point to the statement of “Yahweh’s barrier” and the use of Common Law liens as patterns of an essentially religious – or even magical – belief: that by mere belief, things will come true (Wessinger 2000b:184f).

The same day, negotiations are once again attempted. This day, Karl Ohs returns for another short consultation with the Freemen but without being able to report back much in the way of progress towards a solution to the standoff (CNN 1996-05-09). Meanwhile, the communication between the FBI and the religious scholars continue. The latter try to press the importance of the religious symbolism and almost ritual nature of the Freemen’s activities so far, showing parallels with nativist movements of the last century, with the Davidians, Aum Shinrikyu and the Solar Temple. They also suggest that efforts such as the ones attempted by Gritz will most likely prove the most fruitful; that is, the use of intermediaries that can “speak the Freemen’s language” as well as the language of the federal system. (Wessinger 2000b:183ff).

A few days later, on May 14, the stand-off has surpassed the length of the Waco siege and a debate is brewing over the virtue of waiting and the need for swift(er) resolution. On the one hand, Waco showed that even 51 days could be too soon, but on the other, the costs are mounting and the symbolic damage from a small group being able to refuse to submit to the legal system keeps increasing (CNN 1996-05-15). Even previous negotiators such as Gritz and the state special prosecutor are advancing the idea of a raid to end the stand-off (Wessinger 2000b:186). The day sees another visit from Ohs as well as news that Colorado State Senator Charles Duke will be joining the negotiation effort in a couple of days on the request of the Freemen. Like Gritz, Duke is a staunch supporter of the right-wing militia movement and an opponent of the federal government, at least in its current form. Labelling himself as a zealot and revolutionary, he is a leadership figure in the burgeoning Tenth Amendment, or “Tenther” movement. Its followers interpret the cited amendment to the U.S. constitution as meaning that the federal government has next to no rights over the nation’s citizens. The year before, he made headlines by laying the blame for the Oklahoma bombing squarely at the feet of the federal government and its incursions into state and individual rights (ADL 1996-05-21; Colorado Springs Independent 2007-10-04).

Duke’s mediation begins on May 15. The senator clearly states that he is merely trying to bring the standoff to an end, as is the FBI, but this does not mean that he is working for the bureau. Even though he was invited on the Freemen’s behest, Duke says he only sympathises with the Freemen’s goals but not with the methods they have used and which have landed them in the current situation. The hope is that Duke’s position as both an anti-government militia activist and as an elected official in a legislative state body will let him bridge the gap between the two parties. There is some initial strength to this argument as Duke’s efforts lead to the first face-to-face meeting between the Freemen and the FBI two days later. Over the next days, the two parties meet for one or two

hours every day and a laundry list of issues related to both the Freeman's grievances and the FBI's demands is put together. While Duke later states that there are some points of agreement and headway is being made towards a resolution, bureau officials deny that any deals have been made (CNN 1996-05-18, 19; Wessinger 2000b:186).

The talks also start to focus on the remaining families on the farm. The FBI expresses some concern for the well-being of the children that have been hidden away so far during the stand-off, especially after some initial reports of the Freeman rationing food and water, and the FBI is finally allowed to meet with some of them. Their lack of visibility has so far created some uncertainty about the exact number of people holed up on the farm. The official FBI estimates have said the number is somewhere around 18, whereas negotiators such as Gritz and Duke, who have been allowed access to the Freeman's houses, have put the number at 22 (including the man who left after Gritz' first visit). The hope is now that some of these families can be persuaded to leave the Justus Township since no federal or local charges exist against them (AP News 1996-05-20; CNN 1996-05-20). Duke expresses some concern that the Freeman are not likely to want to exchange the relative safety and familiarity of the township for whatever uncertain future awaits them outside, especially for the ones who are facing federal prosecution. Nevertheless, he is still happy to have been able to finally make the two parties meet and to both offer concessions in the negotiation process. He intimates that now that the official talks have started, he will exit the proceedings on May 22 (CNN 1996-05-20; Wessinger 2000b:186f).

On May 21, however, his cautious optimism proves premature. The FBI receives a list of demands from the Freeman and as the negotiations continue, it keeps being expanded to the point where Duke declares the entire effort an exercise in lunacy. One late demand is that the President declares a constitutional emergency to address the Freeman's concerns. After a last agitated discussion, Duke and the FBI agents quickly leave the negotiation table and the Freeman begin to send out armed patrols around the township border. Having previously made a name for himself with his anti-federal stance and his sympathy for the Freeman's cause, Duke states unequivocally that the FBI has done everything in its power to reach a peaceful solution and that the Freeman are not the patriots they claim to be and that. Rather, they are frauds who have no interest in any real resolution and "they need to feel some pain." In addition to the armed guards, the Freeman respond to the break-down by flying the militia movement's symbol of an upside-down U.S. flag to signal the supposed plight of the nation (CNN 1996-05-21, 22; Wessinger 2000b:186f).

The break-down sparks worries that the stand-off will take a more aggressive turn, and the AAR scholars urge the FBI to not let perceptions of a regular hostage-barricade situation drive its strategy. They posit that any effort that does not take the Freeman's core belief system into account is bound to either just fail outright or drive the group towards a stronger cohesion as their views on

the oppressive and ZOG-influenced government are given further confirmation (Wessinger 2000b:187f). One of the scholars suggests that experts in Common Law might be able to address some of the concerns of the remaining Freemen (Wessinger 2000b:191).

For the FBI's part, the break-down causes the agency to start preparing new measures. Two portable generators are brought to the area so that the power grid feeding the Justus Township can be cut off without affecting some of the neighbouring farms that sit on the same grid. The bureau also posts armed guards to block off more access roads leading in and out of the area (CNN 1996-05-23, 24, 29). Karl Ohs is brought back to try to get the negotiations back on track and spends a couple of hours discussing with the Freemen. Yet no real change in the attitudes of either party is made and the next few days offer nothing but tense waiting. The FBI also tries to establish a direct contact between the AAR representatives and the Freemen, but since the militia members refuse to answer the Bureau's calls, the attempt proves futile (Wessinger 2000b:189). The only development is an increase in tension between FBI and the media roughly a week later, after a small journalist crew sneaks through the perimeter to try to arrange an interview with the Freemen. This leads FBI to evict all journalists from their encampment overlooking the farm (CNN 1996-05-29).

On May 28, acting on the suggestion of the religious scholars and on the offer given two months earlier, the FBI contacts the CAUSE Foundation to act as intermediaries and "interpreters" of the legal issues involved (Rosenfeld 2000:339). The Foundation legal team has the intersection between Common Law and actual U.S. jurisprudence as one of its specialities, and was founded specifically to provide "civil rights representation for white majority, primarily involving overzealous government" (*cf.* AP 1996-06-11a; SPLC; Stormfront 1994).

5.2.4 *Increased pressure*

The news of the AAR's involvement breaks on May 30, and the media quickly make the connection between the scholars' presence in Montana and their criticism against being shut out of the proceedings at Waco (CNN 1996-05-31). The next day, the spectre of Waco makes itself further known by the arrival of armoured vehicles and helicopters to the operation area. However, unlike the Combat Engineering Vehicles (essentially military armoured personnel carriers converted for demolition tasks) that were used in Texas, these are emergency service rescue vehicles that have been armour-plated to offer protection for EMTs and wounded individuals. The FBI describes the vehicles as entirely defensive (CNN 1996-05-31, 06-02).

Having established that the Freemen do indeed exhibit a strong millennialist pattern, and even making some headway into building an understanding with the negotiators of what this actually means, the AAR scholars continue to analyse

the situation. They still consider the militia members as “ultimately concerned” in some way, but the question remains about what. An initial hypothesis would link the concern to the core beliefs of the entire Christian Identity or Christian Patriot movement, but the repeated break-down in negotiations at the hands of CI/CP-evangelists, such as Gritz and Duke, suggests that something other than individual freedom or the fight against the ZOG is at play. Ohs will later state that Gritz and Duke were too occupied with scoring political points within their respective movements and against the federal government to really be able to address the Freeman’s specific concerns (Wessinger 2000b:189). Rather, the issue seems more grounded in the Justus Township itself. It was the establishment of this shared space that had brought the group together, but their decade-and-a-half long struggle to keep the farm that had generated a large amount of animosity within the local community (Rosenfeld 2000:332; Wessinger 2000b:190).

After nearly two weeks of preparation, the power to the Clark farm is cut on June 3. The surrounding farms rely on their own emergency power or on the extra generators the FBI had previously brought in, as do the FBI posts surrounding the farm. While most in the area assume that the Freeman, too, will have some means of generating emergency power, it is unclear for how long they can stand to be disconnected from the main power grid. The bureau also starts doing helicopter fly-bys of the township, ostensibly more for surveillance than the kinds of sound warfare used in Waco (CNN 1996-06-03). Two days later, federal agents meet with the Freeman for the first time since the break-down two weeks earlier. They carry with them a formal offer from the state of Utah to the mother of the family targeted by the Duke negotiations proposed over a month earlier. The offer states that if the family comes out, the custody charges against the mother will immediately be dropped and her children will be put in the care of her sister, who is also allowed to come in and visit the family. The FBI also relays communication from the leader of the sect the woman belongs to, stating that she should do what is right and leave the Freeman. The next day, on June 6 and after these mass urgings, the family of four decides to come out. This reduces the number of people left to less than half the initial number at the beginning of the stand-off (CNN 1996-06-06, 07; Wessinger 2000b:190). It is also the first time in over a month that any of the ensconced Freeman has been persuaded to leave the farm. As before, the key to success seems to be specific individual concerns rather than any specific shared issue – hence the long and complex lists of demands that have been generated at every other occasion. Here, a message from God, courtesy of the sect leader, and an assurance that the family will not be split up assuages the concerns of those who choose to leave (Rosenfeld 2000:335; Wessinger 2000b:190).

Their departure sparks further negotiations between the remaining Freeman and the FBI. Some consternation is made from the fact that the deal proposed to the family is altered after the fact: the Utah judge presiding over the custody case changes who will receive custody of the children and only affords the mother

very limited visitation rights. She comments that “They see me get screwed and they know they’re going to get screwed” and predicts that as a result of her treatment, the stand-off will end in bloodshed. (CNN 1996-06-07; Wessinger 2000b:190). Even the FBI expresses concern that the altered deal from the Utah judge will create bad faith among the Freeman, but nevertheless, the negotiations continue over the next couple of days. The exit of the family and the continued negotiations also means the bureau decides to hold back on some of the isolation tactics that have been prepared in case the break-down continues, such as jamming equipment to stop radio and cell-phone reception and to cutting off the Freeman’s satellite TV feed (CNN 1996-06-08).

5.2.5 *Legal aid*

On June 10, a week after the power was cut and two weeks after the initial contact was made, three lawyers from the CAUSE Foundation are finally allowed to meet with the Freeman to discuss the merits of both their and the FBI’s complaints. On the suggestion of the lawyers, and after much convincing of a very sceptical FBI team, the member of the Clark family who is the formal owner of the farm – Edwin Clark – is allowed to fly with the FBI to the jail where Schweitzer is being held. Schweitzer is consulted over a possible deal for surrender and its legal implications, and with his approval in hand, the entire group returns to Jordan to continue negotiations (AP News 1996-06-11b; CNN 1996-06-11, LA Times 1996-06-15; Wessinger 2000b:191f). June 12 comes to a hectic start. During the morning, a number of meetings are held over the proposals by the CAUSE Foundation and Ohs is brought back in to offer further mediation and some continuity in what has been discussed so far.

The following negotiation efforts are concentrated on Edwin Clark. His formal ownership of the land that is the Justus Township is a fact that is recognised by the rest of the Freeman, and his surrender would be a strong signal to the remaining group even though he is not one of the formal leaders of the actual militia. The AAR scholars suggest that the fate of the farm is the root of *Edwin’s* personal “ultimate concern” and that alleviating this will open the gates to evacuating the entire Township. Ohs also later reports that one of the crucial changes over these last few days is that Edwin Clark becomes increasingly assertive over his this unique position (Rosenfeld 2000:336; Wessinger 2000b:192). Even so, the immediate result of all this activity is that the youngest person still inside, a teenage girl, is allowed to leave the farm. This means only 16 adults are now left, half of which are subject to the original federal charges against the group (CNN 1996-06-12).

The next day, after yet another frenzied morning, the FBI moves a convoy of vehicles to the entrance of the farm. Aside from trucks and transports for the FBI agents, it also includes a number of moving vans and mini-buses. Soon thereafter, a truck carrying packing crates is driven up to the farm to allow

the Freemen to secure masses of documents that they feel are instrumental in proving their case against the government. This is part of the deal put together by the CAUSE lawyers; the Freemen will be allowed to retain control over their legal defence, not just in the upcoming trials against them, but also in their overarching suit against a supposedly corrupt and infiltrated government. This eases the concern of many of the militia leaders that they would lose all control over their own fates if they surrendered to the federal legal system. Instead, their personal freedom and agency in engaging the government head-on are retained (Rosenfeld 2000:339f; Wessinger 2000b:193ff). In a signal that the struggle is over for now, the Freemen lower the upended flag they had flown weeks earlier to demonstrate their duress. With their own evidence safe, the remaining Freemen load themselves into a motor home and are escorted off the farm by its owner Edwin Clark, who will now take the fight to the courts. Once outside, they all surrender peacefully to the agents waiting there (CNN 1996-06-13; Rosenfeld 2000:336f; Wessinger 2000b:192f). After a record 81 days, the standoff comes to an end. The FBI agents move in to secure evidence of their own in order to file charges, new and old, against 14 of the Freemen.

5.3 Aftermath

The immediate aftermath of the standoff was a palpable sense of relief among the local community, more courtroom antics from the arrested Freemen, and a good round of praise from law enforcement community and FBI Director Freeh (CNN 1996-06-15, 19). Still, the slow and careful nature of the stand-off was not without criticism. The fact that the Freemen occupied land that had been foreclosed and sold at auctions to other farmers meant that, as the deadlock crossed over into and surpassed the sowing season, the sizeable investments those farmers made would not pay off this year. Similarly, some of the neighbouring farms saw their activity curtailed by the FBI presence, leading to similar if smaller-scale issues. Even the very peaceful end of the stand-off received some criticism, as the remaining Freemen were allowed to escort themselves out in an orderly fashion, and not even hand-cuffed, all to let the militia members exit the scene with some dignity preserved (Wessinger 2000b:192).

The stand-off has also occupied a huge amount of federal agents. Official reports later put the number at 740 people, not including some remote support functions, who had been rotated in and out of the operation. At any given time, roughly 100 agents were on location. In total, the 81 days amount to 41 staff years worth of work for the bureau and cost some \$7.5 million (GAO 1996). This amassing of manpower at times put a drain on efforts elsewhere. The spring of 1996 also saw a series of arson attacks against black churches in the southwest of the U.S., and the FBI received criticism for spending so much time and personnel on what was perceived as a much smaller and simpler problem up north.

Also, while ultimately the fears were never realised, the spectre of Waco loomed heavily over the entire operation. As the bureau started using pressuring tactics reminiscent of that siege, and moved heavier equipment into the area, a petition for “reasonable force” started to spread in the local communities, somewhat tempering earlier voices that had been raised in favour of a more direct approach (Wessinger 2000b:190). With the chosen strategy proven a success, however, the CIRG passed its first major trial by (lack of) fire, as did the networking strategy used to connect with AAR and which triggered the creation of CIAG. These efforts, and the by now well-proven need for them, fueled the creation and finalisation of Project Megiddo and further efforts to learn about millennialist movements (Barkun 2002; FBI 2002). The use of third-party intermediaries and the difference they and external expertise made for the negotiation process received a significant amount of attention, and became incorporated as more formalised procedures within the FBI (Noesner 1999; Romano 1998).

Neither 1996 nor the militia movements had come to an end with the apprehension of the Freemen, however. In July, portions of the Washington State Militia was disassembled as a number of key members were arrested while planning to plant bombs in numerous locations around the state. A similar fate awaited The Mountaineer Militia operating in West Virginia, as well as members of the CI movement The Phineas Priesthood, both groups being pre-empted in their plans to acquire explosives and funds for future deeds. Earlier in the year, The Priesthood had already used a pipe bomb attack in one part of Spokane, WA to create a distraction and cover for a bank robbery in another part of town. The October arrest was for the preparation of a similar attack. An official FBI brief the following year on terrorist threats against the U.S. focused almost exclusively on domestic, right-wing, and often millennialist-fuelled terrorism, with left-wing and international terrorism receiving a scant single page (out of 28) in total (FBI 1997).

Still, the main fear of 1996 *was* however realised. On July 27, a pipe bomb exploded in the middle of Centennial Olympic Park during the Atlanta Olympic Games, killing one person outright and causing a fatal heart-attack in a second. While a main suspect was identified in early 1997, he remained a fugitive for six years before he could finally be arrested, at which point the motive behind the attack was revealed to be fuelled by a right-wing NWO-based conspiracy belief. This ran in parallel with the investigation of the mysterious explosion that brought down TWA Flight 800 on July 19, killing all 230 on board. While the trail ultimately led nowhere, an initial FBI analysis suggested that traces of high explosives found on parts of the wreckage might be linked to the explosion, which would suggest a terrorist act or a stray missile hit. The threat of terrorism and a new groundswell of conspiracy theories remained the focus for much of the bureau’s efforts for years to come.

5.4 Analysis

An immediate observation and comment on the material is well worth making. The chronology contains very little mention of the actions of the FBI; instead, it is a story of third-party mediators. Part of this is due to the success of the operation, which means there were no congressional hearings or major reports scrutinising every last detail, so the public historical record is one that is largely available through news reports as well as articles and books from the outside participants. Even so, that fact is itself telling. Despite so many outside consultations and the information they provide, the closed structure that signified the FBI at Waco seems to have vanished only three years later. Aside from the much gentler approach, the effect is not immediately obvious, and that gentle touch can in some sense be explained by the fact that the stand-off did not start with the active hostilities. The FBI did not take over a shooting war between the besieged and another federal agency, like in Waco, but rather had the opportunity to control the situation from the very start. From there, the escalation, if the word can even be used, is one of trying out different negotiators with different backgrounds and, one would imagine, different types of legitimacy in the eyes of the Freemen.

There are also some very quick results: six people come out on the first day and four more, including two suspects, after mediation in the second week alone. This represents almost a third of the entrenched militia members. When there are no more results, the strategy chosen is not one of more pressure, but one of widening the parameters for what kind of mediation the FBI might allow. It takes a full month for them to start allowing people who are (essentially) Freeman sympathisers to try to talk the group down, and it is around the same time that the religious expertise gets involved. The latter is likely triggered by the religiously coloured argumentation that Bo Gritz reports back. Even though the arguments originate from someone in the Freeman camp who the FBI has pinned as a charlatan, they have apparently learned to not let first impressions from, or just experiences from, crime-fighting be the final say in how such statements should be interpreted. If nothing else, the concept of being “ultimately concerned” offers a fruitful lens to the approach of the last month of negotiations, albeit in a wider and looser sense than the academics themselves might use it. Some key clusters of individuals are identified at a fairly early stage and targeted with their own unique argumentation and bargaining. It is an altogether far more varied and flexible approach that is being displayed, with multiple avenues of persuasion being employed at once. During the entire stand-off, outside family members are allowed to visit almost freely in the hope that they will assert their own kind of influence on their relatives.

As Figure 7 shows, the FBI itself might have been a constant presence, but only in the sense that it was in charge of the proceedings. In terms of actual presence on the farm, many of the mediators have the FBI beat, and the real face-to-face negotiation did not start until mid-May when Duke finally convinces

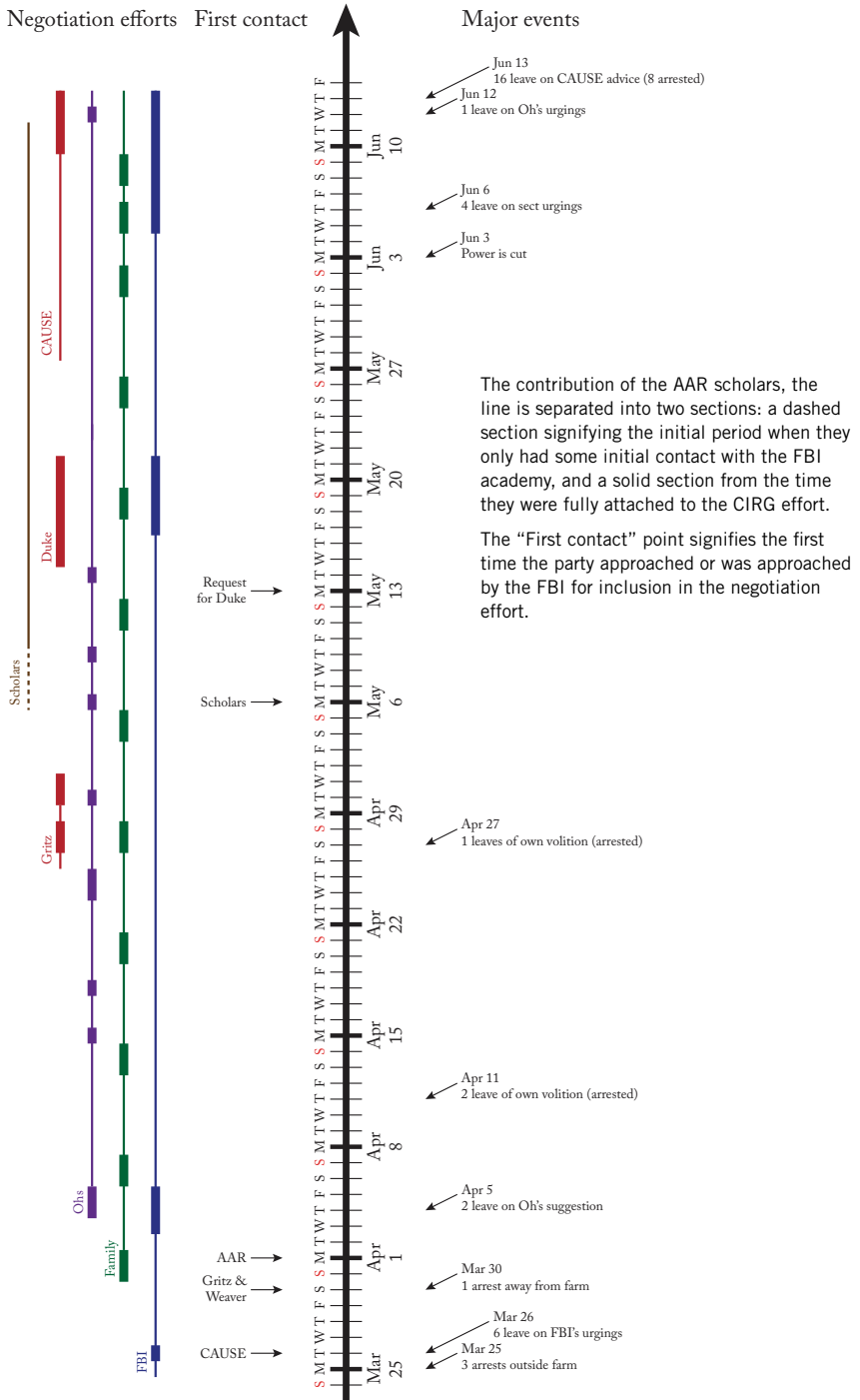


Figure 7: Montana negotiation events and results

the Freeman to sit down with the bureau officials. Before then, the only governmental presence was the state legislators, among them Ohs, who were brought in specifically because the Freeman refused to concede any legitimacy on the FBI. The state representatives were at the same time not part of the supposedly infiltrated and corrupted federal system, but rather closer to the “common man”, and yet were deemed by the Freeman to be above the bureau in overall hierarchy of the legal system. It is a stroke of good luck since Ohs’ familiarity with some of the Freeman families allows him to strike a rapport with the group, and he becomes a somewhat regular fixture in the first half of the stand-off. Indeed, it very much seems like it is these personal connections – with family members, with Ohs, and at the very end with religious leaders – that generate almost every defection from the Freeman camp. Even the final group of 16 are finally swayed by the connections of a single person, only this time it is the formal owner of the Justus Township and his connection to the family farm. While it may be debated exactly how much the advice of the religious scholars weighed in on the negotiation efforts, it cannot be denied that their conclusion that the conflict revolved around a number of the deeply personal concerns was proven accurate. In addressing – if not outright solving – these concerns, the negotiators and mediators finally managed to create the sense that surrendering would not be the end of the world, literal or otherwise, for the Freeman.

A curious thing to note is that, for all their criticism after Waco and all the work later put into project Megiddo, the AAR’s and religion scholars’ contribution is fairly subdued. While there certainly were very early contacts and although they were involved during the entire second half of the standoff, they were actually *less* involved in the on-site negotiation than what they managed to inject into the Waco proceedings. There was an attempt to establish a contact for discussion in late May after the negotiations had broken down, but at that time, the Freeman refused to answer any calls made by the negotiators and the attempt was soon abandoned. As a result, and as the figure shows, the scholars took on more of a consulting role rather than any kind of direct involvement or interaction with the freemen.

Another thing to note, especially since it is not part of the main analytical thrust, is the role of the media. As mentioned, there are quite a few long since archived artefacts of the media reporting of the standoff that points towards the news agencies anticipating a new Waco-style siege. This is also an oft-reported concern, both among the local inhabitants and of the various sympathiser movements expressing their support for the Freeman. It becomes very clear in the density of the material itself that the reports grow increasingly disinterested as time passes, with the first couple of weeks seeing multiple daily reports (of nothing really happening) and later weeks offering more summary reports every two or three days, even at times when the negotiation was in full swing. Part of this can certainly be explained by the lack of spectacle. The standoff itself consisted of agents in simple FBI jackets maintaining road blocks some distance away from the

Justus Township, as opposed to the armed siege with uniformed and camouflaged paramilitary troops and vehicles closely encircling the Mount Carmel compound at Waco. In addition, although it proved fairly easy for reporters to gain access to the Freemen, only a handful had any motivation to do so. By the time the standoff had started, there had already been a small media frenzy over the antics of the militia and this had soured the relationship between the two. Having seen some crews scammed or robbed by the Freemen, other reporters were not inclined to waste much time on them, and reporters were threatened or harassed unless they could show that they had previously offered a sympathetic view on the Freemen's cause. Over time, the reporting turned more towards conveying the view of the locals and their wish for the standoff to end. Where there had initially been protest campaigns to stop the FBI from enacting another Waco, the narrative slowly turned to one of protesting that the FBI was being too slow and lenient and that the bureau should end the standoff with force, if necessary.

5.4.1 Organisational context

Perhaps the greatest benefit the FBI had, which allowed it to dictate the pace to such a degree, was that this was very much the bureau's own operation. There was only the local and state police to coordinate with on jurisdictional matters, all of which is subject to long established procedures and, perhaps more importantly, all of which sort under the Department of Justice, same as the FBI. The state judicial system was involved, not just in prosecuting its own cases, but also in being a target for the threats the Freemen had made – threats that in turn made them a target for the initial FBI investigation. It was all neatly held within the family of the DoJ, and any other potential jurisdictional friction was probably greatly alleviated by the fact that the local agencies had asked the FBI to step in and investigate the matter earlier in the case. The FBI's arrival could therefore scarcely be seen as an intrusion, but rather more as responding – if a bit slowly – to a call for help.

The situation was also contained in the sense that the FBI was the instigating party to the standoff. The FBI had been on a path of escalating intelligence gathering for almost a year and had spent that time building a picture of the Freemen and their township; installing surveillance equipment; and generally getting a feel for the area. Given the nature and location of the Clark farm and the nature and beliefs of the militia, expressed loud and clear to anyone who wanted to listen, some sort of standoff would be a likely scenario in the wake of the arrests. This is further demonstrated – and even precipitated – by the fact that parallel to the actual arrests of Schweitzer and Skurdal, some 100 agents descend on the township. They block the roads and cut the phone lines, but they do not enter the farm itself, opting instead to urge the Freemen to come out. The anticipated drama of the early days is almost entirely relegated to the arraignment hearings where the arrested Freemen loudly and vocally resist any

kind of due processing. This lack of aggression and the absence of any symbolic invasion sets the tone for the rest of the standoff.

There are numerous other historical factors related to the organisation of the FBI that allow it to adopt this strategy. Attorney General Reno is no longer new at the job at this stage, but her initiation by way of the Waco disaster and the self-recrimination that follows demonstrates both a motivation and a mindset to explore more options and try every means of letting a matter come to a peaceful end. Likewise, FBI Director Freeh had his own legacy from Waco to deal with: he was appointed in the immediate aftermath of the crisis and therefore had no involvement in how it was handled, but was instead in charge of the heavily criticised investigation of what had gone wrong. Allegations of tampering with evidence had been raised against the bureau with some going so far as to suggest a deliberate attempt at a cover-up. The first official report was so poorly received that half a dozen new DoJ and senate reports were initiated over the following years to address all the gaps and uncertainties created by the first report. Many years later, tensions between Freeh and Reno on the matter of Waco comes to a boil when Reno sends U.S. Marshals to retrieve documents related to the Waco investigation for safe-keeping away from the hands of the FBI (New York Times 1999-09-02). In the spring of 1996, however, the need to conduct a flawless operation outweighed any rising conflict between the two, especially since Freeh had to prove that his agency would not make the same mistake twice.

Internally, as mentioned, the Critical Incident Response Group had been established to overcome the kind of inter-departmental conflict that marred the negotiations with the Branch Davidians. Acting as a nexus for all conceivable strategies that might be employed against a problem, CIRG thus also had become a natural point of contact for the inclusion of external expertise and other less conventional or unforeseen support functions. In short, the core mission of the CIRG was to provide expert support for the Special Agent in Charge in the field. Established in 1994, it was still a fairly new and untested structure for these larger types of operations in 1996. Similarly, the small research group CIAG (Critical Incident *Analysis* Group), also established in 1994, had yet to find its future home at the University of Virginia or its formal and natural connection to CIRG by overlaps in key personnel. Even so, by 1996 it had already begun creating a network of scholars to act as a “plug-in” for the CIRG expert support structure. Both these groups offered new organisational structures and procedures to allow for a more dynamic and case-specific problem solving within bureau operations.

One last contextual factor that we will have reason to return to shortly is that there were no other, secondary concerns or charges for the FBI to worry about. The bureau was in Montana to pursue a set of federal charges against the leaders of the militia, nothing else. While the state and local legal authorities had their own prosecutions to deal with, they were all self-contained and not contingent on anything the FBI was doing. The only dependency was with having the suspects arrested and detained, which the local agencies were ill-equipped to do

without fear of retribution from the militia. However, should the suspects be captured – and the militia incapacitated – by the FBI, the local and state charges could simply be processed in turn. Unlike at Waco, where there were concerns of continual child abuse and of destruction of evidence of drug manufacturing and illegal weapons modifications, the only real concern was with disrupting the sowing season for the farmers in the area and with not letting the owner who had bought the foreclosed property make full use of his land.

5.4.2 The nature of the crisis

The first question we need to ask, then, is: was this a crisis? As the previous section may have indicated already, the answer turns out to be **no**, but it needs more elaboration than what has already been given. While the FBI is, perhaps very plainly and obviously, the key actor to be analysed, there are a number of potential subjects at play in this case for whom the standoff might have been a crisis: the local and state law enforcement authorities, the FBI and its director, and the Department of Justice and the attorney general. The FBI is only obvious in that it was the organisation that sat at the centre of the Waco crisis, making a focused comparison possible; thus the FBI more or less *has to* become our key target of analysis. As it turns out, though, the nature of the crisis for the other actors becomes contingent on how the FBI handles the situation so if the bureau can manage its crisis well, it will also largely be resolved for the others. Conversely, if the FBI bungles its crisis management, this will trigger a crisis for the others.

The best way to disentangle potential actors and see this dependency is by looking at the crisis definition criteria in the opposite order to what is often customary and start with the threats to critical values.

Critical values at stake

For the state and local agencies, the primary value at stake at this point is one of legitimacy and of restoring law and order. In a sense, this has already been put into question by allowing the Freemen to wreak as much havoc as they have, up to and including challenging the judicial and law enforcement system itself. The question now becomes, how can the system deal with a group that expertly throws bucketfuls of spanners into the works, that ignores all legal threats, and that out-numbers and outguns the local police force tasked with enforcing those threats. One way of solving the problem would be to let the other farmers loose on the Freemen and have the different groups duke it out as best they can. There is only one tiny flaw with the plan: it would completely rob the judicial system of any legitimacy, essentially affirming the entire *Posse Comitatus* movement's view on how the world should be run. A better solution would be to follow procedure and escalate the matter to a part of the legal system that is better equipped to handle these kinds of problems – namely the FBI. If the bureau can deal with the situation, the system obviously works and its legitimacy is proven.

The federal governmental level also has a similar legitimacy problem on its hands. The federal government is not supposed to be in the business of repressing and persecuting the people, but at the same time, the law of the land has to be upheld. There is already a sizeable legitimacy gap since the last crisis of this kind, or even well before that, and this gap has proven to be fertile ground from which people holding the state in contempt can recruit like-minded and supporters even as they express that contempt in increasingly violent ways. Further repression will just fuel that particular fire; ignoring the threat will make the government seem illegitimate from a completely different perspective since it is no longer keeping the people safe. The only way out of the dilemma is to enforce without excessive force, and the ones who are doing the enforcing in this case is the FBI. So again, the outcome of the potential federal governmental legitimacy crisis relies on whether or not the bureau can resolve the matter with a gentle hand.

As for the FBI itself, it sits at a cross-roads between these two issues. On the one hand, it must be able to perform its job in the escalating hierarchy of law enforcement, or it is obviously not a worth-while part of the system. In practice, it has absolutely no problems doing so given the manpower, training, and equipment the bureau has at its disposal. However, as demonstrated three years earlier, there is a distinct difference between just bringing an end to a crisis and actually resolving it, because on the other hand, the FBI is supposed to be an agency of due process, not indiscriminate repression. At the same time, it has an image to uphold, both internally and externally, as being a very sharp instrument. It is supposed to be the line you do not want to cross as a criminal, consisting of tough and extremely competent agents who always get the job done. The FBI does not waver or appear soft.

The agency also still has to redeem itself from the Waco débâcle and the sharply criticised investigation that followed, both putting the professionalism and quality of its agents into question. A clear demonstration that the new structures and procedures solves those problems will go a long way towards cleaning up that image, and will demonstrate that the FBI is capable of adapting to meet new challenges and solve new problems at short notice. This, in turn, means it has to *actually* resolve a number of old internal conflicts between different groups and departments – CIRG has to produce real results to not be dismissed as a pretty but pointless paper construct. There are also plenty of detractors waiting for the new FBI to slip up, and again, CIRG is the key to including many of those detractors so as to make them personally invested in the outcome and thereby prematurely deflate a lot of the nearly automatic criticism that their exclusion would generate.

In the end, the FBI solves this value conflict by taking a careful and measured approach to addressing the problems at hand, at times erring more on the side of caution than action to the point where it start to draw some criticism from the local community for not acting forcefully enough. The FBI is also criticised for how it is balancing the much more concrete value conflict, namely the allocation

of personnel. The Montana operation involves a staggering amount of both agents and support personnel, leaving other parts of the country understaffed, which detractors suggest adversely affected the bureau's ability to investigate a rash of arson attacks in the south. Likewise, huge sums of money are spent on the travel and overtime accumulated by the agents in the field. This allocation of resources that raises some scattered questions. At the same time, the nature of the strategy means that the costs are not as spectacular as for the Waco siege since there is no need for a tightly controlled 24/7 armed cordon of the area, nor of night-time harassment measures. Regardless, it is evident that money and manpower were ranked a lot lower by the FBI than the value of resolving the situation peacefully. Even in some of the earliest official statements, it is made clear that the stand-off is likely to last for some time and that the FBI emphatically *will* be patient and let it run its course.

Time in its many form is, in essence, the resource most deliberately and consistently sacrificed in order to achieve other goals and save other values at stake, be it man-hours or time for analysis or time to let the Freemen mull over discussions and negotiations. Another, far more ephemeral value that the bureau is willing to sacrifice in Montana is a complete control over the proceedings, and with it the image that the FBI is entirely in charge of everything that happens on-site. This is also a very deliberate trade-off that comes inherent with the nature of CIRG. The whole point is the realisation that bureau staff might not always be the most knowledgeable in dealing with matters, even on an very hands-on and operational level. Allowing third-party mediators to be the outwards face of the agency towards the opposition means that, not only are these mediators exposed to risks that may be outside the FBI's control, they also run the risk of creating a mixed or muddled message between the negotiators and the other parties. However, the potential gains are judged to outweigh these risks. In Montana, it certainly paid off as it introduced a layer of translation between a group of people steeped in Christian Identity rhetoric and imagery (further coloured by an almost century-old conspiracy theory, as well as in their own brand of Common Law practices) and a formal negotiation team that could not possibly contain expertise in all these areas. Even if the translation might at times be garbled or contain miscommunications, it is better than no mutual understanding at all – a lesson hard learned from Waco. A small measure of control (and self-image) was therefore sacrificed for a large increase in the available information on which the continued effort can be based.

So while many values were at stake for the different actors, the deliberate choice to dismiss time as a highly valued commodity let the FBI disentangle the remaining conflicts in a structured manner, thereby significantly reducing the degree to which the Montana standoff can be called a crisis. Consequently, the critical values at the local and governmental levels were preserved as well, dissipating any potential crisis there as well as far as the actual standoff is concerned.

Uncertainty

As mentioned in Section 2.5, if one of the three components of a crisis can be resolved, the other two cease to be a problem. In Montana, the FBI deliberately chose to diffuse the crisis by making time an almost complete non-issue. Consequently, the FBI had (relatively speaking) all the time in the world to untangle any uncertainties they encountered. However, that description vastly over-simplifies what allowed them to make that trade-off. There were numerous points of uncertainty and ambiguity in dealing with the Freeman, chief among which was the fact that they resorted to an unusually legalistic rhetoric when discussing their grievances and that the foundation for those arguments was different from the legal framework the FBI operated within. Only one state in the U.S. – Louisiana – does *not* operate on a common-law legal system like the rest of the U.S., but that system is still something radically different from the biblically based Common Law practices preached by the Freeman and similar Christian Identity groups. The very basis of how both the FBI and the Freeman operated can be described as an ambiguous term with at least two different, but still somewhat overlapping meanings.

Of course, there were also numerous uncertainties with the FBI's task that are best described as almost rote or routine since they are inherent in the job of dealing with a human opponent, especially in a negotiation setting. What are the motives of the opposition? What are the factions within the group? How, if at all, can these factions be pitted against each other to break the group cohesion apart? How will the group respond to various means and methods of persuasion? Being inherent in the FBI's daily work, the bureau already has lots of expertise in answering these questions, so in and of themselves, they might be less cause for a crisis than one might otherwise assume. This kind of "normal crisis" is inherent in almost all emergency professions to the point where it is commonly not even considered a proper crisis when they occur. As discussed in the previous chapter, there is an entire literature on the cognitive heuristics of emergency managers and how these heuristics guide their problem solving. It is when these rote uncertainties are amplified by other factors that matters start to slip towards a crisis: when the heuristics fail because the motivations and responses do not follow the logic the emergency manager (or in this case, a negotiator) is used to.

The mission of CIRG – indeed the very purpose for which it was created – is to provide subject-matter expertise to law-enforcement field commanders. The FBI has a long tradition of employing this type of expertise and has gathered an impressive collection of professionals in a wide variety of forensic sciences. Part of the reason arrangements like CIRG and CIAG were created was the realisation that the in-house expertise will not always sufficient, or even appropriate, to meet all the knowledge needs the commander might have and that not every field of expert knowledge can be represented and contained within the agency itself. The problem of amplified normal uncertainties is thereby in theory solved by being

able to bring in the expertise needed to adjust the expectations and intuitions from a normal incident.

In Montana, the theory was put to the test with highly successful results. Intermediaries (such as Ohs, Gritz, and Duke) might not have had the personal successes they had hoped for in terms of bringing the standoff to an end, but they nevertheless provided the FBI with more information and insight into the situation at the farm than they would have otherwise gotten. The CAUSE Foundation is an almost textbook example of the kind of interpretation expertise needed to resolve the ambiguities between the two opposing legal systems at play. The variety of intermediaries also allowed the negotiation efforts to identify and divergent agendas within the militia group: individual families had different concerns than the core leadership, and the formal leaders proved to be willing to defer to the actual owner of the property.

At the same time, these solutions created a new set of uncertainties. What is the agenda of the mediators? Can they be trusted to accurately represent and convey FBI's communication to the militia members and to give a useful and accurate account for their response? Can their safety be guaranteed, or does this method run the risk of turning the largely peaceful standoff into an *actual* hostage situation? Can they provide any real influence or added value, or is it a waste of time? Once again, it proves to be a trade-off. Family members of those holed up on the farm could assert a great deal of influence without any real risk, but were perhaps less viable as a conduit for direct communication. Right-wing sympathisers such as Gritz, Duke, and the CAUSE foundation could likewise enjoy a reasonably low risk since, at least nominally, they were "on the Freeman's side", but as such their motives and willingness to co-operate fully with the bureau might be (and indeed was) questioned. Ohs' previous connections and role as a representative of the state of Montana – a role far more readily accepted by the Freeman than that of the supposedly illegitimate FBI – allows him to build trust over a long period of time, and thus strike a balance between the benefits and drawbacks of the other mediators.

The last prominent tool employed by the CIRG to combat uncertainty was the connection to AAR and the team of religious scholars. Much of the literature on the case paint them as instrumental in introducing and preserving the perspective of individual concerns that had to be addressed to bring closure to the standoff, but as mentioned in earlier chapters, this particular characterisation should probably be viewed with some suspicion since this literature is written by some of the very same scholars. Thus, there is a strong risk of bias in how their contribution is valued. Nevertheless, the fact that they were included at all is telling in and of itself. It demonstrates a willingness from CIRG to consider this angle as well, rather than dismiss the Freeman's talk of divine protection as mere posturing or superstition. The scholars also spend considerable time trying to figure out what the crux of the matter is from the Freeman's perspective. Their analysis ultimately provides conclusions that prove to be very accurate, and

which also becomes the key issue resolved by the CAUSE lawyers, namely that the Justus Township itself is at risk and has become the central symbol that the Freemen want to preserve. The CAUSE lawyers convince the Freemen is that this symbol can – and even should – be better defended in the court room than by some ultimately futile effort of occupation, and so the final conundrum of giving the Freemen reason to surrender without giving up their cause is resolved.

Time pressure

When talking about both the Ohs effort and the work done by the scholars, we once again stumble over that operative word: time. Again, from the very start, and continuously throughout the standoff, the FBI was very clear that it would take as much time as necessary to see a peaceful resolution. In other words, the FBI consciously and deliberately chose to not let this become a crisis by removing time as a factor, by using time as a release valve for any potential value conflicts, and by spending time on resolving any uncertainty and ambiguity they encountered. If there was any time pressure at specific points in time, it was never enough to cause the type of systematic stress that characterises a crisis.

There was certainly some outside pressure to bring the standoff to a quick end, both from other parts of the country where the continued allocation of manpower was questioned, and from local actors since the disruptions to their normal life went on through the entire spring. Was it really necessary to spend quite so much time keeping a mere dozen or so people contained when the agents involved could perhaps do more good in actual investigative work elsewhere? Could they not just overpower the Freemen and let the local farmers get on with the business of cultivating the surrounding land? The land owner who had purchased the foreclosed property that the Freemen were occupying had initially hoped that he would have enough time to at least get a short season in 1996, but as the resolution slipped towards mid-June, this became a lost opportunity. From the bureau's own point of view, there was perhaps the pressure of keeping a costly operation running for months on end, but at the same time, the set-up of the operation meant that costs were not as high as one might expect. Again, the good-will and legitimacy costs of (potentially catastrophically) acting too soon outweighed the monetary cost of time, and this was an attitude that was strongly supported higher up in the governmental hierarchy, by the Justice Department and the attorney general.

It is worth noting that, in the discussion of the uncertainty of the case, the points made only ever applied to the FBI effort. Part of this is because, as mentioned earlier, the potential for a crisis for the other to subjects was contingent on how the FBI managed its part, and that uncertainty or ambiguity was not much of a factor unless the FBI failed. Beyond that, there are only really two main points of uncertainty for both the local and the governmental level: what is the value of continuing with the slow approach as opposed to a swift resolution, and what is at risk with either of the two strategies? Thus the uncertainty is really just a question

of time, and that particular question had already been resolutely answered by the FBI at the very start of the standoff. The fact that it was entirely the FBI's case, with a minimal number of other agencies to coordinate or co-operate with, gave the bureau much more flexibility in setting the terms. All it had to do was arrest the people under federal indictment, and there were little to no worry about destruction of evidence or of further harm to some perceived "hostage" in any sense of the term. The state and the local authorities had already prepared charges and they, too, had no need to actually enter the premises as quickly as possible beyond some sense of getting it over with in order to be able to start the legal proceedings.

Another factor that contributed strongly to alleviating the time pressure is the strategy employed by the FBI. While the two parties were certainly in contact throughout the stand-off, there was very little in the way of actual discussion or negotiation going on until almost two months had passed. Instead, they relied on family members and sympathisers to slowly weaken the resolve of the Freemen, and their influence pretty much *had to* be allowed to simmer over time to do its work. Families to the ensconced Freemen were allowed to come and go almost at their leisure, and every week-end saw one visit or another. This strategy of peer pressure scores some initial success in that four people leave within the span of a week, and it then takes a while to notice that it does seem to yield any more results. It is at this point that the FBI switches gears more towards using right-wing sympathisers and to let those arguments stew for a while as well.

This is not to say that old-fashioned pressure techniques were left unused. As early as mid-May, the FBI agents signalled loudly and clearly that they were preparing to introduce some discomfort into the township by cutting the power to the farm and by visibly increasing the amount of intrusive air surveillance. It is hard to tell how far they were willing to push this tactic, since the standoff ended before more escalation was needed. These first measures seem to be largely symbolic since it was no secret that the Freemen had their own means of generating emergency power; indeed, it is pretty much a requirement for all farmers in the region. Rather, it was a means of sending an unambiguous message to the Freemen in the wake of the negotiations breakdown that followed Duke's last visit. The FBI and its mediator may have been rebuffed, but they were still not going leave any time soon. The message and change of pace apparently worked, too, since more direct communications started at this point, partly aided by visiting families and communication with other trusted parties. Above all, from an analytical standpoint, it means that the initial stance of not letting time be a factor was still holding strong by early June.

By now, the result should be clear: the so-called "standoff" in Montana is called that for a reason. It was not a siege, unlike Waco, and it was actively and deliberately kept away from being a full-scale crisis by knocking out the third pillar – time – that supports that kind of condition. With time no longer an important factor, the FBI could resolve ambiguities and uncertainties by involving subject-matter expertise on a deeper level and employ a wide array

of strategies to probe for a way forward in the proceedings. The FBI could also identify, evaluate, and balance out or resolve value conflicts by holding firm on the conviction that time and quick resolution was not one of the values it had to preserve. At the same time, one of the reasons that it was possible for the FBI to take this stance is that its agents had already spent a fair amount of time trying to hone in on what problems they would be facing and how best to deal with them. In reality, the time investment required to handle the Freeman standoff is far larger than the standoff itself, and it started in 1994 with the creation of the CIRG. By the time the actual (non)crisis happened, the bureau did not have the additional time pressure of trying to figure out procedures for dealing with the issues at hand – that work had already been done – and “all” that was required in Montana was the actual work of dealing with them.

5.4.3 Anticipation of due process

The question of whether or not the FBI was familiar with the processes that were in place in Montana is a somewhat tangled one. On the one hand, and as discussed in the previous sections, this was almost entirely FBI’s own operation. It had to co-operate and coordinate with local and state law enforcement agencies, but this is part of the general jurisdictional puzzle the bureau has to deal with no matter where it goes, and is therefore very much part of the standard procedures. One might therefore expect this to be a case where no adjustments are needed for the FBI: everything is as it always is, and is well-contained within established procedures for dealing with exactly this kind of problem.

However, while no other agencies can butt in to demand or enforce new standards, the bureau itself has changed to allow for a new type of outside interference. In fact, outside interference has in a sense become an ingrained and internalised feature of the post-Waco FBI. The Critical Incident Response Group presents an interesting analytical conundrum. It is part of the new FBI process for dealing with critical incidents, but on the other, it is still a very new and largely untested construct which may in and of itself create some system stress as it rolls into action. Also, while the CIRG may on the one hand indeed be an integrated part of the critical incident procedures, one of its key missions is, on the other hand, to provide a conduit for outside expertise to take part in or at least influence the operational management of a crisis. In Montana, this kind of influence is pushed to its limits as third-party mediators are brought in to handle a large portion of the initial contacts with the Freeman. How much of the process can be anticipated when the people enacting it are not even part of the FBI, much less have any familiarity with its methods or practices?

What should have been a trivial and clear-cut answer – a single actor engaging in its core competence without any unforeseen changes in the larger organisational context – now becomes more of a judgement call. The question is whether or not the establishment of the CIRG in and of itself qualifies as enough foreknowledge of the processes that will be used to outweigh the uncertainties and

disruptions of the established processes that the CIRG will inherently bring. For the sake of this analysis, it is actually not that difficult a question to answer. The operationalisation offered in Chapter 3 asks whether or not the organisation has formal and regulated instructions for collaborative interactions without outside parties and, more generally, whether the subject should be familiar with the processes involved. The answer to this is very clearly yes. In Montana, *the FBI itself* had formally regulated the inclusion of outside expertise and third-party mediators into its operations, and the processes involved should have been, and were, familiar to the decision-makers. The CIRG is that process, and its formal mission is the rule structure that regulates these interactions. If there was any lack of anticipation or unfamiliarity with the processes, it would have been in the third parties, but they are not the subject of this analysis.

Still, that type of answer feels like it sits somewhere between a cop-out and a case of begging the question – it just lazily leans back on and lets the operationalisation spit out the answer. After all, there is still that apparent conflict between the inherent uncertainty of how the third parties will handle their task or of how well the external expertise will be able to provide useful answers, and the very clear anticipatory measure that the CIRG itself represents. Not to pre-empt the discussion of MESO usage further down, this conflict looks like a direct result of the kind of feedback issues that were discussed in Chapter 3: the knowledge management the CIRG is set up to handle means that the processes are subject to some dynamism during the course of the crisis. The process itself anticipates that the process will, at least in part, not be rigidly defined and may have to be altered in various ways. “Expecting the unexpected” may be a cliché, but that does not take away from its applicability or usefulness when it perfectly describes what happens. So rather than lazily adhering to the strict letter of the operationalisation as the only argument, we can see that there actually is not that much of a conflict between anticipation of process and an inherently unforeseeable part of the process. Instead, it is more of a case of being aware of the boundaries of that predictability and making everyone aware that the standard procedures might not – in fact, most likely *will* not – be able to deal with all eventualities. It is an almost text-book example of meta-knowledge. It is also a matter of having enough gateways and attachment points into the existing procedures where these new external parts can slot in, and of having enough confidence in the integrity of the system to allow for *ad hoc* solutions without worrying that everything will come crashing down. It comes as no shock to anyone that strange new pieces are grafted onto the organisation, and there are people in place to deal with and to bridge the seams that will appear in the process, to the point where the line members of the organisation might hardly even notice the addition.

In short, “expecting the unexpected” may be a good candidate for the process-anticipation version of the identification paradox discussed in previous chapters, and analytically, it allows us to see exactly how and why a process can still be considered as fully within the realm of what was anticipated. It deserves and will receive further attention and deliberation in later chapters.

So not only did the FBI anticipate the processes that would be used in Montana, simply due to the fact that there were no real outside influences that it had to adjust to. In creating the CIRG and starting to tie a closer connection to the fledgling CIAG, the FBI also took the next step in the anticipatory process and started to map the boundaries of what could be foreseen and how to manage the very foreseeable cases when unexpected outside groups had to be incorporated into the management of a crisis. The interest in and eventual close collaboration with CIAG can even be seen as taking yet another step further. By trying to turn those unexpected groups into something more predictable and maybe even start to map out what issues and work methods the bureau could conceivably expect to deal with in the future.

Of the seven deviations from due process listed on page 61, the CIRG was explicitly created to handle four. The CIRG removes any ambiguities in how collaborations with outside actors will work, and it centralises and creates a trusted party for that collaboration as well as for the problem formulation and knowledge brokerage between experts and decision-makers. Its mere existence also removes two of the deviations outright by signalling that these events are now part of what is to be expected: that the bureau will be required to engage with numerous different organisational cultures and the requirement to go through some kind of intermediate communications layer. In fact, it is the CIRG's job to manage those issues. That leaves the seventh deviation: the uncertainty of the value of the information that comes from outside sources. At the time of the Montana standoff, this too was something that CIRG had to manage, but it would also quickly become the key component of the collaboration with CIAG: the analysis group would act as both a detector and a filter for "useful" expertise that could be enrolled to aid the FBI. That is not to say that the deviations were *eliminated*, only that there now was a function within the bureau to specifically make sure that they caused as little problem as possible. The internal workings of the bureau would therefore not be disrupted. The stress of matching two (or more) potentially very different cultures, languages, and methodologies surrounding a problem was compartmentalised and not allowed to spill over into other areas. As rigid and rule-bound as the bureau might have to be in order to follow its own regulations, there is a layer of organisational lubricant that still lets it be very flexible and dynamic to outside actors.

5.4.4 Organisational closed-ness

As mentioned on numerous occasions, the FBI is at its heart a law enforcement agency. Its entire purpose is to enforce rules and regulations, and it has historically cultivated a strict image of being a straight-laced and at times almost deliberately dull and bureaucratic. It is very tempting to just look at the keyword descriptions for a closed organisation: 'regulation', 'rigidity', and 'consistency.' Then check off each one on the list, and call it done. Indeed, some of these can even be consid-

ered highly cherished core principles of both rule of law and due process, both of which may be considered cornerstones of Western civilization. At the same time, it is a fairly trivial observation that the broad mission of the FBI and the wide array of cases it is tasked with solving both mean that this is an organisation that cannot employ a one-size-fits-all approach to its problem solving. For the most part, and in a larger perspective, this observation is correct. The FBI was a very well-furnished toolbox, equipped to solve almost anything, but it was also the case that each division – each tool – existed somewhat separately from the rest. Turning the analogy on its head, there is also the saying that if all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail. As the clashes with millennialist groups in the early '90s showed, there was still a tendency for the different parts of the bureau to have a somewhat fixated view of their own role and the nature of the problems the organisation would be likely to come across. Even across the FBI as a whole, there was a core assumption that the opposition would consist mainly of criminals, with the odd foreign agent or terrorist thrown into the mix.

Instrumental work flow

Following Waco and the Oklahoma bombing, this assumption had to be altered and more nuance introduced. The varied nature of the problems the bureau had to deal with also had to be reflected in how the organisation as a whole approached its problem-solving. Chapter 8 will go into a more detailed comparison between the cases, but already here, it is worth pointing to differences in how the FBI chose to frame the standoff against the Freeman compared to the approach used at Waco since this offers a solid foundation to discuss how to categorise the bureau in terms of openness or closed-ness. Perhaps more importantly, it will highlight why some of these characteristics *remain the same*, in spite of the different strategies used.

The FBI seems to have framed the entire Freeman standoff very differently, not just from how it framed Waco, but also from the kinds of situations it is more accustomed to meet in its law-enforcement capacity:

- The opposition is not (necessarily) a band of criminals trying one final scam.
- The rhetoric in use has a meaning, and is not just posturing.
- The group is more likely to *rally* around scare tactics than break apart, same goes for any kind of siege posturing.
- It is not a hostage rescue scenario, in spite of the presence of innocent third parties.
- It is *also* not a uniform group with a single goal.
- There are many layers of leaders over a number of overlapping group structures.

All in all, it is a remarkably open, assumption-free, and complex view of the problems facing the bureau. It is also not a constant framing. While some of

these may be attributed to learning from Waco, others are conclusions that are reached over the course of the standoff. The meaningfulness of the rhetoric, for instance, is something that the scholars have to forcefully impart on the negotiators, but the team has at least learned to look into such clues rather than dismiss them out of hand. When Gritz reports back the mention of “Yahweh’s barrier” from a source the agents consider a professional charlatan, it is not assumed to be just another trick in his book but rather something that might need some expert attention and interpretation. This willingness to reinterpret the situation, as well as the methods used both to get at the information and to turn it into actionable knowledge, all point to the bureau having a more flexible work flow during the standoff than was previously the norm.

Here, it is important to note a key distinction in the framing since it explains the choice of strategy on the FBI’s part. From the bureau’s perspective, it *was* still trying to apprehend a group of criminals, and that group had at this point definitely made a career out of some of the crimes they had committed – most notably the fraudulent liens and the tax evasion the Freeman habitually used to finance many of their deals. None of this made the Freeman textbook career criminals, however, and for all intents and purposes the Freeman themselves did not even consider themselves subject to the laws they were supposed to have broken. This perception is important because it informs how the people on the farm chose to respond to the FBI’s actions. For instance, since they all saw themselves as (Common-)Law abiding and sovereign citizens, the people on the farm had no particular reason not to stand with their peers. They certainly were *not* hostages of any kind – after all, how could they be held against their will by their equally sovereign peers? If anything, they were being held captive by the illegitimate FBI and needed to be rescued from *it*, not from each other. This perception is demonstrated by their use of militia symbolism and signals such as the upturned U.S. flag, as well as by how other sympathiser movements across the country read these signals and – to varying degrees – came to the Freeman’s aid. So while they may indeed have been perceived pursued by the FBI as criminals, they would not respond to the bureau’s actions the way the ordinary criminal group would.

The FBI identified this at a very early stage, quite possibly before the first arrests were even made, and framed the problem accordingly. The tactic of waiting and using “friendly” parties to influence the Freeman is chosen as opposed to some strategy of repression and show of force that might work to subdue regular group of extortionists and fraudsters. This tactic in turn required the bureau to be far more flexible in whom they chose to include in the process. They may have those more repressive tactics and criminal psychology down pat, but neither will help much in creating the kind of influence the situation called for – for that, friends, family, and militia sympathisers are needed. Flexibility in the framing therefore precipitates flexibility in the negotiation strategy, which in turn requires flexibility

in the overall work flow. Entities such as the CIRG and CIAG had recently been created or adopted to provide exactly that kind of flexibility.

If there is anything speaking against this characterisation of the new FBI as a much more flexible institution, it is – perhaps to the chagrin of us researchers – its long tradition of heavy reliance on scientific methods. While we might not want to put it in quite those terms, the notion that there is a right way and a wrong way of doing things definitely falls within the ‘rigidity’ characterisation of a work flow. Even so, Montana exhibits some flexibility in this area as well, not in the sense that the scientific methods are compromised, but rather that a wider array of scientific fields are included in the problem-solving effort. Again, institutions like CIRG and CIAG were purposefully designed to allow a much more flexible and dynamic inclusion of expertise without requiring the FBI to have experts in every field imaginable in-house.

Guiding principle

While the work flow may be geared more towards a flexible response, it is hard to argue that the underlying principle that is supposed to be served by this flexibility is anything other than one of regulation. By virtue of being a public law enforcement agency, its activities are still heavily regulated and its entire purpose is in a sense to ensure that regulations are followed. It is certainly true that the bureau has a chequered history of abuses and of flouting the rules, but it would be cynical to elevate those episodes to the level of calling it a guiding principle for the FBI as a whole. Session’s ouster halfway through his tenure as FBI director illustrates both sides: even (or maybe especially?) at the highest level, proper procedures were not followed, but at the same time, that failure resulted in a premature termination. At the end of the day, not following procedures – especially in the field – vastly increases the chances of having a painstakingly planned and executed operation end in the suspect being let loose on a technicality by the court. It quickly becomes far too high a cost – not just in time, money, and manpower, but in legitimacy and regulatory trust – to let such mistakes become commonplace. Another point in favour of the ‘regulation’ characterisation is the bureau’s history of heavy regimentation and specialisation within different departments. There is a number of clearly defined areas of expertise that must exist within the bureau, and the overlap between them is slim to none.

At the same time, CIRG is meant to keep that kind of monoculture from spreading to the operational end. All the areas of expertise required for an operation are supposed to be available to the Special Agent in Charge, which would seem to nullify some of this regulated regimentation. Also, per the operationalisation in Section 3.2.3, the difference between the two extremes of the ‘principle’ spectrum is heavily dictated by the extent to which people outside of the formal hierarchy are allowed to take part in the decision-making process. In Montana,

the heavy reliance of third-party mediators as direct proxies for the negotiation team would therefore strongly suggest that the FBI should sit more towards the 'informality' end of the spectrum.

Once again, we have an apparent conflict between the strict wording of the operationalisation and the intuitive characterisation based on the nature of what the actor is doing. This time, though, it is the intuitive sense that wins out. While it is true that outsiders are allowed a place on the inside, we must not forget that *the regulations have very recently changed* at this point in the bureau's history. The guiding principle is still very much one of adherence to regulations, but those regulations have been altered to redefine what actually counts as an outsider and to broaden the scope of which interactions one should expect. Nothing is being skipped for the sake of expedience. Instead, a more generally applicable methodology has been thought out beforehand, along with formal procedures for how sensitive material can be shared with these not-quite-outsiders.

It can certainly be debated that this change in formal procedures in and of itself represents a more open behaviour – that we are seeing a move towards the 'informality' end of the spectrum – and is as such a point worth returning to in the case comparison. For the individual evaluation of this one case, however, we are looking at a single point in time and trying to assign it a binary value. All things considered, the guiding principle is (still) best characterised as one of regulation.

Preferred outcome

A similar initial conflict between the intuitive and the analytical answer may be seen with the last characteristic of the open/closed distinction. Intuitively, a law enforcement agency like the FBI would want a consistent outcome. After all, the concepts of due process and rule of law suggest that justice should not be applied or pursued arbitrarily depending on who is being indicted or on what charge. However, that is not the type of outcome that we are interested in for this question. Rather, the "outcome" in question is the process by which a problem is being solved. By this definition, and when we consider the nature of the work the FBI does, the preferred outcome simply cannot be anything other than a dynamic one. Not all crimes are the same, nor are all operations. Each requires its own methods for investigation and strategies for apprehending the suspect.

There is an argument to be made that the bureau still has a number of templates for different types of crimes and that each case will be squeezed, to a lesser or greater degree of success, into one of them. Terminology and legal definitions such as "violent crime", "kidnapping", "hostage taking" or "corporate fraud" exist within the agency and to some extent dictates which part of the FBI is tasked with handling the case. Likewise, as discussed in the previous chapter, it can be argued that Waco was a clear case of the FBI trying (and failing) to fit an operation into a preconceived model, not just of how to solve the case, but

also of what kind of case it was to begin with. However, even then, there is a strong sense that every case is unique and will require a tailor-made solution. The question is more how much tailoring is taking place, mixed with the simple fact that multiple law enforcement agencies exist and that the investigation of crimes is split across a myriad of jurisdictional axes: location and geographical spread, the severity and scope of the crime, the type and nature of perpetrator, the nature of the victim, the specific criminal code or offense, and so on.

While Waco may have teetered on the edge between a 'dynamic' and a 'consistent' preferred outcome, the FBI as a whole still ended up on the 'dynamic' half of the spectrum. In Montana, the teetering is gone and the bureau is firmly planted at the dynamic end. The existence of CIRG and CIAG points towards an ingrained willingness on a policy level to pursue multiple possible problem images and solutions at once; the use of multiple intermediaries and numerous expert groups from different scientific fields demonstrates that this multi-pronged approach is also used in practice in the field. The inclusion of external expertise, while regulated, is very clearly allowed even on an *ad hoc* basis, and there are clear procedures to make it happen. The two critical incident groups also demonstrate a willingness to spend a bit more effort on making information fit the organisation rather than limit the information flow to only include what is already pre-moulded to fit the existing format.

At the same time, as mentioned in the discussion on time pressure, some of that willingness is most likely due to the fact that part of the effort can be expended ahead of time by pre-emptively building the connections and communities – not to mention pre-screen the participants – from which information can be drawn. Whether this initial investment yields more usage because of some sunk cost fallacy or because they in practice reduce the effort required in times of crisis is an interesting question that, unfortunately, lies beyond the scope of this thesis, partly because it requires a level of detail in the empirical material that is simply not available, and partly because it does not actually matter for the conclusion made here. What matters is that we can observe a willingness to spend time on getting better information rather than requiring that all input adheres to some standard format.

Finally, it is worth looking at the CIRG's role as a gatekeeper. This is an area where we see perhaps the most distinct difference compared to Waco, where the in-house subject matter experts took on a gate-keeping role that enforced a kind of orthodox problem image. By contrast, in the Freemen case, the CIRG rather took on the alternate gate-keeping role of sifting through the information flow for valuable nuggets that could be passed to the on-site commanders, irrespective of the origins and conclusions of that information. Pretty much every indicator of preferred outcome points towards a dynamic problem definition and search for solutions.

All in all, then the nature of the FBI in Montana leans heavily towards being an open organisation. The preferred outcome (dynamics) and the instrumental work

flow (flexibility) are both open characteristics; the guiding principle (regulation) is characteristic of closed-ness – a 2/3 majority in favour of characterising the organisation as a whole as open. Even without the cheap tactic of vote counting, though, it is still fair to say that the FBI is more open than closed in the Montana case. When we look closer at the reasons why the guiding principle is more indicative of closed-ness, we note that the reason the FBI can still be considered to rely on regulation is because the regulations have changed. The policy subsystem has learned from previous mistakes that a more open approach is required to solve these kinds of issues, and that openness is now part of the rule system the FBI has to abide by. The FBI only remains the same in relation to the policy subsystem, and the system as a whole has started to lean more towards openness.

5.4.5 MESO usage

Many of the questions related to MESO usage have already been answered or at least touched upon in previous sections but still bear repeating to demonstrate what is going on from a knowledge perspective and using the terminology created for this purpose. It is also worth revisiting the actual chronology of consultations to look at the factors that made the case (somewhat) famous despite the fact that it is largely unknown due to being a non-crisis. Its claim to fame was the use of unconventional third-party intermediaries and outside scientific expertise but the question is how warranted this reputation is. If nothing else, it is worth evaluating these interactions as they relate to the characterisation of “flexibility” that this thesis has just bestowed on the FBI’s efforts in Montana, and to the issue of the identification paradox discussed in previous chapters.

An immediate methodological quandary lies in what to include in the actual case? Many of the MESO uses illustrated by the Montana episode did not actually happen during the standoff but in the period leading up to it, thereby providing the groundwork for other, in some sense less significant, uses during the event itself. It hardly sounds fair to evaluate the use of MESO-knowledge in crises by looking at how said knowledge was used outside of the critical phase. While prevention and preparedness are certainly considered crucial parts of the overall crisis management puzzle, they are really only *enablers* of good crisis management and, almost by definition, are not active components of the management once the crisis starts. On the other hand, as was established in a previous section, what we have here is a *non-crisis*, largely because those preventive measures worked so well. The fact that it continued to not escalate into a full-blown crisis can also be attributed to the continued use of the same measures. As such, it would probably just make the discussion disjointed and unclear if we tried to strictly separate the preventive and prepared measures from the practical effects they had during the standoff. In a sense, it is the confounding influence of the identification paradox feedback loop we are seeing here. The proper use of MESO-knowledge helps to prevent an escalation, which in turn allows for further use of MESO-knowledge.

It is not quite a chicken-or-egg kind of problem since we have a clear chronology and a definite start of the cycle, but it is nevertheless a self-reinforcing cycle where we should account for all parts of the sequence.

Meta-knowledge

The most clear example of meta knowledge usage has already been identified. The fact that the CIRG was instituted demonstrates a reflexive realisation that the FBI's own procedures had limited applicability, as did the fields of knowledge that the bureau hosted in its in-house scientific expertise. With those limitations in mind, a solution was created to allow reasonably painless grafting of new knowledge from sources with potentially vastly different procedures. The bureau also grafted a loose, initially small, and highly informal pre-existing community of practice onto its own knowledge base in the form of CIAG, and took measures to cultivate and grow this community over time to include more and more members in more and more fields. It is hard to put a hard boundary between the meta-knowledge of understanding the bureau's own limitations and needs, and the empathic knowledge base that comes with these kinds of research networks. The FBI's continued participation can be seen as a continual knowledge inventory – figuring out what there is to know on a given topic and whether or not it is something the bureau should take a more active interest in – but also as an effort to build empathic knowledge and keep tabs on who possesses the knowledge that, at least for the moment, is not deemed immediately critical.

A better example of meta-knowledge, and one that sits in sharp contrast to how the same issue was handled three years earlier, is the decision to include a group of religious scholars as part of the analytical effort in response to Bo Gritz' report of the Freemen describing "Yahweh's barrier" protecting them from the agents outside. At this stage, the FBI still considered it as a dubious claim made by a know fraudster, but the bureau had the wherewithal to note that this type of religious symbolism was outside of its immediate area of expertise and that others may be better suited to analyse the Freemen's statements. Indeed, the same report had caught the attention of the scholarly group that mainly had followed the events passively up until this point, but which now sprung into action. The FBI needed a second opinion and the scholars had an opinion to offer, so it was a match made in heaven.

Long before this, though, similar realisation about the bureau's own competence – and, more relevantly, its limits – came during just the first couple of days. Very early on, it became clear that the Freemen did not consider the FBI a legitimate agency, but rather some kind of perverted enforcer of a supposedly deeply invaded and thoroughly compromised federal government. Rather than trying to assert its role as the pre-eminent federal law enforcement agency, the bureau concluded that this image meant they lacked a key competence that was required for the negotiation efforts, namely the ability to *not* be part of that

federal system. Since the only way for the FBI negotiators to be seen as worth talking to was for them to not be FBI negotiators, and thus the use of third-party intermediaries became the only viable option. Here, it is worth going back to Chapter 2 and reminding ourselves of what the definition of knowledge is, as posited by Polanyi: it is 'actionable' – the process and ability to make use of the information we have at hand. The FBI negotiators themselves did not have this ability due to how they were being viewed, but others were not limited in the same way, and a piece of knowledge the FBI *did* have was how to put these other individuals in a position where they could do some good.

This early realisation is the key insight that unlocks many, if not all, other pieces in the process of understanding and substantially communicating with the Freemen. It is a very similar insight that eventually leads to the FBI allowing communication between one of the families on the farm and the head of the sect they belong to. The FBI might not hold a perceived position of authority, but others do, and those can assert a very strong and direct influence on the people on the farm. Similarly, the FBI almost completely lacks any insight into or understanding of the Common Law system embraced by the CI movement, but the CAUSE Foundation is deeply familiar with both it and the actual law of the land, allowing it to take on a translator role that proves to be much needed for everyone to start understanding each other.

Empathic knowledge

The uses of empathic knowledge during the standoff are both less readily apparent and less neat than the above examples. One has already been mentioned and is deeply intermingled with some pre-emptive meta-knowledge usage, which is the creation of CIRG and, to an even higher degree, the close collaboration with and cultivation of CIAG. The purpose of both these efforts is to create the ability to quickly incorporate knowledge from sources that have been identified ahead of time, but which are not deemed central enough to become a core competence within the bureau.

From this foundation, the standoff provides numerous examples of empathic knowledge use when the FBI's own knowledge proves insufficient. Again, the insights about how the bureau was perceived led to the empathic knowledge use of recognising the ability of mediators such as Gritz and Duke to speak to the Freemen on their own terms, and of CAUSE to discuss the key legal concerns using a legal framework that the Freemen both understood and saw as legitimate. Likewise, the inclusion of the religious-symbolical analysis in the negotiation effort is a case of understanding that another party's knowledge and understanding of the matter is better than the FBI's own. Many of these were identified at an early stage, only to be incorporated and used at some later point in the standoff. For instance, CAUSE and its predecessors were already well known within the FBI from numerous previous cases, and they were among the first to offer their

services to the bureau when the standoff started. Even so, it took some 53 days between the initial contact and the point where they were called in to aid the FBI – a period longer than the entirety of the Waco siege. Similarly, it took almost four weeks between Gritz' first offer to help and his inclusion, and seven weeks between the first contact with AAR and the inclusion of the religious scholars. In other words, the knowledge of what other parties had to offer existed at a very early stage, even in the instances where these parties had not taken part in the preparatory work in building communities of practice and similar knowledge networks. Still, this empathic knowledge eventually led to actions being taken to include a third party in the negotiation efforts in one capacity or another.

In fact, with the meta-knowledge examples in hand and almost universally being acted upon, it is perhaps more interesting to look at the instances where empathic and meta-knowledge *did not* go hand in hand. As mentioned, the FBI understood its relationship – or lack thereof – to the Freemen very early on, and the empathic knowledge work with the aforementioned intermediaries demonstrate that the gap and the ability for others to fill it was also well understood. Nevertheless, all offers were initially rejected, and even during prolonged breakdowns in the communication between the Freemen and the FBI, none of them besides the ones already mentioned were acted upon. Perhaps they lacked the previous experience and proven record of Gritz and CAUSE, or the stature in their respective communities of Ohs and Duke, but it certainly seems like some of the militia representatives that arrived in Montana were dismissed outright and never considered viable candidates to begin with.

It is in other words worth noting that, while the Freemen standoff is often considered a prime example of the use of third party expertise (at least among those who know of the non-crisis at all), that use – and with it the use of empathic knowledge – is still limited to only about half a dozen different parties: the family members, Ohs, Gritz, Duke, CAUSE, and the religious experts. It is a lot only when compared to how few – usually zero – were allowed this close in before this event, and perhaps we should not expect much more in what is effectively a pilot or trial case of a very new set of procedures. The fact that this grafting of external knowledge is almost all that remains of the public record, with little to no mention of what internal expertise the FBI made use of, is itself telling in terms of what a break it was with previous methodologies.

At the same time, and to no-one's real surprise, it is clear when looking at the chronology of events that one of the success factors in Montana was the use of intermediaries. In spite of a couple of temporary breakdowns, they kept the process going well enough that other, more repressive measures only needed to be introduced towards the very end, and even then, the introduction was slow. Put into the terminology minted in previous chapters as a new way of cutting the knowledge management literature, the FBI could make use of empathic knowledge to keep both the uncertainty and any potential value conflicts at bay,

thereby creating a self-reinforcing feedback loop that kept the standing from escalating into a full-blown crisis.

Second-order knowledge

The problem of putting a clear boundary around what should and what should not be included as part of the crisis becomes readily apparent when it comes to looking for second-order knowledge. Section 3.2.4 suggests a number of indicators for second-order knowledge but also warns about difficulties to distinguish these in practice from the more obvious use of empathic knowledge. While the establishment of CIRG and CIAG could potentially be seen as deliberate efforts to build second-order knowledge, that effort takes place during the two years that precede the standoff, and very little in the way of using that knowledge shows up in the actual case.

There are only two real candidates here: the suggestion from the AAR that the FBI should make contact with religious experts to help with analysis, which is nullified by the experts taking the first step more than a month later; and the suggestion to bring in Duke as a trustworthy representative of the militia cause, which is nullified by the fact that it is more a request from the Freeman than a result of any kind of knowledge use on the FBI's part. Some of the narrative regarding the identification of the Justus Township as the Freeman's and how this feeds into the CAUSE Foundation's focus on resolving that one issue could conceivably qualify as well, but this narrative comes almost exclusively from a potentially biased source and is therefore a less than stellar example to draw any conclusions from.

Granted, given the existing examples of MESO-usage, it is perhaps not a problem that we cannot find any clear case of second-order knowledge in action – there is already ample evidence that the FBI was employing these skills and that it had laid down the groundwork for future second-order knowledge usage by introducing a community of practice like CIAG or a knowledge brokerage function like CIRG into the organisation. So for the purpose of putting a value on the MESO-usage variable, we are already looking at a reasonably high score. However, this problem raises some questions both about value of the knowledge distinction itself – what use is the distinction if it is this hard to demonstrate – and about the methodology used to detect it. It may also raise some questions about the case selection. Could we potentially find a case where this use is more obvious? Such questions warrant a revisit once the other cases have been covered, at which point we can start to try to discern a pattern in how – if at all – this knowledge concept appears in the empirical material.

On a more positive note, it is worth reiterating the point from the previous section on how these policy changes and how the organisational restructuring allowed the FBI to start to expect the unexpected. There is the barest glimpse of second-order knowledge in the fact that the bureau knows that it can, must, and

will rely on knowledge it may not even be aware of beforehand, and consequently procedures are put into place to accommodate the grafting of this yet unknown knowledge onto the CIRG's efforts to support operations in the field. Perhaps this knowledge would come more to the fore-front if we studied yet another case from later in the history of the bureau.

For the time being, though, we can conclude that the Montana Freemen stand-off provides numerous examples of meta-knowledge and empathic knowledge in use. The preparatory work and organisational changes took place immediately before the standoff point towards a willingness and ability to also employ second-order knowledge, even though none is really apparent in the case itself. In addition, common knowledge management tools such as the establishment of communities of practice and knowledge brokerage are in use during the events. We should also take note of the fact that the use of empathic knowledge continuously allowed the FBI to take its time to find more solutions, suppressing the potential escalation of the crisis.

5.4.6 Conclusions from Montana

To sum up, this chapter has shown a very different FBI from the one that appeared in Chapter 4. Indeed, the entire case turned out radically different in spite of some very central shared characteristics. Rather than being bewildered by a seemingly obvious, but subtly different opponent, the FBI took *a lot* of time to understand what was going on and how to best resolve the grievances that kept the Freemen from surrendering. By taking its time, the FBI managed to steadfastly define the event as a non-crisis – a decision that was made possible by a confluence of fortunate contextual elements. The FBI had full control over the case from start to finish. It had the confidence of the Justice Department which also dependent on a positive outcome as the bureau itself. The FBI had newly instituted processes and mechanisms to maximise its use of both internal and external knowledge to resolve ambiguities and uncertainties, and it was able to clearly prioritise some key values over others. In particular, time and money had almost no priority at all and could be used as a valve to deflate the crisis trilemma.

In terms of answering the analytical questions, then, the standoff in Montana can be summarised as follows:

- Montana *was not* a crisis for the principal actor.
- The processes being used *were* anticipated.
- The principal actor *could* maintain an essentially open mode of operation.
- The principal actor demonstrated *multiple instances and moderate to heavy use* of all types of MESO-knowledge.
- A reinforcement cycle that reduced the degree of crisis and helped anticipate the processes in use *can* be observed.

For the most part, these answers can be directly translated into the binary variables we need for our case comparison. The one possible exception is the MESO usage, where only two of the three knowledge types are readily apparent in how the FBI dealt with the (non)crisis. Even so, two out of three should be good enough, especially when considering how prevalent the observed characteristics are. In addition, while it strictly speaking means looking outside of the event itself, second-order knowledge usage is still apparent in how the bureau chose to implement and design functions such as CIRG and CIAG in order to ensure that there is a way to find that additional knowledge, should the meta- and empirical knowledge use prove insufficient.

The same process also resolves a potential issue with the classification of the FBI as an open organisation. The bureau still very much operates with regulation as its guiding principle, but at the time of the standoff, that regulation had itself been altered to inherently include a much more open work-flow. This observation is important because it provides an example of an analogue to the already established identification paradox – an interference between MESO-usage (or, more accurately, the lack thereof) and the occurrence of crises. The difference is that, in this case, it is a more positive interference between MESO-usage and the anticipation of due process. In addition, the case provides an example of the positive flip-side of the paradox, where good MESO-usage helps suppressing the descent into a crisis.

Thus, we arrive at the following variable values for Montana:

- Degree of crisis: low.
- Degree of anticipation of process: high.
- Degree of closed-ness: low.
- Degree of MESO usage: more high than low.

As noted in almost every instance, the values are really not quite as clear-cut as this binary division would suggest, but this is what we arrive at given the methodology chosen for this study. The finer details are still worth revisiting in the case comparison in Chapter 8.

Chapter 6: The 2004 Boxing Day Tsunami

Winters are cold in northern Europe, in spite of the Gulf Stream, and the northern latitudes make them dark as well. As a result, the time around Christmas and the new year in Sweden sees a wave of people fleeing the country for sunnier and warmer climes. Ever since the charter boom of the 1980:s, Thailand has become a mainstay of these migrations, seeing hundreds of thousands of Swedes visiting on a yearly basis – by the early 2000:s, the number was some 200,000 and strongly trending upwards (Vagabond 2013). This is how, on Boxing Day 2004, Sweden becomes the nation outside of the direct disaster area that is hit the hardest by the Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami. While utterly dwarfed by the tens or even hundreds of thousands of casualties seen in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, and other countries directly hit by the earthquake and the tsunami waves, the 543 Swedish losses are not just the highest among the nations hit indirectly in absolute terms, but also in relation to the size of the country's population.¹¹

In a testament to how disasters never strike when you are ready for them, Sweden is also a nation that is largely shut down on Boxing Day beyond being the first day of the post-Christmas sales. Critical services are certainly still up and running, but for the most part, office workers and managers at public agencies follow the same vacation patterns as everyone else, even at the highest levels of government. It is up to each agency to decide whether or not on-call staff is required, and for most of them, the national shut-down means that little of importance will happen over Christmas. At the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the number of Swedes abroad at this time means that the department dealing with consular matters – usually tourists getting hurt or losing passports

11 At the time, Sweden had just surpassed 9 million inhabitants, which means there were 60 deaths per million. The runner-up in this category is Finland with 179 deaths and 5.4 million, or 33 deaths per million. In absolute terms, Germany is second to Sweden with 539 deaths.

or money or other essential travel items – needs at least a skeleton staff, although most of those matters can be handled by some local consulate or embassy. The rest of the ministry as well as the foreign minister herself, dealing mainly with higher policy matters of international relations, are normally not desperately needed. The effect of the tsunami on Swedish nationals in the region will soon change this state of affairs and demand a significant re-working of the Swedish crisis management system, in particular on the matter of preparedness, and also demand a distinct clarification of the respective responsibilities of the individual and the government should something go wrong (cf. UD 2001; Fi 2005a:74ff; UD 2007). Beyond the strictly legalistic results, the ensuing crisis also redefines the assumed relationship between the government and the people.

6.1 Background

The executive branch of the Swedish government is curiously devoid of executive power. This may seem like an odd detail to start with in a story about a disaster in Southeast Asia, but the hierarchical setup and separation in governance between central-ministerial and agency level is the crux of the matter in many of the conflicts that arise during the management of the crisis. While the prime minister appoints a cabinet of ministers, this cabinet can only ever influence the Government Offices (*Regeringskansliet*, or ‘*RK*’)¹² and its various ministries and not the public agencies that sort under or report to the various ministries. These ministers are only either heads of the ministry or appointed to head a particular issue area that is deemed to sort under the general responsibility of a given ministry. The ministers have politically appointed state secretaries directly subordinate to them who act as the chef administrators for their respective ministries. The state secretaries, in turn, have as their direct subordinates a number of non-political senior officials and heads of departments that handle the day-to-day business (*Regeringsformen* 1974:Ch.6–7; KU 2006:47ff).

This is where the power of the cabinet ends, and their work is largely limited to policy-making and proposing changes to laws. The actual execution of these policies is left to a number of government agencies, each sorting under a specific ministry but acting independently of them. The ministries only have two instruments of control over “their” agencies: the yearly budget and the ‘instructions’ – laws that

12 As a general rule in this chapter, the organisations and the departments within them will be referred to by their Swedish abbreviations. This is partly due to convenience: the source documents universally use these abbreviations and it is easier for both the author and the reader to keep track of them if the same term is used in both places. Partly, it is due to uncertainty – anyone familiar with the organisations will readily recognise these abbreviations and will not have to suffer (along with the author) any confusion or doubt as to whether the correct translation of a given abbreviation is being used.

direct and regulate the responsibilities and tasks of the agencies – both of which have to go through the same parliamentary process of legislating as every other law of the land. Ministers and other officials in the Government Offices are strictly prohibited, not just by administrative tradition, but by constitutional law, to try to direct or influence the daily operation of an agency or to inject themselves into the decision-making of a case handled on an agency level. This pattern of strict division between policy-making and agency operation also applies to the equivalent bodies at the regional and local level (cf. Regeringsformen 1974:Ch.9, 12, 14; Fi 2005a:54ff; KU 2006:55f, 65ff).

In practice this means that, while every government agency is headed by a director general who is appointed by the cabinet, and whose responsibility it is to ensure that the agency enacts the policies as best they can; even they cannot be directed by the government – only report back how well the agency has followed their instructions and made use of their budget. Should an agency “misbehave” from a political or policy standpoint, the only means available to the government for correcting it are to alter the laws to better encapsulate the policy and leave it to the justice system to pursue and prosecute the officials who break those laws, or to enact punitive budget cuts next fiscal year (both measures, as mentioned, being subject to the approval of the parliament). Anything more, and it is the government officials themselves who becomes the object of legal action.

Although there have been a number of high-profile instances where accusations have been levelled against government officials of breaking this hard rule (often also implicitly accusing the minister or state secretary at the top of the hierarchy), the tradition has largely become the reverse (cf. Fi 2005a:60ff; Brändström 2016:50ff). Rather than chafing against this restriction and trying to work around it, officials can often lean on the legal framework as a reason to distance themselves from operational matters more than is strictly necessary. In a world of legalistic politics, discretion often really *is* the better part of valour: being seen as distant and aloof is a political PR problem and generally easier to deal with than being too involved, which could quickly turn into a draw-out legal process. At the same time, the government agencies are universally required to report their activities to their respective ministries, and the ministries often ultimately have the power to approve or veto any activity that falls under their domain unless that power has explicitly been delegated to the agency. Two cases in particular stand out where this holds true. The first is whenever an activity falls outside of the general instruction to an agency, yet clearly falls within the agency’s specialist competence, which usually means that it requires additional funds beyond what is in the yearly budget. The second is whenever an agency becomes a representative of the Swedish government or nation, rather than just of the agency itself – in such instances, the Government Offices generally want to retain some control over what kind of image of Sweden is being projected.

The Swedish entry into the EU a decade earlier had disrupted this state of affairs somewhat since, in a single stroke, agencies and offices at all levels of

government, from local to national, were not just allowed but actively encouraged and even bound to make international connections. Previously, and except from some fairly rare circumstances, the international arena had been the unique (and occasionally tightly guarded) purview of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In 2004, it is more or less expected that ostensibly national agencies will have international connections, if nothing else with their sister agencies in other EU countries. Even so, a number of agencies and offices have long-held traditions of operations across national borders for various reasons, in particular in matters that relate to disaster relief. It is within this group that we find the main *dramatis personæ* (or should that be *ordinationes?*) of the Tsunami crisis.

6.1.1 *The Swedish Government Offices (RK)*

Regeringskansliet (RK) is the collection of administrative bodies that support the government's policy process. Always subject to change to match the division and organisation of policy areas the government envisions, in 2004 it consisted of the 10 ministries, the Prime Minister's Office, and ever-present functions such as the Administrative Office and the Representation to the EU. Of the 4,600 employed at the Government Offices, only some 200 are politically appointed, the rest being public servants employed the same way as at any other office (Fi 2005a:135; Regeringskansliet 2004:6, 10ff; KU 2006:53f). In essence, *RK* and its many ministries are yet another set of government agencies among many others, the main difference being that they are headed by the members of the cabinet – the prime minister being the head of *RK* itself.

As mentioned, every agency will have some international aspect to it, if nothing else through the connection to the EU. Even so, two in particular inherently deal with international matters as part of their main responsibilities: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Utrikesdepartementet*, or '*UD*') and the Ministry of Defence (*Försvarsdepartementet*, or '*FÖ*').

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (UD)

UD traces its roots back to the late 1700:s and remains a high-profile and high-prestige organisation within the Government Offices. It is the central node for diplomatic relations with other nations and for managing the Swedish foreign policy in its most direct forms. It formally heads the Swedish representation in foreign countries, through embassies, consulates, and permanent offices in international organisations such as the EU and UN; each mission being its own governmental agency (Fi 2005a:135f). The ministry also handles some matters of economic statecraft, such as promoting Swedish trade and managing foreign aid. In many ways, *UD* is the ministry tasked with managing not just the projection of the Swedish government's wishes, but also of the overall image of Sweden abroad. Aside from its formal ability both to assign long-term budgetary means and to

draw on short-term funds for emergencies, both of which give the ministry some fairly strong *de facto* vetoing power over issues that fall within its purview, there is also a historical administrative tradition that informally assigns that same power over almost any activity done by a governmental agency abroad (cf. Fi 2005a:137f). It is simply not good form to go out and – even vaguely – represent Sweden in some form without the nod of approval from the ministry.

While most of the departments within the ministry serve to communicate with foreign nations, one focuses more on individuals, and on Swedes in particular: the Department for Consular Affairs and Civil Law (*Konsulära och civilrättsliga enheten*, or simply ‘*UD-KC*’). *UD-KC* is the central point of contact within the at the main office that individuals in need can turn to if if something happens to them abroad and they need to receive some kind of assistance from the Swedish government (Fi 2005a:83ff, 136). Abroad, the individuals themselves are usually in contact with personnel at an embassy or consulate, who may refer them to *UD-KC* for advice, information, or coordination with other agencies in Sweden. When the individual is in Sweden, the situation is generally reversed: they are in contact with an administrator at *UD-KC*, who relegates the matter to the appropriate mission where contacts are made with the local agencies that need to be involved. Being this close to any kind of operative level, and dealing with individuals rather than states, makes the 15-person strong *UD-KC* something of an odd bird within the ministry’s organisation.

The Swedes being a travel-happy people,¹³ this particular area of responsibility means that *UD-KC* has a fair amount of experience with managing crises on an individual level and with providing temporary assistance for Swedes abroad when things go awry (Fi 2005a:74ff, 83ff). This entails everything from lost passports, tickets, and money to legal aid. With such a wide area of responsibility and so many people that could potentially fall within that category, it is at times said that “abroad” is Sweden’s biggest county, referencing and comparing the administrative division of responsibility that applies to country’s inhabitants in their every-day life. While the technical accuracy of this claim is debatable, the implication is that the various foreign missions are collectively responsible for the well-being of as many people as even the most populous of the nation’s administrative regions. At the same time, the scale of this responsibility should not be exaggerated. *UD-KC* staffs some 15 individuals, and this is generally sufficient to deal with the daily flow of issues. A 2001 government report on the need for clarified rules on the assistance to Swedish nationals abroad claims that some SEK

13 As a point of reference, a survey study over the years 2002–2004 suggests that, in any given month, some 15–20% of Swedes have booked some kind of trip abroad, meaning that, on average over a full year, the number of trips is roughly two times the total number of citizens of the country, a pattern that holds true a decade later (cf. ETour 2004; UD 2001; Andersson 2013).

2.2 million (roughly €260,000) was paid in economic assistance the year before, half of which was designated to Swedes permanently residing abroad rather than temporary travellers. Spread over the nearly 20 million Swedish trips abroad, it seems like a fairly limited problem (cf. UD 2001; GP 2005-01-11). Even so, and rather prophetically, the report highlights that Swedes often over-estimate what the government – *UD* in particular – can do for them in the case of large-scale crisis, either due to the local laws or the Swedish division of responsibility between various agencies. In short, *UD* of 2004 has both an internal and an external image of being a reasonably reliable helping hand for Swedes abroad, and of having a good grasp of crisis management, not just as it relates to the various emergencies that occur every day on the international arena but also on an individual level. Indeed, *UD*, and perhaps *RK* in general, often claims that crisis management is what it does all day, every day (cf. KU 2006:36).

The Ministry of Defence (FÖ)

Through a process that winds its way through two world wars and the ensuing cold war, all while Sweden has maintained a policy of neutrality and non-alignment, in 2004 *Försvarsdepartementet* was the ministry tasked with overseeing both the civil and the military security of the nation (Fi 2005a:137). The civil security sector came under the ministry's purview through the contingency planning in case of war. Over the years, that task expanded in stages, from mainly dealing with matters such as maintaining bomb shelters and planning for black-outs in case of air raids, to also include the larger scope of stockpiling and ensuring access to critical resources for the civil sector in times of crisis, and later to include almost all forms of civil protection. During the 1990s, the end of the cold war and the Swedish entry into the EU mean that the neutrality policy was quietly dismantled and that the focus of the Swedish defence sector in general turned more towards both civil and military crisis management within the EU, rather than towards defending a nation wedged between two super powers at war. The national military capacity, in particular, was drastically down-sized and tuned more towards participation in international UN or EU missions (cf. Regeringskansliet 1999:7, 16; 2002:33f; and 2004:30f).

As with many other nations, a significant shift happened as a result of the 9/11 terror attacks, when civil protection and intelligence gathering became hot topics over night – two areas where *FÖ* was the lead organisation within the Government Offices. The national civil protection area had become somewhat neglected in terms of planning and reform over the last decade, but now appeared on the agenda once again (Regeringskansliet 2004; Statskontoret 2005:39; KU 2006:51). In 2002, the old Agency for Civil Emergency Planning was replaced

by the rather unfortunately named Swedish Emergency Management Agency.¹⁴ In spite of its name, SEMA did not manage emergencies, but was rather meant to act as a planning and oversight office and a national co-ordinator between more operationally focused agencies such as the police and rescue services, as well as a centralised conduit of information between these agencies and the Government Offices. Within the organisation of the ministry, this contact was done through the department of civil affairs (*FÖ/CIV*), and also fed through the function for intelligence and preparedness (*FÖ/UNDBER*) as it was the ministry's own information clearing house (Fi 2005a:137, 292f).

As much as the classic task of national defence in and of itself has had a clear component of international developments, this component was further reinforced at the turn of the millennium by the Swedish policy focus on participation in peace-keeping missions under the EU/UN flag. In addition, many of the competences that exist within the civil crisis management sector are in demand across the globe, and many of the national agencies have developed emergency response units that can be sent out at a moment's notice. We will come back to a couple of notable examples in the section on national agencies below. Consequently, even such an ostensibly inwards-looking department within the ministry as *FÖ/CIV* needs to maintain an international focus in order to keep track of any international developments that might require the attention of the civil agencies that sort under *FÖ*.

6.1.2 The national agencies

In a still on-going trend of reorganisation and centralisation, the number of national agencies that report to the Government Offices has nearly been halved since the mid-1990s. In 2004, there were 574 such agencies, half of which received a yearly "letter of adjustment" allocating the agency's budget and overarching goals for that year (Regeringskansliet 2004:137; 2005:142; Statskontoret 2014:45). In most cases, the reduction came in the form of smaller, local agencies being combined into a central organisation that handled the same issues only on a nationally co-ordinated level. In a handful of instances, it was a matter of rationalisations where a policy area had been differentiated into a number of closely linked agencies, each dealing with some specific facet of the issue, and that this split had now been deemed inefficient.

There are in practice three main roles for these agencies to fill: acting as the operational, business-end of the government, applying and enacting the laws of the land; acting as oversight and controller agencies for a policy sector or

¹⁴ The English name for the agency was chosen in part to evoke a parallel with FEMA in the U.S., whereas the Swedish name *Krisberedskapsmyndigheten (KBM)* – literally "the Agency for Crisis Preparedness" – was a more accurate reflection of the actual responsibilities of the agency.

subsystem; and acting as an expert authority on an issue area, either as support for other agencies or for the government itself. Some agencies may only fulfil one of these roles, others may do two or all three of them, with the expert role being almost universally applicable since it is needed as a foundation for the other two. Viewed from this perspective, *RK* is itself a controlling agency that largely borrows its subject-matter expertise from its subordinate agencies, either by having individual liaisons from these agencies in place at the Government Offices or by requesting research reports or expert judgements on a given matter. The exact nature of this relationship varies wildly between the different ministries and agencies, some having a tradition of very close bonds and others being much more distant.

Aside from the strict legal prohibition for government officials to try to direct or interfere with the day-to-day work of the agencies, these three roles give the agencies another layer of independence. They generally know better than anyone how an issue within their field of expertise could or should be handled. In addition, agencies with a strong operative division tend to have professional ties and competences that further solidifies their ability to act on their own volition. Three such agencies that will come to play a central role in the tsunami crisis are the Swedish Rescue Services Agency, the National Criminal Police, and the National Board of Health and Welfare. Not coincidentally, all three deal with highly professionalised areas of civil protection, and all three maintain pools of emergency personnel that can be called in and sent out to crisis areas around the world.

The Swedish Rescue Services Agency (SRSA)

The SRSA was only in part what the name suggests: it was the central agency for rescue services, delivering among other things training for fire fighters and other emergency service personnel, but it was also a central agency in numerous civil defence and civil protection areas (Fi 2005a:137f). It dealt with protection against hazardous materials; it provided communications and IT service support for foreign missions; it was the central agency for learning and after-action reports after crises; and it provided both on-site expert support and IT-based crisis decision support for emergency managers. Its clientele ranged from local municipal agencies to the national government, to supranational organisations and other nations in need.

In particular, SRSA was a well-established and renowned brand name in the international community for the services it had provided throughout the years in the area of post-disaster reconstruction (Koraeus 2009). The agency maintained a pool of specialists in the fields of search and rescue, with a special focus on earthquakes, and civil mine action – that is, the mapping and clearing of mines and education of mine safety among locals. It also had a large team of ICT technicians that specialised in setting up and maintaining in-field infrastructure to support

other missions with any kind of telecommunication need. While not everyone was fully trained and certified, much less ready to leave at a moment's notice, in 2004, its resource pool counted well over 1,500 people (Koraeus 2009). In order to maintain this level of readiness, the agency had been forced to become reasonably good at prognosticating exactly what competences might be needed in the resource pool in the near future, so the right expertise could be attached and trained long before they were actually needed.

The reputation of the SRSA was such that its teams are often requested directly in connection to disasters. Events in Sweden or within the EU were generally channelled via *FÖ*, since they were the co-ordinating ministry for civil emergencies in that geographical area. Requests from further afield, especially from UN organs such as OCHA, generally went through *UD*, since it was the point of contact for the UN and since it was the lead ministry for foreign aid. Almost all international SRSA missions, and a lot of the aforementioned planning for the future, was also done in conjunction with the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), which reports to *UD* (Fi 2005a:138). Such SRSA missions were effectively funded through the foreign aid budget that was managed by SIDA, which meant that the mandate and reporting structure was somewhat odd: *UD* ultimately had the budgetary responsibility for these missions, but *FÖ* provided the mandate for them to actually go anywhere and was also the recipient for SRSA's reports on their activities (cf. KU 2006:136ff). Beyond that, and as part of their general instruction, SRSA could somewhat independently send out observation teams to disaster areas, either to study the management of the disaster as part of the agency's larger knowledge gathering mission or to evaluate the local needs if and when a call to support the disaster management efforts was anticipated.

At any rate, SRSA was a prominent provider of operational expertise and manpower, as well as an agency that was experienced in operating on the boundary between the two policy fields that were signified by the ministerial division between *FÖ* and *UD*. At the same time, it was almost fiercely and proudly independent, resting on the narrative of doing "good deeds" and projecting the image of Sweden as a care-giving nation on the international arena (Koraeus 2009).

The Swedish National Police Board (RPS) and the National Bureau of Investigation (RKP)

The third major agency actor in the tsunami crisis was the Swedish National Bureau of Investigation (*Rikskriminalpolisen*, or '*RKP*'), which was technically not a separate agency but a division within the National Police Board (*Rikspolisstyrelsen*, or '*RPS*'). In 2004, the Swedish police was a heavily decentralised affair, with each county police force being its own agency and with *RPS* being a central planning and policy office that co-ordinated between all these local forces and which reported directly to yet a third ministry: the Ministry of Justice. *RPS* also

maintained a number of police competences that were either too technical and specialised to work properly if divided into local agencies, or where the issue area was of national rather than local interest and a division would have been unsuited for that reason. These competences included the Swedish Security Service (the national civil intelligence and governmental protection agency) the National Police Academy, the National Laboratory of Forensic Science, and the National Criminal Police. Of these, the two main operative divisions are the Security Services and the National Criminal Police, but the *RPS* also had numerous relatively minor support functions that were more aimed towards operative matters in support of the nation's many police local agencies. In particular, *RPS* needed to be able to provide ICT and administrative support to the police, and it had the capability and competence to maintain large data collection efforts that worked across agency borders. One specific implementation of this was the so-called ID Commission, which was tasked with collecting and sifting through large amounts of (often incomplete and fractured) data in order to establish the identity of individuals, either for forensic purposes or in support of larger criminal investigations (Fi 2005a:138).

RKP's particular focus was with organised or other larger-scale crime, cross-border criminality and international co-operation, and with crisis management and co-ordination in case of large extraordinary events. While the National Police Board as a whole somewhat mirrored the wide variety of roles of the SRSA, ranging from pure research and analysis, to oversight, to operational matters, the National Criminal Police was very much at the operative end of the spectrum and was highly professionalised. This was a police force that operated both on the national and the international level. While it had a wide array of competences and areas of expertise, those were mainly employed in service of *RPS* or used to support the local police forces, and less a service offered to outside agencies or to the Government Offices. Even so, of the national agencies presented here, *RKP* was perhaps the one with the clearest international focus, largely due to its areas of responsibility. It was the point of contact for agencies such as Interpol and Europol; it was heavily involved with the police and border control co-operation within the Schengen area through Frontex; and it managed most, if not all, of the international regular police work – that is, anything not handled by Security Service. It was mainly these international contacts that would occasionally call for *RKP* to make an appearance in the Government Offices outside of the Ministry of Justice, for instance to take part in some *UD*-sponsored mission or to support a more complicated consular matter (Fi 2005a:138). In the decade since the Swedish entry into the EU, most of this international work had been normalised and become a routine part of both the agency's and the nation's integration into the larger EU security framework. As such, it was no longer really a matter of foreign policy or of projecting any kind of image of Sweden; rather, it was simply police work done within a geographically expanded area of interest that had become relevant for the Swedish police.

This largely held true for the Ministry of Justice and its subordinate agencies in general. As a rule, they dealt with domestic matters rather than any of the international projections of policy one might see from the Defence or Foreign Affairs Ministries. It was simply the case that, over time, “domestic matters” had come to include numerous interactions with other EU member states and institutions, especially in the Schengen region. To some extent this held true even before the EU entry, if perhaps on a smaller scale, since similar schemes were set up in the Nordic region to simplify travel, business, and all manners of official affairs between the bordering nations.

6.2 Chronology of events

Since the purpose of this study is to evaluate the how the Swedish Government Offices, and *UD* in particular, handled the fallout of the boxing-day tsunami, this chronology will largely focus on what happened in Sweden and even then only on issues pertaining to information sharing and knowledge needs at the Government Offices. The full scope of the disaster itself, even from just a Swedish perspective, covered a dozen countries across seven time zones. Unless otherwise noted, times and dates are given in Central European Time – the time zone used in Sweden.

On Sunday, December 26, 2004, at a minute to eight in the morning local time, the Indo-Australian tectonic plate is forced in under the Burma plate along a fault-line that stretches from the Bay of Bengal to the southern tip of Sumatra (Fi 2005a:101; USGS 2005). The movement creates a 10-minute earthquake with its epicentre between the island of Simeulue and mainland Sumatra in the Aceh province of Indonesia. The earthquake has a moment magnitude of 9.3 and reaches an intensity of IX – defined as cracked ground and buildings being shifted off their foundations – in nearby Banda Aceh,¹⁵ and it is soon felt all around the north-eastern corner of the Indian Ocean. The quake triggers a row of tsunami waves that radiate out from the Sumatra coast and the straits between northern Sumatra and the Adaman and Nicobar islands. Moving mainly in an east-westerly direction, the waves force themselves into the Malacca strait, thereby

15 There are two main scales in use when describing the severity of earthquakes: the moment magnitude (M_w) scale and the Mercalli intensity (MM) scale. The former is a mathematical measure of the *magnitude* of – i.e. energy released by – an earthquake. It is a generalisation of (and often incorrectly reported as) the older Richter scale that was developed for measuring moderate earthquakes in California, but which proved too dependent on the geological specifics of that locale and as such was unsuited for accurate measurements of very weak and very strong quakes. The latter is an observational measure of the *intensity* – i.e. effects on nature and on man-made objects – and is an expansion of the earlier Rossi-Forel scale, only extended to a wider array of outcomes and more precisely defined. Magnitude is generally reported as a decimal number on the continuum between 0.0 and 10.0, whereas intensity is described in discrete steps denominated by a Latin number, with the Mercalli scale using steps I through XII.

hitting northern Sumatra both from the Indian Ocean side and from the Malacca side. Crossing the deeper Indian Ocean at great speed, the waves hit Sri Lanka after an hour and a half, the front then continuing up the coast of eastern India. Malaysia, Thailand, and Myanmar are hit roughly two hours after the initial quake. In the west, the wave continues past India, hitting the Maldives after three and a half hours, and Somalia after seven hours (Fi 2005a:102; NOAA 2008).

The quake is felt strongly enough for employees at the Swedish embassy in Bangkok to become worried (Hansén 2005:24). Two hours later, just after the waves have struck the shores, they receive a call from the popular destination Phuket describing the immediate aftermath of the tsunami. An attempt is made to contact the ambassador, but he is coincidentally stuck on a plane taking off for Phuket and cannot be reached. Instead, they decide to report back to *UD* in Stockholm and reach the on-duty officer for consular affairs in her home (Fi 2005a:140). An immediate estimate is made that some 10,000–20,000 Swedes are in the region, perhaps as many as 30,000, giving an hint of the scale of the potential disaster they have at their hands (Hansén 2005:24f).

Back in Sweden, the quake takes place at 01:59 in the morning, and the news spread slowly. The news agency *TT*, a news clearing house shared by the larger national newspapers and which is almost universally monitored and used as a source by other Swedish media, makes its first report about the quake at 03:35, just as the waves hit Sri Lanka. The first notice of the waves that wash over the Thai beaches come at 04:10, when local travel agent offices in Thailand begin reporting back to their Swedish headquarters, describing scenes of hotels having entire floors washed away and debris filling every surface on land. These reports trigger the respective crisis management groups within the affected travel agencies. The call from the Swedish embassy to *UD* comes in at 04:40, and from previous experience, the staff on call estimates that the ministry is about to be inundated by as much as *half a million* calls from the next of kin to those directly affected (Fi 2005a:127, 143; Hansén 2005:25). The on-duty officer contacts the *UD* press office to pass the news on and to suggest that extraordinary measures will be needed to get the information out and stem the inevitable tide of incoming calls. In particular, the *UD* staff responding to calls will have to forego the standard procedures for taking notes on incoming calls since this will slow down the response rate at a time when maintaining a high rate is absolutely critical (Hansén 2005:25, 51).

Sure enough, at 04:50, the first external call arrives at *UD* from a journalist asking about the situation in Phuket, and the press office provides the information they have just been handed from the embassy. This is enough to prompt the newspaper in question to stop the presses and prepare for a special edition. Soon thereafter, calls start coming in from Swedes, both at home and in Thailand to ask for information on friends and family visiting the coastal areas. The public also contacts various emergency services, including *RPS*. Meanwhile, the on-duty officer contacts the head of *UD-KC* to discuss the need for reinforcements, both

at the embassy and at the Stockholm offices. She then calls back to *UD* to communicate a decision not to take any detailed notes on incoming reports from the public on missing Swedes – the existing routines for doing so will not be able to cope with the expected flood of calls, and will just unnecessarily degrade the response time and create further confusion and anxiety. Half an hour later, at 05:30, the amount of calls from the public have started to increase and the duty officer at *UD* is quickly swamped and requests that additional personnel be called in to handle the matter (Fi 2005a:106, 124f; Hansén 2005:26ff). The on-duty officer receives yet another call from the Bangkok embassy that passes on early reports of at least 1,000 Swedes being affected by the tsunami. The embassy also provides a similar report to *UD-ASO*, the *UD* Department for Asia and the Pacific Region. By now, the Swedish ambassador is off his plane, the flight to Phuket having been cancelled, and he finally receives the message sent to him an hour earlier. In response, he calls the Swedish honorary consul in Phuket to get an update, and based on this reports decides to put the Bangkok embassy at full alert. This order is relayed only minutes after the embassy's report has been sent back home to *UD* (Hansén 2005:30f).

Around 05:40, the news media start to highlight the tsunami and its effects (Fi 2005a:125f). The earlier contact with *UD* is publish on a news website, and *TT* sends out a report of buildings being levelled and people swept away by the waves. One of the department heads at *SRSA* takes note of the news but judges the event to be too remote to allow for an effective search and rescue operation using *SRSA* personnel (KU 2006:136f). These early reports prompts a seismologist at Uppsala University to start making inquiries, and he is also contacted directly by the media to comment on the matter (Fi 2005a:125f). The same idea has occurred to the on-duty officer at *UD-KC*, but she only reaches the Geo Centre institution at the university, which – perhaps unsurprisingly – is not staffed at this time. Further searches put her in contact with a researcher connected to the Swedish Defence Research Agency who briefs her on the nature and immediate risks of earthquakes and tsunamis (Hansén 2005:27; Fi 2005a:125). In the meantime, she receives a call from the ambassador in Bangkok, who gives his view on the current situation, and also reports that he will attempt to travel to Phuket by car – a trip that is estimated to take 10 hours. The media also starts to track down contacts at the travel agencies that serve the region, who estimate that there are 10,000–15,000 Swedes in Thailand alone. Some of the travel agencies also contact *UD* to notify them that many of their customers have been hit by the disaster and may need immediate evacuation, but that the chartered flights will not be sufficient to carry them all. In addition, those flights will not be suited to bring home the many wounded that are being reported by the local offices (Daléus 2005:94)

RKP receives its first formal report on the disaster at 06:33, and the head officer on duty decides to activate the National Police Board's ID Commission and to contact the agency's division for violent crime. An event of this magnitude will

require its expertise in collecting and culling the identities of the thousands of individuals affected by the disaster, and the violent crime division has the systems in place to manage the amount of data required for the task (Hansén 2005:28, 50). At roughly the same time, a first brief goes out from the on-duty analyst at *FÖ/UNDBER*, citing an estimate of 20,000 individuals affected and a high probability that there will be many deceased and wounded that might require the use of the National Air Medevac service (Fi 2005a:144; Hansén 2005:28). The Swedish Armed Forces in general had received scattered and piecemeal information about the disaster almost since the very start as a number of officers on vacation in the region have reported back to their regiments. The morning news at 07:00 contains the first interviews and eye-witness reports from people in the affected areas, and the scope and nature of the disaster becomes generally known (Fi 2005a:125f; Hansén 2005:27). At 07:20, the telephone exchange at the Government Offices opens and starts taking calls, most trying to reach *UD*.

6.2.1 Day one – waking up to a crisis

The phone system at both *RK* and *UD* is almost immediately overloaded by the mass of incoming calls. In addition to routing those connections, the exchange is also continuously tasked with setting up small conference calls between key individuals within the various ministries, most of which are on Christmas vacation or doing on-call duty from their homes. The work load soon becomes high enough to make this solution impractical. The on-duty officer at *UD-KC* finally manages to get in contact with the head of her unit and the head of *UD-KC*, filling them in on the events of the early morning (Fi 2005a:145f). The head of *UD-KC* decides not to contact the political leadership of the ministry, but rather delivers a report to the director general of administrative affairs since he is also the chairman of the emergency preparedness group at *UD*. The director gets the impression that there is no due reason for alarm: no solid information exists of Swedes being affected, all the key functions have been activated, and *UD* seems to have the situation under control. As a routine measure, the unit head contacts *RKP*'s ID Commission and is informed that it has already been activated in response to the events (Fi 2005a:146). *RKP* has also already concluded that *UD* will have to take the lead on the collection and registration of incoming data, that the ID Commission will separately do the actual data-crunching required to identify individuals, and that the two organisations must make this division of labour clear and known amongst themselves. This plan meets with approval from the *UD* representative (Hansén 2005:32ff, 50f).

Both the director and the unit head are on vacation away from Stockholm and neither judges the situation to be critical enough to warrant an immediate return to the *UD* offices. The *UD-KC* unit head also receives calls from the head of the *RK* phone exchange and from the press office, trying to stress the dire situation for the phone operators and for the scant few desk officers trying to answer

questions – many of which are being asked to handle consular matters, which is outside of their area of expertise. The message is that there is a desperate need for some kind of management-level leadership of the effort, but the reports are rebuffed as being “out of order (Fi 2005a:145f, 149f; Hansén 2005: 32ff, 38). At the same time, reports start coming in from Sri Lanka and the Swedish embassy in Colombo, where no clear picture exists of the extent of the damages or whether any Swedes have been affected. An international call for aid to Sri Lanka also goes out through UNDAC (United Nation Disaster Assessment and Coordination), which gets the attention of SRSA, as does a similar request sent by the UN via EU-MIC (Monitoring Information Center). The agency responds to UNDAC half an hour later, saying that they can supply personnel and equipment with very short notice (Fi 2005a:151; KU 2006:137). From an internal discussion between the duty officer, the head of the operative division, and the head of a unit in the same division, it seems highly likely that a significant number of Swedes, both in Thailand and in Sri Lanka, will have been directly hit by the disaster. The Director General of SRSA is also informed about the situation. Meanwhile, since SRSA sorts under the responsibility of the Ministry of Defence, a contact is made between *FÖ/CIV* and the *UD* department of Global Security (*UD-GS*), explaining the aid requests and SRSA’s intention to put three operations into effect: a shipment of emergency supplies; a team responding to the UNDAC call, which can depart later in the day; and a monitor responding to the EU-MIC call. All three operations are aimed at Sri Lanka, and the EU-MIC response, being only a single person and responding to a UN call, gets an immediate go-ahead (Hansén 2005:28f; KU 2006:137).

Back at *UD*, the first formal written report on the event from the Bangkok embassy is received by fax at 08:28, depicting an escalating crisis (Fi 2005a:1907ff, 140f). Thai authorities have started their disaster response, and while no hard data is available, there are rumours of mass casualties. However, as one might expect on a Sunday during Christmas, the *UD* offices are not well-staffed and the mere handful present at the ministry are too occupied with answering phones, finding people, and routing calls to notice this delivery. None of the 15 employed at *UD-KC* are present, and the on-duty officer function is set up to be able to work from home in exactly these kinds of situations. At this point, the Government Office phone exchange is staffed by all of three operators; the average waiting time to get through is one hour; and the dual-digit display in the exchange showing how many calls are on hold is constantly pinned at 99 (Fi 2005a:126, 140; Hansén 2005:33, 38).

As the pressure mounts and information about the event spreads across the evening news, a skeleton staff starts to assemble at the offices. At 09:00, the *UD* press director arrives the ministry’s press office (*UD-PIK*) and starts trying to clear up the communication with the media, after having been contacted by a friend whose relatives were in the area and who reported mass casualties and destruction. She also contacts the unit head and director at *UD-KC* to communicate the

lack of management present, but is told not to bother with how the department staffs its offices. Half an hour later, two desk officers at *UD-KC* enter duty, one from their home and the other on location at the *UD* office, both having been called in by the unit head (Hansén 2005:38f). It is only during the following hour, some 1½–2 hours after its arrival, that the faxed report from the Bangkok embassy is noticed and processed, but since it lacks any clearly specified recipient, this information stays within the four units where the report has been received: *UD-KC*, *UD-ASO* (the department for Asia and Oceania), *UD-PIK*, and the still unstaffed emergency response secretariat (Fi 2005a:104, 188; Hansén 2005:33f).

Completely separate from the confused internal information flow at the *UD* offices, the minister for international development receives a briefing at this time from her senior political advisor, but this briefing only really relates to the EU-MIC and UNDAC calls for aid to Sri Lanka since these are more traditional foreign-aid requests. However, in other contacts with the ministry's cabinet secretary and staff at *UD-GS*, she has come to understand that some measures will be needed, not only in Sri Lanka but also in Thailand to aid stranded Swedes (Fi 2005a:142). The director general of SRSA comes to the same conclusion following a direct eye-witness account over the phone. When contacting the head of operations at SRSA, she learns that no official request for aid has gone out from the Thai government, which means that such an operation will not automatically be funded, but rather requires a special directive from the government in order to receive the necessary funds (KU 2006:16). Nevertheless, the head of operations contacts the deputy director of *UD-GS* to explain the situation and the need for an SRSA mission. The deputy forwards this information to his director and to the state secretary to the minister for international development, and also contacts the minister directly. All three give their preliminary approval to the mission, and the deputy then contacts the SRSA operations head to relay the news and to tell him to start preparing some kind of operation in the area (Hansén 2005:34f, 44f).

At 09:50, the on-duty officer at *UD-KC* once again calls the head of her department, pointing out the lack of any kind of operational leadership and how the situation was quickly becoming unmanageable. Shortly afterwards, the head of her units, who was not part of this previous call, contacts the on-duty officer to remind her of the chain of command at the ministry and reprimand her for bypassing a step in that chain. She is also told to stay at home, ostensibly because she has already worked all night, rather than come into the office to try to lead the work being done there (Fi 2005a:145f; Hansén 2005:33f). Similarly, by 10:00, the department focusing on Asia and neighbouring regions, *UD-ASO*, has finished their first report for the head of the department. From a very early stage, the deputy director at *UD-ASO* is worried about the number of Swedes that will most likely have been on, or close to, the popular Thai beaches as the waves struck. When asked for further directions, the head of the department judges this to be a matter where *UD-ASO* must follow *UD-KC*'s lead rather than

act on its own, and she gives the order to wait for any support request from that department (Hansén 2005:26f).

By 11:00, the director general of SRSA and her head of operations have concluded that an official government directive will be required in order for SRSA to be able to send any kind of aid mission to Thailand (Fi 2005a:151f). She therefore calls the state secretary of the defence minister at *FÖ* to argue the need for such a mission. The state secretary calls his counterpart under the foreign minister, as well as *UD*'s cabinet secretary to inform them of this need. Since there has been little to no contact between these two and the individuals involved in the earlier conversation between *UD-GS* and the minister for international development, he and is told that it is *UD*'s call whether or not such a mission should be sent and that no such plans exist at the moment. Nevertheless, he offers SRSA's services should the need arise (Hansén 2005:45; KU 2006:137).

At the press office, the information officers are as leaderless as the staff at *UD-KC*, and they struggle to keep on top of the news flow (Fi 2005a:146f). The ministry's press director makes one of the first attempts at raising the matter to the political level at 10:30 by asking the foreign minister's press secretary if the minister should issue a statement, and is told to await a reply. Just after 11, a news report makes the claim that no Swedes have perished in the disaster, and the press office has to scramble to issue a correction: there are no such indications, and at that point there are simply no official reports of any dead or wounded (Fi 2005a:127). A revised news report is issued almost an hour later. In the meantime, the original report, conflicting with what Swedes have heard directly from friends or relatives in the region, further increases the pressure on the entire Government Office phone exchange, and on *UD* in particular. While dealing with this mix-up, a message comes back from the press secretary. The foreign minister will not make any statement at this time (Hansén 2005:34). The message to the media becomes increasingly mixed when the second in command at the Bangkok embassy states that there have been two confirmed Swedish casualties, this only minutes after the redacted report has gone out that no information in either direction exists (Fi 2005a:127). The reports from Thailand are either not picked up by, or not disseminated within *UD-PIK*, which makes the press office contradict the reports from the field. When asked, they instead keep repeating that no information exists about any confirmed Swedish casualties, even as the media reporting from the disaster area keep suggesting increasingly higher numbers of dead and wounded (*cf.* Fi 2005a:127; Hansén 2005:34).

The information flow within the rest of *UD* is just as lack-lustre as the small trickle of desk officers that arrive after having been called to work are swallowed up by an unending flow of incoming calls. Two more officers arrive at *UD-KC* at lunch time, and together with the colleague who had come in earlier in the morning, they decide to join the beleaguered operators at the main Government Office phone exchange, once again leaving the *KC* offices empty (Hansén 2005:38). The conversations during the morning have given

the director of *UD-KC* the impression that the matter is being handled, albeit at a high work-load, and that there is no immediate need to raise the issue to a higher level. As a result, the ministry's cabinet secretary is largely left out of the loop. Rather than hearing any reports directly from *UD*, he is contacted by the state secretary to the defence minister, who is passing on information about the planned SRSA operations since these will require intra-ministry co-ordination. Beyond this information, the cabinet secretary's only source of information has been the media reporting during the morning hours and a brief contact with the Ministry of Foreign Aid (Fi 2005a:146f; Hansén 2005:33, 35; KU 2006:16f). Some of the senior administrators who could conceivably, and with ease, escalate the matter to the state leadership level have arrived at the Government Offices by now, but their exact whereabouts and activities will later become a point of contention. The state secretary to the foreign minister claims that he arrived at the Government Offices at 10 and stayed there for the remainder of the day, informing himself on the matter over the phone with the *UD* cabinet secretary. Media investigations after the event instead suggest that the state secretary visited the *UD* offices on a number of occasions, and the cabinet secretary goes on to claim that no calls were made. A technical investigation into the matter offers no conclusive evidence of any visits to the *UD* offices, but also shows that no calls are made between the cabinet and state secretaries at this time, and further suggests that the any attempts at collecting information on the crisis on the part of the state secretary were shallow at best (*cf.* Daléus 2005:84f, 87f, Hansén 2005:37; Hirschfeldt et al. 2007:15ff).

At *RKP*, the formal internal responsibilities for the upcoming operation are being drafted and disseminated within the national police organisation. A call is made to the head of the active unit at *UD-KC* asking for the ministry to send what information they have gathered so far in order to get the data collection effort started, and after some urging, a first set of data is transferred. However, due to the order sent out during the early morning not to follow standard procedures in answering the calls at *UD* and to skip most of the note-taking, the quality of the material varies wildly. As time passes and the need to do so becomes increasingly obvious, the staff answering the phones start ignoring the morning order but it is still done in a largely *ad-hoc* manner using whatever tools are available. In fact, the on-duty officer who issued the order eventually starts taking notes herself. Some notes are recorded digitally but a lot is simply done using pen and paper on whatever available forms seem most suitable. The distribution of labour between *RKP* and *UD* was made clear between the head officer on duty and the active unit head for the respective organisations but does not seem to have spread within *UD* or the phone exchange office. The unit head at *UD-KC* also takes a number of calls from the travel agencies servicing the region, where they describe what they know of the situation so far (Daléus 2005:94; Hansén 2005:51f).

Another attempt at raising the issue to the political level is made at 14:00, when the *UD-PIK* press director contacts the prime minister's press secretary to see if the PM is planning on making a statement and if this should go into the information package being prepared for the ministry's web site. The package is part of an attempt to bring some order to the work at the press office. The press director is told that the press secretary will find out and come back shortly. In the meantime, the minister for defence is following the events through the media in her home, bedridden with fever and gastroenteritis (Fi 2005a:146f). As she learns that the *UD* and *RK* cannot keep up with the incoming phone traffic, she contacts her senior political advisor and asks him to scramble some personnel from *FÖ* that might help offload the call flow. At the same time, both agree that this is first and foremost a matter for *UD* to handle (Hansén 2005:34f). At 15:00, the PM's press secretary returns with the message that the PM will not make any statement at this time because no demand exists for such a statement (KU 2006:18f). It later becomes clear that the press secretary has assumed that the Swedish involvement would at most entail some kind of foreign aid, mainly because the press has made no attempts at reaching the PM through her – indeed, when someone finally calls later in the evening, it is regarding a question that just so happens to be best answered by the minister for international development. Likewise, the PM himself mainly follows the international media reporting and therefore receives little to no indication of any Swedish aspects of the event. Instead, it largely seems to him to be a matter of a natural disaster striking a number of developing nations dotted around the Indian Ocean (Hansén 2005:34, 37; KU 2006:18).

Over at *UD-GS*, it is becoming increasingly clear that Swedish tourists are in need of aid and that SRSA is not just willing but expertly able to mobilise the required expertise in very short order, not just in Sweden but on location in Phuket (Fi 2005a:152f). A desk officer manages to get a call through to unit head at *UD-KC* to suggest that such a team should be deployed, but since there has been no request for such aid from the consulate, she declines the offer. The deputy director at *UD-GS* also tries in vain to reach the unit head and the director at *UD-KC* on multiple occasions. Instead, he gets through to the press secretary to the minister for international development and asks him to tell the *UD* cabinet secretary to issue a formal request for an SRSA mission. Soon thereafter, the press secretary returns the call, relaying a message from the *UD-KC* director via the cabinet secretary that SRSA is not able, allowed, or willing to do anything at this moment (Fi 2005a:152f; Hansén 2005:45f; KU 2006:138). The deputy director returns with the news to the SRSA head of operations and is told that the agency needs a formal request in order to be able to do anything. In response, he asks the head of operations to skip the formalities and just make sure that a mission is underway soon. He also contacts the his own director of *UD-GS* to explain that *UD-KC* seems hesitant to deploy SRSA, asking the director to apply some director-level pressure on the cabinet secretary. Soon thereafter, the state secretary to the minister of international development calls the director with a

very similar request. However, the cabinet secretary cannot be reached, and the director eventually resolves to make the formal decision himself. Even though it will technically be a mission to help Swedes, and therefore should be a consular matter to be paid for by *UD-KC*, it can be provisionally funded through the *UD-GS*-controlled pool for disaster management. With the financing arranged, the Ministry of Defence is informed that the SRSA mission can go ahead (Fi 2005a:153; Hansén 2005:45f; KU 2006:138).

While the funding problem seems to be solved, there are still many other questions left unresolved for the mission itself. The agency determines that this will not be a search-and-rescue mission, nor is it really a matter of dealing with an earthquake – to things the agency specialises in – but rather some kind of disaster survey with no clear pre-existing routine or work format. A formal request will not only require funding, but also details describing the purpose of, and demands on, the mission, neither of which exists. In addition, the conflicting messages from different departments at *UD* makes it dubious, or at best just unclear, whether or not the ministry has actually approved the mission. Another possible issue, at least from *UD*'s perspective, is that the Thai government has not formally requested any aid, which would technically prohibit Swedish governmental and agency officials from acting in the country. Attempts are made to contact the Thai Ministry of the Interior, but the calls are left unanswered (Hansén 2005:49).

During the afternoon and early evening, a handful of desk officers come into the *UD* offices to help manage the situation. Some of them have been working from home but have found it impossible to keep up with the work flow. The director of *UD-PIK* also finally arrives at the office and is shocked by the complete chaos and lack of leadership at the ministry; she is the first individual in a managerial position to have arrived and actually witness the situation at the office. By now, many have been working for 12 hours straight and need to be relieved, and there is no word on how the call flow will be handled during the night shift. The time difference pretty much ensures that just as the calls from Sweden start to drop off, calls from the areas struck by the disaster will start to pick up. A meeting at the cabinet secretary's office is set up for 10:00 the following morning, where management representatives from all *UD* departments are to be present, as well as representatives from a couple of key Government Office functions. With this decision, the ministry's emergency response group is officially activated (Fi 2005a:147; Hansén 2005:38ff; KU 2006:130f).

Preparing an appearance in the early evening news, broadcast at 19:00, the minister for international development almost exclusively discusses the relief mission to Sri Lanka since little other information has reached her during the day (KU 2006:19). In trying to get a clearer picture of the work done at the ministry, she is referred to the director at *UD-KC*, who conveys his impression that the matter is, by and large, being handled. Additional staff has been called in to deal with the workload and some 20,000 Swedes are estimated to be in and around the general disaster area (Fi 2005a:147). At this point, she is the

only minister tied to *UD* that had been in contact with the foreign ministry and who has had to make a public statement. Even this is largely by accident, due to the early-morning call to send out SRSA representatives. The minister for migration is abroad and has received no particular information, and the minister for foreign affairs has only been in contact with the upper management level and has been assured that the matter is being handled. This message is partly due to the management level not being present to witness what is going on at the ministry, and partly because of the lack of official information, which makes them reluctant to pass on any impression that this is a major crisis. Meanwhile, those who are aware of the situation though the unending phone calls are too busy with dealing with those calls to compile reports to the management level (Hansén 2005:35, 40f).

The director of *UD-PIK* attempts to rectify the situation by calling the cabinet secretary and the director of *UD-KC*, demanding that a leadership structure be established at the offices and that relief personnel is called in. She receives assurances on the second point, but no further directions for the evening. While the cabinet secretary arranges the staffing issue, the director makes a final call to the head of operations at SRSA to inform himself of the status of the agency's mission to Thailand and is told that no formal decision has been made.

6.2.2 Days two and three – grasping the scope

Monday the 27th sees a greater understanding of both the disaster in Southeast Asia and of the crisis in Stockholm. Both are the focus of the morning print and broadcast news, finally offering a clear picture of the scope to those who have only received reports during the previous day that it is being managed. The prime minister recalls the national trauma of the MS Estonia disaster ten years earlier, which resulted in 852 lives lost (Fi 2005a:148). By the reports, the tsunami may be of a similar magnitude, only with vastly more people wounded, stranded, or traumatised – a total that is likely to dwarf the number of deceased. On contacting the *UD* cabinet secretary, he learns of the 10am meeting, and asks to be kept informed about any new developments. He then starts to travel back to Stockholm by car (KU 2006:20). The *UD* state secretary initially plans to be present at this meeting, but is instead swamped by requests for comments from the media. The minister of foreign affairs, on the other hand, has not been informed and the morning news paints a very unfamiliar picture for her (Fi 2005a:148). Consequently, she tries to reach the head of administration at *UD* to set up a meeting at 10:30, but gets no response since the head is currently on a flight back to Stockholm. Also in during the early morning hours, more attempts are made by the travel agencies to establish a proper contact with the ministry, but little comes out of it for the time being (Daléus 2005:95; KU 2006:20f).

At the emergency meeting, the group is in contact with the Swedish ambassador who has reached Phuket during the night and who has now travelled to Khao Lak to witness the effects of the tsunami in person (Fi 2005a:113, 129). Fifteen minutes in, the minister of foreign affairs comes into the meeting, having just arrived and looking for the cabinet secretary to get herself briefed on the situation. The emotional report from the ambassador becomes the first official report of the devastation: at least ten Swedes are confirmed dead, 200–300 have been hospitalised, and several hundreds are reported missing. Several urgent needs are identified: reinforcements at the Bangkok embassy and Phuket and Colombo consulates; vastly increased capacity at *UD-KC* and at the *RK* phone exchange; expedient aid to Swedes who have lost their travel papers; disaster care and support at the airports for travellers coming back from the area; and some kind of mission to Thailand for *SRSA* and the ID Commission (Fi 2005a:152, 168). The ministry also needs to contact the travel agencies serving the region to see how well they are able to handle the flood of returning Swedes and if they need any support.

One thing that is left unmentioned is how the work at *UD* should be managed and organised, and as the meeting draws a number of managers away from the Monday meeting regularly held at the same time, the ministry at first looks as bereft of direction as the day before. This impression is strengthened by the fact that the unit head and director of *UD-KC* who played a role in the proceedings the day before arrive well after the meeting has ended (Hansén 2005:42f). As a result, and in spite of the unit head who had set up the division of labour between *UD* and *RKP* returning to the office during the morning, the efforts at collecting information on Swedes in the region remain almost as disjointed as the day before. While more desk officers and operators are available to take incoming calls, the ones assigned to this duty tend to be new and lower-ranked, with little to no experience or familiarity with official procedures. A basic self-selecting triage system is set up by publicising a special phone number for next of kin – anyone calling this number is automatically routed to one particular set of desk officers who are supposed to be able to provide a bit more information to them and also to gather what information the next of kin have to offer (Hansén 2005:52).

At the Ministry of Defence, no further agreement had been reached in regards to an *SRSA* mission (Fi 2005a:153; KU 2006:139). At 10:15, the director general of the agency discusses the matter with the state secretary to the defence minister, and points out that this will soon become a political problem as it looks like the Swedish government is entirely passive. The nature and purpose of such a mission becomes the focus of much of the work being done at the ministry during the morning, and over at *UD*, the potential stumbling block of sending Swedish agency personnel is cleared up when the deputy foreign minister of Thailand publicly announces that the nation welcomes all international aid (Hansén 2005:47, 49).

Also during the morning, the foreign minister's state secretary at *UD* and the prime minister discuss the need for a high-level meeting when the PM arrives in Stockholm. The meeting is set for 14:00, followed by a press conference at 15:00 (Fi 2005a:129). The Government Offices are also contacted by the half state-owned Swedish-Finnish telecommunications company TeliaSonera who offers its services to set up a call centre and routing services to alleviate some of the pressure on the *RK* phone systems. This offer is declined. Over at the National Police, the ID Commission begins entering information into their databases related to disasters and the identification of the deceased, and starts preparing to receive information from the registration efforts over at the Government Offices (Hansén 2005:43, 50, 53).

At lunchtime, a meeting is held at *FÖ* where SRSA and the Swedish Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) discuss the option of sending an observation team. Both agencies already have some personnel on site – mainly employees who have been caught up in the disaster during their vacations in the region – but a more specialised and properly equipped team is needed. In part, this is a stop-gap measure to work around the fact that no clearly defined or properly financed mission can be designed at this point, but the fear that the “observers” will end up having to solve problems they have not trained for puts an end to that idea. While observers might indeed be needed, a correctly staffed and out-fitted service team needs to accompany them to deal with any such issues, and it is still unclear what “correctly” means in the context of the tsunami aftermath (Hansén 2005:47f; KU 2006:139).

At the 15:00 press conference, the outwards messaging is muddled and unclear, but a new conference is promised for two hours later, with the cabinet and state secretaries present and available for questions – a decision that is news to both of them (KU 2006:21f). The hour leading up to this next press conference is therefore spent trying to get an updated picture of how the situation is being managed. News arrive that the travel agencies do not have the capacity to bring everyone home at once, and it becomes clear that many desk officers have gone way outside regular procedures in contacting other government and local agencies to fulfil both their own and the agencies' information needs. It is decided that a special coordinating group has to be set up to manage these contacts, to ensure that the correct ministries are kept in the loop of what “their” agencies are doing (Daléus 2005:95f; Hansén 2005:43f). As far as the travel agencies and airlines are concerned, existing capacity is booked up until at least the end of the week, and while the regularly scheduled flights will bring people home as planned, this obviously does not cover the many thousands who need to return ahead of schedule. An option is discussed to make use of the EU emergency management system, and in particular the solidarity clause, to borrow airlift capacity from other member countries. This option is soon dismissed on the grounds that a similar operation only a month earlier had required months of planning to get off the ground. Another problem is that regular seats on a regular flight will not cover

all the needs. The director of UD-KC, having recently served as ambassador in Bangkok, is familiar enough with Thai health care and consider it adequate, but still recognises that a lot of people will require medical transports. He therefore initiates a probe of what will be needed to meet those needs (Hansén 2005:57ff).

At 17:30, the defence minister's state secretary and the cabinet secretary at *UD* discuss the issue of sending an SRSA team to Phuket (Fi 2005a:153f; KU 2006:140). The state secretary requests that an official point of contact be established so the financing can be sorted out once and for all, and is directed to the director of *UD-GS*. The state secretary then asks the director for *FÖ/CIV* to contact her counterpart and also informs the *FÖ* general counsel and the minister for defence to inform them about the plan and obtain formal clearance to go ahead. He also asks the counsel general if it is possible to dispatch the SRSA without a governmental decree and is told that this should be possible (Hansén 2005:48). While preparing for an appearance on the evening news, the minister for international development calls the defence minister to ask about what the delay is on the SRSA mission. Having given the go-ahead for that mission hours ago, this comes as a surprise and she once again contacts her state secretary only to be told that *UD* had never returned with an answer. After asking him to put some more pressure on *UD* from his end, she relays this answer back to the international development minister who in turn calls the deputy director at *UD-GS*. The deputy is told that SRSA can call the defence minister to receive official clearance, but the director general of the agency feels that it more appropriate to call on the minister's state secretary instead, who cannot give the mission a "go" (Hansén 2005:48; KU 2006:140).

By 18:00 it has become clear that the morning's attempts at triaging incoming calls and adding more people to the system has not appreciably reduced the pressure on the Government Offices (Fi 2005a:130; KU 2006:22). The small endeavours to improve the effectiveness of the note-taking are swallowed up by the sheer volume of incoming information. In an effort to resolve this issue, the idea of hiring external call centre services is revived and met with approval. A smaller company is contracted to take basic calls using an established *UD*-standard procedure starting the next morning. Another idea that is broached but not (yet) implemented is to turn the tables on the call flow and send out a mass SMS to Swedish-owned phones in the region, asking the recipients to contact their next of kin. Finally, to bring some desperately needed efficiency to the information gathering, a consultant is brought in to analyse the needs and potential solutions. The consultant concludes that an existing information sharing application is probably the best option – its original purpose is something completely different, but it is capable enough and, more importantly, very familiar to the *UD* staff (Hansén 2005:52f).

By 22:30, it has become critical to untangle the knot of the SRSA mission and get it underway, and the defence minister's state secretary calls the director of *FÖ/CIV* to check on the status of the mission and is told that *UD* still has

not contacted her. She tries to initiate contact with the director of *UD-GS* but cannot reach him, but is instead contacted by one of the *UD-GS* desk officers who asks her to get SRSA moving, urgently – *UD* will finance the mission, and the foreign minister has made it clear that the exact technical details can be ironed out later. When the director calls SRSA, she is told that there still does not exist a mission profile clarifying what kind of personnel is needed, and even then, *FÖ* has to issue a formal decree to send the specified mission off and the matter will have to wait until the next day (Hansén 2005:49; Moseley 2005:202f, 208; KU 2006:22, 140).

Tuesday, December 28 proceeds much like Monday. *UD* is still largely using *ad-hoc* methods of registration and still distinct lacks management. The call centre company joins the fray, adding some 30 phone operators who route calls and make simple registrations – anything more complicated than reporting someone as alive, dead, or missing is passed on to the desk officers at *RK* (Fi 2005a:131). This turns out to equate roughly half the calls being made. On the *RK* side, another 30 desk officers are added to the work force – 15 at *UD* who have been called for extra work, and 15 borrowed from other ministries. Efforts also start at adjusting the existing information sharing software into an application that is more suited to the current needs – meanwhile, the largely paper-based registration continues as before. Similar customisations of existing systems are being made at *RKP* to accommodate these special circumstances and the extraordinarily large amount of persons involved (Hansén 2005:51, 53; Fi 2005a:165ff).

As the quandary of the SRSA mission is coming to a close, a new issue takes centre-stage: how to get the stranded Swedes home. The day before, the low availability of transport capacity was made clear, so now it is a question of finding that capacity elsewhere. In principle, this is an operative and business matter that lies far outside of what the Government Offices deals with on a regular basis, but the public pressure is building for the government to do *something*. Separately at *UD* and *FÖ*, it is discussed whether the Swedish Airforce's transports can be used.¹⁶ At *UD*, the conclusion is that the aircraft lacks the speed, capacity, and facilities to carry passengers in a meaningful way. At *FÖ*, a decision is made to put the aircraft on alert status for the purpose of carrying supplies to the region (Hansén 2005:58).

By lunch, *FÖ* finally makes a formal decision to send an SRSA to Thailand, along with the agency director general, the minister of foreign affairs, and representatives from the Church of Sweden and the Swedish Red Cross (KU 2006:23f, 140). The previously discussed mass-SMS is also sent, and largely achieves its

16 The Air Force uses the TP 84 (a variant of the turboprop Lockheed C-130 Hercules) as its bulk transport aircraft. It can carry 20 tonnes of cargo or up to 90 passengers depending on configuration, and has a maximum range of 3,500km. The straight-line distance between Sweden and Thailand is closer to 9,000km.

intended effect of getting more solid and coherent status confirmations from those who have come through the disaster relatively unscathed (Fi 2005a:131). When the plane carrying the SRSA mission and the other representatives take off a few hours later, two days and a half has passed since the first report arrived at the Government Offices. Even as the flight is in the air, the actual mission remains somewhat unclear and a the first proper briefing is held during the flight (Hansén 2005:49, 55; Moseley 2005:204).

From a problem-solving perspective, the afternoon is mainly spent on trying to resolve the issue of transporting Swedes back to Sweden. At *UD*, a meeting is held with representatives from the Scandinavian embassies in Stockholm and from the jointly state-owned SAS Airlines to see if the countries can find a shared solution. However, outside of a couple of smaller aircraft, the airline cannot free up any of its capacity until later in the week. The standing order from the political level is now that anything goes and that no expense should be spared in finding flights to fill in the gap. With such loose reins, a flight could be arranged for almost immediate departure. The medical transports would naturally sort under the National Air Medevac Service – a program jointly run by the National Board of Health and Welfare, the Civil Air Administration, and SRSA – but the formal program is still under development. Instead, the agencies have to scramble to resuscitate an older incarnation of the same idea and combine it with some of the support functions that are more or less ready to use (Åbrandt & Lumsden 2005:25; Fi 2005a:131, 155ff, 272; SoS 2008:20f, 46f).

As work is being finished on the customised information-sharing platform, the head of *RKP* contacts the director of administrative affairs at *UD* to inquire whether the ministry could make use of the data management expertise at the police board. The internal count at *RKP* lists some 1,500 individuals missing whereas the official count from the government is twice that, which suggests that either some information is not reaching the police even though they are supposed to be the collection end-point, or there is a lot of duplicate information in the *RK* lists. It turns out that the triage system and separation between registration and handling of cases has created a situation where anyone who is missing but presumed dead is moved to an internal list at *UD-KC*, meaning they will not appear to anyone on the outside and therefore risk being registered as missing a second time (Hansén 2005:53f). During the day, the question is also raised by the media whether the casualty lists should be made public to allow the public to spot and call in to correct errors – a question that receives no official answer (Daléus 2005:108).

On Tuesday evening, a meeting is held between a number of *UD* and *RKP* representatives to further discuss the database issue. The police representatives present the system they have devised for tracking all the individuals involved, based on a relational database and spreadsheets, and suggest that this is something the *RK* effort should make use of as well. The idea is met with little enthusiasm; the information-sharing platform at *UD* is already familiar to the desk officers

and is ready to be rolled out. Changing course, waiting for yet another implementation round, and re-training everyone in a new system at this time seems wasteful. In addition, porting the data from one system to the other will get messy and there is some scepticism on the *UD* representatives' part whether the *RKP* system will be able to handle the large number of – and diverse nature of – the entries collected so far. Nevertheless, it is decided that the responsibility for, and maintenance of, the casualty lists will gradually transition over to *RKP* to aid the work of the ID Commission. The ID Commission is scheduled to depart to Thailand in two days, but *RKP* is now advised that a second team will be needed in Sri Lanka as well (Fi 2005a:134; Hansén 2005:54, 60).

6.2.3 *The new year – structure and cool-down*

As more procedures are put into place, more desk officers are called in, and a modicum of leadership is applied to the work, matters start to gel into the rudiments of a routine. The pressure of incoming calls remains high, reaching a peak during Wednesday and Thursday with roughly 100 desk officers and operators handling some 4,000 incoming calls each day. By the new year, the flow is down to 1,000 calls per day and the regular RK organisation re-establishes itself after both the Christmas holidays and the crisis. The air-lift capacity problem slowly starts to be resolved as well – Wednesday morning sees the arrival of the first chartered flights, and two aircraft and the required medical personnel has been scrambled to qualify for the first “medevac light” flights. The technical capacity is not on the level planned for the finished program, so the flights cannot carry intensive-care patients, but are at least sufficient for stable patients who can not use regular commercial air travel. The short notice also means that the aircraft are fairly small, only barely offering more range than the Swedish Air Force transports but at greater speed and capacity – it is a 20-hour flight with three stops between Bangkok and Stockholm (Åbrandt & Lumsden 2005:228f).

On Thursday, yet another meeting is held to discuss the data sharing between *UD* and *RKP*, this time with external consultants who analyse and suggest improvements on how the work is being organised. Immediately on trying to implement the new system developed at *UD*, there is a snag: the software only works on a select few machines, and cannot be rolled out universally to everyone engaged in the effort. The consultants opine that the police organisation is already well established and working, with a clear leadership structure and proven systems for keeping case diaries, whereas *UD* has none of that – at most, the organisational structure is clear, but it is not really working as well as it should. This analysis is further reinforced by media reports that the travel agencies cannot hand over their passenger lists and other information they have collected, because *UD* cannot answer the question of where or to whom these lists should be delivered. A decision is made to transfer all the collected data to *RPS*, who will structure and systematise it and then provide *UD* with a cleaned-up version. The next day,

work starts at *UD* to do an internal quality control pass on information gathered so far in order to eliminate duplicates, correct names, and double-check that the information is still valid and accurate. The quality control effort engages almost as many workers as the registration did during its peak, and continues for days (Hansén 2005:54f). The same evening, the prime minister announced that the lists will not be made public, both because the quality control effort is underway and because the information could be used for criminal purposes such as spotting good targets for burglaries and similar crimes. From the perspective of the police, this reasoning is a lesser consideration. Instead, *RKP* concludes that there simply is no need to make the information public or to engage in some kind of crowd-sourcing to fact-check the entries since *RKP*'s own quality control procedures are deemed more than sufficient (*cf.* Daléus 2005:108; Hansén 2005:56).

Among other things, *RKP* engages in some data house-keeping over the weekend by cross-referencing its lists of confirmed returnees with the population registry controlled by the Swedish Tax Agency to validate the data, and an agreement is reached to let *RKP* take complete control over all lists of individuals struck by the disaster (Fi 2005a:233). The hand-over is to take place on the following Tuesday, January 4. The Swedish Tax Agency also contacts *UD*, assuming that it will want to do a similar cross-referencing check, but is told that the ministry has no plans on any such effort.

The week is capped by a final information mix-up: as a second team from the ID Commission arrive in Colombo as ordered by *UD* to deal with any missing or unidentified Swedes there, it is soon becomes clear that there are none (Fi 2005a:134). Their work in Sri Lanka done, the team departs for Thailand a day later to join the on-going efforts there instead.

Contrary to – or perhaps inspired by – the assertion two days earlier that *UD* does not plan to check its information against the population registry, just such a check-up is done on Monday, January 3. The data is also analysed by the agency Statistics Sweden to evaluate the integrity and coherence of the data set. The hand-over to *RKP* goes ahead as planned the following day. While the checks-ups by the Swedish Tax Agency and Statistics Sweden have filled in some gaps in preparation for the transition, the quality control work is still lagging far behind, to the point where the data is classified as largely unreliable by the police. The delays in getting a computerised reporting system up and running means that a lot of the material only exists in paper form, and thus has not gone through either of the two vetting processes. Now, this material has to be physically transported, organised and digitised by the *RKP* technicians. The data has to be ready in by the end of the week as it is to be disseminated to local police agencies and municipalities, in particular in preparation for the new school term starting the following Monday. As Friday, January 6 comes to an end, the data processed by *RKP* goes out to local authorities, with a notice attached that there may be some remaining errors and discrepancies.

An agreement is made that the police will feed their collated data back to *UD* so the ministry can continue its business of handling the many consular matters that have arisen due to the disaster, but no actual exchange happens (Fi 2005a:233f). This affects the work load less than might be expected since the rules for assisting Swedes abroad have been thoroughly gutted over the last week. Relatively few emergency passports or other provisional papers have been issued since the Thai authorities have removed the need for a passport to leave the country. Media and public outrage increases over the terms and the paperwork required for providing economic assistance to stranded citizens. The idea that disaster-stricken individuals have to stand the regular bureaucratic red tape to escape from the area is ridiculed and decried as unconscionable. Normally a short-term loan with all the accompanying documentation one might expect, the economic assistance becomes a simple non-refunded grant that can be had with a signature, and in some cases just for the asking (Daléus 2005:107; Fi 2005a:85f). The operational part of the crisis has now completely shifted to the relief and identification efforts on the ground in Thailand – itself a complex and winding story to be told – and the ministries and agencies back in Sweden start to return to some state of normalcy. By January 2, the evacuation from the Phuket area is largely complete; two days later, the Bangkok evacuation nears completion as well (Fi 2005a:120), but the work to find, identify, and send home the bodies of the deceased and to rebuild the areas destroyed by the tsunami continues for months. However, yet another crisis is brewing as a result of the first few days' confusion and indecision.

6.3 Aftermath

The stories told by the returning Swedes stick to one theme: a distinct sense of being abandoned to fend for themselves, met by callous and uncaring representatives from the Swedish government. A similar sentiment is offered by volunteer workers on the ground during the early stages of the relief effort: even as they try to make sense of a senseless situation and create some order in the ensuing chaos, they are lectured by Swedish authorities for not following proper procedures. Likewise, the early response from the Government Offices is heavily criticised for not sympathising with the anxiety and grief of those calling in; for providing information of little use or of a contradictory nature; and for simply not being available (*cf.* Fi 2005a:129). Here, too, the often rigid adherence to the normal rules in a decidedly abnormal situation becomes a source of criticism, as all kinds of extraordinary issues are being squeezed to fit into the mould of the existing standard procedures. The early confusion of who should be doing what adds to the aggravation, as individuals are being asked to contact a number of different agencies to report missing friends and family members. The two-day delay in getting an SRSA mission off the ground further compounds the issue, offering a clear outwards illustration of the dithering that goes on within the government.

All of these are relatively minor details compared to the political storm that soon erupts. As it becomes increasingly clear that key ministers and decision-makers were absent, ignorant of the events, and generally made no visible decisions until more than a day had passed, the public reaction to the management of the crisis takes a sharp turn for the worse, and it was not all that good to begin with (Fi 2005a:269ff, 326ff). The focus of the public ire comes to rest on the political level of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: the cabinet secretary, the state secretary to the foreign minister, and on the foreign minister herself. The former two seem to not be able to get the story straight of who said what to whom and when, and the minister's complete absence from the proceedings during the first day – topped off by her going to the theatre in the evening rather than leading and bringing order to a confused ministry – is interpreted as outright negligent. The narrative also soon finds its designated hero in the travel agencies as a contrast to the politicians, since they were quick to identify the crisis, quick to act, and were thoroughly and consistently professional in how they treated their customers.

Already two days after the disaster, as the Government Offices slowly start to achieve some semblance of organisation, the question is raised of an inquiry into the top-level management of the crisis. On Wednesday, December 29, the first seed of what will grow into the “Disaster Commission” (Katastrofkommissionen) is publicly announced, but soon itself becomes the target of criticism. The first appointees are deemed far too closely tied to the government to offer a trusted opinion on the matter. The commission is formally assembled and approved on January 13, and steadily grows over the coming months. It delivers its final report on the matter on December 1, 2005, offering a number of key critiques of the handling of the crisis and suggesting a number of improvements to the Swedish national crisis management system (Fi 2005a).

6.4 Analysis

Unlike the previous two cases, with their very prolonged and at times almost static turn of events along a single axis, the 2004 tsunami is an acute and complex tale of intertwined processes and decision-making (or lack thereof). Instead of one clear main actor using or misusing expertise to try to understand the workings of a clear antagonist, we have a multitude of diverse and even fragmented actors trying to understand an event at a distance. Rather than a relatively finite set of potential advisors on a single well-delineated issue, we have – even in this drastically cut-down narrative – a dozen different actors requiring information and getting it from, quite literally, thousands of sources. The disaster itself is almost incidental to the crisis that unfolds, and the information needs are quite different, both in nature and in scope, from what we have seen so far. The complexity, but on the problems themselves and in the tangle of agencies handling the crisis, unfortunately makes it next to impossible to draw up a clear and comprehensive timeline like the ones for the FBI cases. Any attempt would, suitably enough, look more like a

seismograph readout as questions, problems, and points of confusion are rapidly passed back and forth between the many actors involved.

At the heart of it all, we have this: a single understaffed department in a ministry on vacation has to collect and process information from several thousands of Swedish citizens and also sort and distribute that information as required by a number of other departments, ministries, and agencies (cf. Fi 2005a:16f, 19f). The ministry is also the organisation that formally owns the mandate to decide on most of the critical matters related to the disaster. As always, the devil is in the details. At first glance, this combination is not all that strange or even cause for alarm since, as the case itself illustrates, national organisations such as the *RPS* and *RKP* are specifically made to deal with such broad-spectrum issues on the international arena. No, the devilish detail is exactly where this crisis unfolds – within the Ministry of *Foreign Affairs* – and exactly who is the victim in the disaster – Swedish nationals.

Had either of those two details changed, things might have turned out very differently, but as it is, during this event we have a ministry that by and large focuses on matters of policy on a grand arena and of relations between nations and international or supranational organisations. All of a sudden, this ministry has to deal with individuals rather than states; it has to deal with down-to-earth operational matters rather than policy issues; and it has to deal with Swedes rather than foreign nations. None of those are high priorities for the ministry, as the general set-up amply demonstrates. This particular combination is handled by *UD-KC*, which is itself only just over a dozen individuals strong. Although the department likes to boast – not entirely without merit – that it manages crises every day, it is not set up to handle anything of the magnitude of the tsunami aftermath. Even so, the division of labour within *UD* is such that the tsunami clearly falls within the purview of this small department, making them the lead unit to decide on all matters pertaining to the Swedes affected by the disaster.

There certainly are related issues that were handled by other departments. *UD-GS*, for instance, managed the foreign-aid and international cooperation part of the events, but from a Swedish perspective, that aspect was largely overshadowed by the consular matters. Similarly, *UD-ASO* managed the actual foreign-relation aspect that became largely void during the period studied here once the Thai government opened its borders to all international support. These differences in focus and their every-day applicability also have a clear impact on what the different departments know during the crisis. There is no reason for *UD-KC* to be familiar with the capabilities of *SRSA*, whereas key personnel at *UD-GS* should have had (and did have) that knowledge. On the other hand, *UD-KC* could perhaps have been more in touch with the travel agencies and airlines since those are actors that might have a direct impact on the kinds of problems that a Swede in consular distress might encounter. Instead, the general attitude at the time was that the travel arrangements were a matter between the individual traveller and whatever company they chose to do business with.

Should there be any problems, UD might find it reasonable to extend a loan or issue provisional passports, but it was then up to the individual to sort things out with the company, or better yet, they should contact their insurance company and get their assistance there instead.

What we have here, then, is a similar situation to Waco but with an even more fractured main actor. The FBI of 1993 had two factions that had a hard time communicating with each other, they were at least pursuing the same goal – albeit with different means – with a shared understanding of the problem. On the other hand, UD presents us with half a dozen organisations within the ministry, each with its own goal to pursue and with its own, if not world view, then at least perception of the problem. And that is just counting the departments that were directly involved. As the tsunami case shows, there were some communication issues here as well.

The curious thing is that, at first, things get off to a good start. The officer on duty makes some very astute calls based on very limited information. The estimated number of Swedes in the region is spot on and remains unchanged even as more accurate information comes in. The number of calls the ministry is about to receive is perhaps overestimated but still amounts to far more than what it can handle, and an immediate need for massive reinforcements is correctly identified. Finally, the unbearable response times that standard procedures will yield are also identified, as is the need to understand the nature of earthquakes and tsunamis. This is where the officer on duty starts getting unlucky in her information gathering. She cannot get hold of the expertise she is looking for since many at the Geo Centre are on holiday some on Boxing Day, and a Sunday to boot. Once she finds someone to answer her questions, the information she gains also seems rather perfunctory and she stops digging further into the matter – it is a textbook example of the identification paradox at work.

The good start comes to a grinding halt in the next step of the process, as the information gathered is spread through the organisation, or more accurately, as it runs into a number of roadblocks. The most obvious of these is the hierarchy of UD, and especially of UD-KC. The head of the on-duty officer's unit receives a number of reports, from the officer and from other sources, since she is the "correct" level where this information should be received. However, the information does not spread very well or very far from there, and it certainly is not transformed into anything actionable. Rather, the severity of the situation seems to be diluted at this step, and it is downgraded even further as the information travels up the chain to the UD-KC director. The issue is downplayed, and is therefore not escalated to the political level since there does not seem to be anything for them to be worried about of at this stage. Other information, such as the contact with RKP on the handling of registered information is apparently not communicated either, and the first reports from the travel agencies seem lost in the void. It may seem a bit harsh to also blame the unit head for making the reports from the embassy be 'temporarily lost,' except for the fact that her meek

actions in response to the previous reports, and her apparent unwillingness to actually lead her unit, contributes to the work overload that ironically keeps that very report from being noticed for nearly two hours.

Then again, what about the other recipients of that very same report? Those departments have already gathered a fair amount of information through their own sources, but there appears to be little to no lateral communication between the departments, possibly due to the strictly enforced hierarchy of the ministry, or at least of *UD-KC*. On two separate occasions, the unit head reprimands desk officers for bypassing or upsetting the correct reporting order, which further suggests a culture of compartmentalisation beyond what the organisational structure of the ministry already hints at. There are also hints of a “someone else’s problem” mode of thinking, not just at *UD-KC*, but at *UD* as a whole and even the Government Offices in general. Once the other departments have identified the disaster as a matter where *UD-KC* should take the lead, they become almost passive – waiting for leadership that is yet to come since the leadership at *UD-KC* has concluded that matters are being handled without their input.

The SRSA mission illustrates this larger pattern more clearly. The Disaster Commission Report identifies a pattern where, at first, neither *UD* nor *FÖ* seems willing to make the final decision since that might burden them with having to finance the venture as well. Even when the financing issue has been resolved – many times over – both ministries exhibit a tendency to just do their part and let the matter drop, waiting for someone else to pick it up and do the next step in the process without much prompting. However, when you add such a largely leaderless and significantly overloaded actor as *UD-KC* to the mix, the chances of “someone else” picking it up, or even noticing that it is their turn to do something, are drastically reduced.

6.4.1 Organisational context

One explanation for this pattern can be found in the overall set-up of the Government Offices. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, while the government itself is up for a complete renewal every election, the offices supporting that government can be surprisingly static. The staff members at *RK* are highly specialised in their issue areas and nearly 95% are not politically appointed. Consequently, this offers fertile ground for building territorial boundaries between the different ministries, and for squabbles to erupt over those boundaries. Hansén (2005:72f) identifies *UD* and *FÖ* as having a history of engaging in exactly this kind of rivalry, and also suggests that differences in status between the departments within both ministries may affect how flexible they are in applying rules and finding solutions. Here, *UD-KC*’s status as the odd one out is reinforced by their having a smaller budget and poor salaries compared to the other departments. Hansén suggests that this sends the signal that the department is of low priority, and therefore does not have the clout to

become too creative and flaunt the rules. It may also explain the stricter hierarchy: any step up from the perceived bottom has to be guarded more ferociously here than in departments where everyone is more comfortable with their position.

Even so, *UD* as whole is a status-conscious organisation to begin with. As discussed earlier, it has deep historical roots and also represents the nation in a very outwards-facing manner, more so than almost all other ministries. In and of itself, this breeds a hierarchical culture that will reappear in all of its facets. At the same time, it is worth noting that this culture seems more prevalent *within UD* than between the ministry's department and other ministries and agencies. As the chronology shows, a fair amount of communication happens between different levels at *UD* and *FÖ* – any dissension seems to exist mainly between the senior bureaucrats and possibly on a state secretarial level, rather than between desk officers at the two ministries or between the ministers in charge of them. On the other hand, there is a fairly clear distinction between “inside” and “outside” at play at *UD*. The most clear example of this is the way in which outside reporting is consistently treated as somewhat unreliable and unconfirmed. It is not really until the Bangkok ambassador – a ministry insider – recounts his observations that everyone from the ground all the way up to the political level accept the fact that this is a massive disaster and that Sweden has been badly hit.

Another territorial boundary squabble that rears itself in the tsunami case is a more recent conflict between *UD-KC* and *RKP*. A few years earlier, the two organisations butted heads over the handling of the Linate Airport disaster in mid-2001 (Fi 2005a:230), and rather than seeing a repeat of that episode, *RKP* chose to largely let the ministry do whatever it wanted to do and then fixed things internally on its own end as *UD* handed over the information it had gathered. While it would certainly offer its services to the ministry, *RKP* did not push very hard, nor did it really communicate how it would treat the material once it was delivered. Instead, it was the hired consultants that delivered the news that *RKP*'s processes and organisation were much more suited for the task of managing the casualty lists than *UD*. It may have kept the peace but most likely also delayed the transfer of responsibility and allowed more poorly structured information to be registered. This, in turn, created more work and more uncertainty about the validity of the data that was finally delivered, both to *RKP* and then to the local authorities.

One of the main problems from an analytical standpoint, then, is the lack of a single unitary actor that can easily be assigned as the key unit to be analysed. The national agencies have their independence from the ministries and from each other. In the tsunami case, they mainly served a peripheral role as sources of expertise that were available to the core decision-makers. The Government Offices was obviously split between its various ministries, and their long-standing rivalries were triggered during the crisis. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with its many departments, also suffered from internal rivalry, each department having its own stake in the crisis, its own perspective on what needs to be done, and all

had different knowledge and information to bring to the table. The Department of Consular Affairs was split between the upper layer of fairly passive leaders and the lower layer of panicked desk officers trying to manage in spite of their working conditions. At every fork in this road – and sometimes more often than that – there was some information blockage that hampered the flow of information and kept knowledge from being passed from one group to the next. The historical narrative has focused on the political level – from the foreign minister to her state secretary and the cabinet secretary – but the problem of blockage was both deeper and wider than that. In particular, the *UD* department heads kept leaving issues unresolved, uninvestigated, and unreported on a number of crucial occasions, leading to much of the confusion about not just the crisis but the state of the Swedish response as well.

6.4.2 The nature of the crisis

Labelling the Swedish handling of the tsunami as a disaster may seem a bit repetitive and redundant at this point. It was a watershed moment in the nation's crisis management history, but for the sake of the purpose of this thesis, it is still necessary to identify the main actor and the reasons why the events at the end of 2004 qualify as a crisis for that actor.

That is also one large difference from the previous two cases. Previously there was one clear actor who engaged with one clear opponent. In this chapter and the next, there are numerous organisations to choose from, each offering a particular viewpoint on the events and different lessons to be drawn from them. As discussed in Section 3.1.2, the actor chosen here is Foreign Ministry as a whole. It is large enough to allow for some dissection without immediately arriving at the level of the individual, and it has enough actors and sources of knowledge around it within the context of the event to allow for the types of interactions we are looking for. It is also an actor for which the characteristics of a crisis can be defined without resorting to trivialities or truisms that lead us nowhere.

Time pressure

Interestingly enough, the time pressure was a fairly simple factor in the tsunami crisis and yet it was not of the more intuitive “act before it is too late” variety. The moment an earthquake hits, what ensues on the ground is largely unavoidable. In the aftermath of a tsunami, warning systems can be developed and employed to at least mitigate the loss of life, but once the wave itself is set in motion, there is no stopping it (cf. Bödvarsson 2005:14). Similarly, once the waves hit the shores surrounding the Indian Ocean in 2004, the destruction was massive and near-instantaneous, followed by a relatively short rescue phase that was largely handled by the local authorities. From a Swedish perspective, there was never enough time to mount any type of normal rescue operation – a fact that was identified at an early stage by the search-and-rescue expertise at SRSA.

Instead, the time pressure from the Swedish standpoint came in the form of providing expedient service to Swedish citizens. Of course, by and large, the attempts at providing these services failed completely for a myriad of reasons. As previously mentioned, matters got off to a good start in that the initial estimates and evaluations were very quick and commendably accurate. The first set of SRSA missions to Sri Lanka and the decisions associated with them were also efficiently resolved and effected. Then the issues started to stack up in rapid succession, and the equation of time and people available to resolve these issues could be solved. There were too many phone calls and too many demands on the attention of the handful of individuals working to allow any kind of efficient or expedient information flow. There was too little information and not enough free time to improve on it to paint a picture that was dramatic enough to fully convey what has happened, and this delayed the political response. The delay in and of itself created yet another time pressure to ‘do something *soon* or else to be seen as doing nothing at all,’ and the back-and-forth between two ministries expecting the other to make a decision, with neither fulfilling the needs of the party who would actually effect that decision, meant that time kept ticking away and the pressure kept increasing. By the time the SRSA and state representative mission took off for Thailand, it was already seen as too late in the public eye.

Probably the main bottleneck here was the failure to communicate and escalate an understanding of the scope of the disaster, which was largely due to the perception inside *UD* that most of the available sources were unreliable – a detail that will be discussed later in this chapter. The justification not to report matters higher up the chain of command because there were no confirmed casualties meant that the political level remained uninformed. In addition, certain individuals who were in a position to declare an emergency ro call in additional personnel were not activated or made to participate in what was going on. Consequently, this communications failure reduced the amount of available and actionable knowledge.

A second chance at acting quickly came in the form of trying to arrange transports for stranded tourists, but it too was at first delayed by the lack of escalation to the appropriate decision-making level. Somewhat paradoxically, once the decision-makers gave the agencies free rein to solve the problem as quickly as possible, it is perhaps solved *too* quickly – the solution for creating medevac flights used aircraft that are not really suited for the distances involved and that were equipped with outmoded stretchers that only barely fulfilled the needs of being able to transport bedridden patients.

In the aftermath, this response and its multiple delays were in sharp contrast to the efforts made by the charter travel agencies, who identified the scope of the disaster at an early stage and were quick make arrangements for additional flights for their stranded customers. This narrative is further aided by tales of how the companies struggled to get in contact with the ministries in order to

request much-needed support – an image that resonated with both the stranded travellers and their relatives, as many of them had also tried to do the same in the days following the tsunami and with similar results.

Uncertainty

From the very start, the entire situation was rife with uncertainty, and it did not really let up until *UD* was elieved of the responsibility to maintain the casualty lists a week after the disaster. To begin with, the concept of a tsunami was itself something most of the ministry personnel were wholly unfamiliar with. There was some internal knowledge of earthquakes from previous Swedish aid missions to stricken areas, but this was a new phenomenon with unknown consequences. The question, then, was what could actually be done? What was the real problem that needed to be solved? It was readily apparent that people expected the government to send help and to do something, but *what?* The MS Estonia disaster a decade earlier offered some guidance. Here, it was crucial to identify the dead and missing and to get as many bodies back home as possible. The ID Commission was an excellent and proven answer for that problem, but its work would most likely to take months and would not satisfy the need for immediate action.

The confused nature of the SRSA mission, even after all the turns to get it approved, demonstrates that this uncertainty existed well into the week following the disaster. Indeed, the team arrived only a few days before the first areas were deemed to be evacuated. They also arrived without much of the equipment they would prove to need, and with little means to support the provisional efforts already in place. This was exactly the kind of problem that an immediate observation team was intended to solve, but as discussed and as we will return to, both political and practical considerations got in the way. Indeed, this was another area of uncertainty: what would be the fate of an observation team should one be assembled? would they get swallowed up in the chaotic disaster work on site? Would they be able to fulfil their purpose? Would they even be allowed to operate in the area?

The next point of uncertainty was very much an internal matter. Different departments, and even different units at *UD* had differing perceptions of what the situation entailed and what resources were available. Knowledge of the capabilities of SRSA were localised in a handful of individuals at *UD-GS*, for instance, and as mentioned, there are distinct differences between what the desk officers, the managers, and the political leader levels knew of the events. There was no common picture, and while some individuals may have a more *complete* picture of the situation, it was not shared nor escalated to the decision-makers that at the early needed it to understand the severity of the situation. The real uncertainty here, then, was just as much an effect of assumptions as of pure ignorance. Time and time again, decision-makers (in particular) assumed that they have been given

a good view of what is going on and did not investigate matters further, or they assumed that a matter was being handled without actually knowing who is doing what. The truth was often that no-one was doing anything. Again, it may be debatable whether or not such identification-paradox phenomena might really qualify as uncertainty, but they definitely contributed to the general confusion of what was going on around the Government Offices at that time.

Of course, the biggest point of uncertainty was the status of the Swedes caught in the region. In a sense, this was the crux of the matter, around which all other issues revolve. It was the imposition to collect the answers to this question that brought the ministry, and indeed large part of the Government Offices, to its knees, thereby heavily contributing to the blocked information flow both into and out of the offices. The matter was further complicated by the *ad-hoc* collection methods being used and, at least initially, the lack of co-ordination of these efforts. There were only limited means available to control for duplicate data or to insert corrections, few means to maintain coherent case files that can be followed up on, and no coherent method for gathering and cross-referencing the kind of information that was needed here, especially not at the volumes generated by such a large disaster.

Related to this there was a final point of uncertainty, edging more towards the ambiguity end of the spectrum: what would be the best methods for dealing with this massive flow of information? At first, the decision was to do nothing and instead direct people to other agencies better suited for the task. This strategy quickly fell by the wayside as there did not seem to be anyone who actually *was* better suited, and the urge to help in spite of everything took over. The early efforts seem to be have neem done more just to do *something* rather than to work towards a clear and cogent purpose. While this was far from suitable, it still created its own inertia and as new and improved methods became available, there was also some resistance against them: is it really worthwhile to try to switch from one system to another? It might indeed have been worth shedding the often haphazard, manual, paper-based methods of the first few days for a more standardised digital storage system, but was it worth replacing that system with a different, unfamiliar one? Add in a mixture of organisational pride and it becomes a question of who was *better suited* to do the data collection? Could it be transitioned smoothly to a different organisation? Almost by chance, it turned out that the newly developed *UD* system, for all its merits of familiarity, could not be rolled out *en masse*, which eventually answered the question by default: the paper-based system simply had to go and the only viable option was to give *RKP* full responsibility over the casualty lists.

The state and topic of uncertainty certainly shifted over the course of the week, but at no point did it really go away. Instead, as one issue was resolved to some degree, another one reared its head – possibly one that had been there all along but had not been prioritised – all while the great puzzle of the casualty lists loomed in the background.

Critical values at stake

There were a number of values at stake for UD during the events of Christmas and New-Years 2004, and while they were initially fairly disparate and tied to different departments at the ministry, they soon became intermingled as they served to support the same larger goal.

For *UD-ASO*, the critical value to maintain were the good relations with the nations in the region. This entailed not sending state or agency representatives uninvited and thereby trampling all over the sovereignty of other states. There were rules for such interactions, and as luck would have it, those rules were followed by the affected governments: Sri Lanka formally requested international aid through UN agencies and mechanisms, and after some initial hesitation, Thailand followed suit. The initial perception of proposed SRSA mission to Thailand was that it had no legal basis unless done in the very simple form of an observer team with no operational capacity. At the same time, and as expressed by almost everyone involved, the chances of such a team remaining mere observers and not getting involved in operative matters were close to nil.

UD-GS faced a similar problem, with the added complexity that it was their job to send SRSA on exactly these kinds of missions. Again, it is a question of what good a Swedish rescue services team could do since the situation was unlike the kinds of earthquake search-and-rescue missions for which the SRSA was renowned. The reconstruction would require a completely different type of team and would need a much longer time-frame than what was being suggested during the first few days. Nevertheless, this was one occasion where the Swedish image as a helping nation was put to the test and where it could not be allowed to fail given the relation the tourist trade had created between the nations. By and large, this was an easy value to protect once the aforementioned issues of sovereignty had been resolved, but then it became a problem of actually getting the mission underway – a task that was hampered by the unresponsiveness of *UD-KC*, by the unwillingness of SRSA to go on a mission without a properly declared purpose, and by the apparent inability of *FÖ* to actually sign off on the mission. Some of these issues were as much of a signal to Sweden itself as they were one to the international community, which added another layer of pressure and demands on the department. In addition, even though it may not strictly have been *UD-GS'* (or *UD-ASO's*) responsibility to maintain and uphold, there is no escaping the image of *UD* as a failing crisis manager – indeed, a failing ministry altogether – which was quickly being constructed in the public discourse. The carefully groomed self-image of the ministry as being perhaps a little bit better than the other was getting severely tarnished, and the confidence in its ability and legitimacy was in rapid decline.

In keeping with its odd status at the ministry, *UD-KC* faced a somewhat different set of problems that needed to be resolved. First and foremost, it needed to be able to maintain its functionality as a the office for consular matters. That

is, to provide services to Swedes abroad and to answer questions posed by Swedes back home. It also needed to act as the lead organisation for the efforts being put together by the other departments at the ministry and by the national agencies. In general, maintaining the service level expected by the Swedish citizenry was the value at stake, but it was soon revealed that those expectations did not necessarily match the standard practices (or indeed the law) on which the department operated. The question then became one of how to maintain at least a *semblance* of good service while still adhering to due process and not get called on the carpet at a later stage by the Audit Office or some parliamentary committee. This was likely a particularly hard blow to an organisation that is so rule-bound as this one.

At the same time, being the lead department for a large-scale consular crisis would have been an excellent opportunity for *UD-KC* to shine and to do what they do best, if only they could keep on top of the work-load. Of course, this did not really work out since the problem it was facing was simply too huge for the small department to handle. Even when the organisation received the peak amount of support, its practices were deemed inefficient and its attempts at being flexible in meeting the needs of the situation were mainly seen as disorganised. Granted, the point of comparison is the *RKP* and its many support functions – a joint organisation purposefully designed to handle exactly these kinds of vast data flows, and particularly for the purpose of determining identities. Even so, more self-image was at stake here than for the rest of the ministry.

Finally, for *UD-PIK*, the episode was a matter of staying on top of the media message and conveying accurate information, but from the very start, it was forced to play catch-up. Again, there was an inherent conflict between the wish to provide timely and accurate reports on the one hand, and on the other the general *UD* tendency of not putting too much trust in external sources. This conflict was exacerbated by the fact that embassy staff were making public statements without consulting the press office – something for which the staff in question later got reprimanded – and that the message coming out of the ministry as a whole became inconsistent and mixed. Eye-witness reports made it clear that people were missing in droves and many are presumed dead; “rogue” personnel made semi-official statements that some of these reports had been confirmed; but not until trusted in-house sources offered their accounts was the press office ready to offer any kind of firm claim.

In short, there is constant escalating time pressure at play in this episode; there is a constantly shifting uncertainty; and there are enough critical values at stake to make stalwart nervous, especially since a number of those values relate to a precious self-image. It is no doubt that *UD* was in a state of crisis, and as hinted at a number of times, there are several indications of identification paradoxes to suggest that the crisis really only had one way to evolve.

6.4.3 Anticipation of due process

In a sense, most of the processes that were involved in the tsunami crisis could have been – and actually *had* been – anticipated well in advance. However, there is one simple but crucial difference that turns all such assumptions on their collective head: volume. *UD-KC* was designed to handle cases involving individuals or small groups – perhaps even an entire stranded flight due to cancellations or some technical error. Swedes are in general a well-travelled people with a fair-to-decent amount of practice in not getting themselves into too really deep trouble. The expected load on the consular office was and remains fairly low relative to the number of trips being made each year. What the office was not designed to handle was 15,000 people – enough to fill a medium-sized town – many of them stripped of all their belongings and with no way of fending for themselves and, on top of that, enough anxious friends and relatives to fill a decent-sized city. Many of the existing processes at both *UD* and the Government Offices collapsed or took on a wholly unpredicted nature as a direct result of this one factor.

Issues such as the swamped phone exchange are almost too obvious to even mention, but they are either indicative of, or the direct cause of, the larger pattern of issues that arose from the disaster. An immediate example of this was the relationship – or perhaps more accurately, the lack thereof – between *UD-KC* and *SRSA*. It was not uncommon for Consular Affairs to have the lead role in a case. It happens commonly enough to warrant keeping a dozen desk officers around to deal with such issues. It was also not uncommon for *SRSA* to go on search-and-rescue or support missions in disaster areas. It could maintain an inactive resource pool 1,500 individuals deep and provide them with enough to do, often enough, to keep them around without any significant drop-outs due to disuse or boredom. What was less common was a situation where a large-scale disaster happens that required an *SRSA* operation but where the nature of the disaster was such that it was *UD-KC* rather than *UD-GS* that took the lead. There were no pre-established routes of communication between the operative agency and the policy-level leadership of the operation for such cases, nor between the policy leadership level and the department at *FÖ* to which the agency formally reported. At best, there were accidental acquaintances or shared policy meetings on the lower political level, but no experienced and familiar connections lower down in the respective hierarchies. In addition, since there had never been any need to acquire it, there was little to no innate understanding in *either* organisation of what the other was capable of (or not). The Boxing Day tsunami was just such a case and came to expose all these gaps.

At the same time, previous large disasters had made their mark in parts of the organisation. The historical analogy of *MS Estonia* returns on multiple occasions among decision-makers involved with the tsunami (cf. Fi 2005a:143, 146ff, 298ff, 351), and many of the issues in that case were the same, albeit on a smaller scale than what happened in the aftermath of the tsunami. It is interesting to note that

the individuals who made this connection almost universally predicted that the phones would start ringing off the hook, whereas it was the unit head who could call in additional personnel – but did not – who also scoffed at the analogy and labelled it as “hysterical.” The potential uses, abuses, and misuses of analogies in decision-making has an entire literature of its own (cf. Khong 1992) and goes outside of the scope of this study, but given how strong a trigger it is for those that make the connection, one can but wonder what the response would have been had more individuals in key positions had accepted the similarities at an early stage and dared to anticipate the flood of calls. This analogous connection and comparison does not seem like an unreasonable leap of logic to make.

On the other hand, as the week following the disaster showed, even a large amount of desk officers and operators chipping away at the problem might not be enough if the procedures for collecting all that information were inadequate. Here, the failure to anticipate what would follow was a bit more curious. At a very early stage, reasonably accurate estimates were made as to how many Swedish nationals might be affected. Even without the added load of friends and relatives suggested by the MS Estonia analogy, this represented several thousands of individuals who somehow had to be accounted for. The curious choice, then, was the decision to try to employ regular procedures and regular forms on this extraordinarily large number of people. Here, it is difficult to fully separate an expectation of the scope of this registration from the expectation based on the analogy. When the on-duty officer gave the general instruction not to take notes, it was based on the latter judgement. Still, once that instruction was set aside, why did no-one expect the remaining standard procedures to be wholly unsuited for the task at hand? Instead, it took three days and a fair amount of consulting to create a more worthwhile process.

The attempt at clinging to this new process is itself telling. Even though *RKP* offered to support the ministry with a better system,¹⁷ *UD* stuck with its newly developed application mainly because of its familiarity. It may not have been much, but at least it was *something* that could be anticipated and that evoked some sense of habit. Meanwhile, there was explicit distrust in the new system offered to the ministry. In the end, this process fell by the wayside too as the responsibility for maintaining the lists transitioned over to *RKP*.

A similar mistrust, albeit of a more closeted nature, was apparent in how the Foreign Ministry reacted to the different reports from the region. In the first day, there were plenty of media reports and tallies being made by local organisation,

17 “Better” in the sense that *RKP*’s relational database was a better tool for the kind of cross-referencing and fast searching that was called for in this process than the document-based information sharing system employed by *UD*. As the label suggests, a relational database records *relations* between entries for easier collation and referencing, whereas a document-based system offers ready-made documents with no particular relationship between them.

but none of these made much of an impression on how the ministry leadership perceived the situation. These were all deemed not quite trustworthy or too vague to elicit any kind of strong response. Even setting aside the wish from *UD-PIK* to not go public with erroneous figures, the adherence to the line that there were no confirmed casualties signals that only some sources were deemed ‘credible’ despite the fact that all data pointed to a similar trend. When the ministry’s internal source confirmed those numbers and trends, however, the data suddenly became valid and “real.”

So far, we have in rapid succession ticked off four of the seven process deviations listed on page 61, without any mechanisms in place to counteract them: a requirement to engage with a different (that is, unfamiliar) organisational culture; an ambiguity in how the collaborative process is meant to work; an uncertainty about the value and content of information; and a mistrust in the problem formulation. This alone should be enough to conclude that in the tsunami case, there was no anticipation of the process due. But what of the remaining three? There is a decent amount of evidence to suggest a mistrust in the collaboration process with other ministries, in particular *FÖ*, but only really at the management level. As previously mentioned, the ministers above that level seemed to cooperate well enough, and there appeared to be a fair amount of co-operation between desk officers. There did not seem to be any inherent mistrust in the knowledge brokerage; everyone seemed willing to look for relevant expertise if they saw the need for it. Of course, the problem was rather the identification paradox of not always seeing that need to begin with, or of thinking that a cursory answer will be sufficient. At most, the mistrust of external sources might come into play again, but that only really means that bar for qualifying as “relevant expertise” is raised higher than one might otherwise expect.

Finally, there is the requirement to go through generalist intermediaries to either spread or find required knowledge. This is perhaps most clearly where the internal hierarchy of the ministry comes into play, at least within *UD-KC*. Here, there were clear and strict channels of communication, and staff both on the inside and the outside was admonished if and when they tried to bypass these routes. Perhaps tellingly in hindsight, one of the deviations from the due process thus existed *within* the chosen unit of analysis, which does not bode well for the openness of the organisation as a whole.

6.4.4 Organisational closed-ness

Once again, it is very tempting to look at this large bureaucratic organisation, then glance over the keywords for describing a closed organisation, and call it a day. It is made even more tempting by the fact that we are dealing with a Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the international arena is not exactly well known for its informality or flexibility, or for everyone outright *wishing for* a highly dynamic environment where everything constantly changes. Some hope might be gleamed

from the fact that, efforts to maintain stability to the contrary, it *is* a dynamic arena where new problems constantly arise that may require some flexibility or a light touch – diplomacy, one might even say.

The problem is that we are not necessarily talking about the international arena here, though, but rather the interplay between ministries and agencies in Sweden, and even between departments within these organisations. From a methodological perspective there may be cause for concern since, as mentioned earlier, we are not looking at a unitary actor with a single behaviour. There are gradations and variations depending on the situation and context.

Guiding principle

Throughout the narrative of the case, there is one facet of the work being done and the internal decision-making processes that kept reappearing across the board at *UD*: a necessity to stick to the rules. Again, this might not be all that surprising, all things considered, since we are talking about an organisation that has to operate on a number of different arenas at once and ensure that their efforts are not rejected on any of them. In particular, an overarching goal is to project the image of Sweden as a good international citizen, in other words, being a nation that does not unduly step on anyone's toes. This apparently carries through to the departmental level, where one department dutifully follows the rules and waits for the lead department to make decisions, even when the lead department is very obviously overloaded and in no condition to decide anything any time soon. The same behaviour was even observed – although admittedly as a more scattered pattern – on the individual level, where the order of the hierarchy had to be obeyed even if it meant bringing work to a stand-still.

On the other hand, the tsunami episode offers numerous examples where almost every actor involved broke, or at least bent, the rules at some point. The willingness to fund the SRSA mission out of the disaster relief funds, even though they were really going on a consular mission; the eventual abandonment of almost every rule pertaining to economic assistance; the multitude of requests to SRSA to just get on a plane with claims that the papers would be in order by the time they landed; and *RKP* entering into an agreement to provide *UD* with cleaned-up data, which they immediately broke. Indeed, SRSA almost ended up being the least rule-breaking party of the lot. Then again, this was a crisis and there were extraordinary circumstances at play. We also need to remember that we are looking at a political organisation in a heavily politicised event where the minister was under pressure to do something, *right now!* If the order came from above to ignore the rules – as they explicitly did in the case of chartering jets for passenger and medevac transportation – what would a regulation-guided organisation do?

From that perspective, the behaviours of the actors become a bit less strange. The ministries, and the departments within them, took orders directly from

the politicians being pressured by the public; the agencies, by law, did not. The ministries are supposed to effect the will of the government, although it is usually done through budget bills and reallocations of large-scale efforts rather than overnight airplane charters, whereas the agencies can, and did, dig in their heels and simply say “no”. Moreover, the agencies are generally far closer to the operational level of any problem-solving endeavour, which is also where reality starts putting limits on what is actually possible. It is easier to agree to an extraordinary plan at a ministerial level and provide ample remuneration, than to actually put that plan into action in a situation when it simply cannot be done using the time or resources available. No amount of compensation after the fact will create more of either right here and now. In addition, for every frivolity in regards to established rules on the ministries’ part, there are many more examples of rules being followed *beyond* the letter, seemingly to ensure that, should something go wrong, at least they had followed procedure where it really mattered or in some other way engaged in text-book regulation-guided behaviour. The many reprimands and gag orders issued at different times at the Foreign Ministry in order to control the message outwards and maintain the chain of command are typical examples.

The intuitive understanding of a ministerial bureaucracy seems to hold true, then, but not always in the manner one might expect. Still, in spite of the occasional departure from the norm, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs qualifies as using ‘regulation’ as its guiding principle by a fair margin.

Instrumental work flow

The instrumental work flow of the ministry presents a much more difficult distinction. On the one hand, there are innumerable standard procedures to be followed when dealing with anything on the daily ministerial agenda, which strongly suggests a rigid work flow. On the other hand, at no point during the tsunami crisis were those standard procedures at play or even applicable. In a sense, it is this departure from the norm that characterised the work done during the first week of the crisis – indeed, it may even be considered a defining characteristic of *crises*, which would expose a horrible bit of near-circular reasoning in the model. In fact, given the number of times the work methodology shifted during the first three days alone, there is a strong temptation to classify the whole effort as fairly flexible – after all, the work had to be done using any means necessary and without proper leadership, and that certainly sounds flexible does it not?

What we need to remember, though, is that it is not necessarily the actual outcome that is of interest, but the intent – the prescribed way of doing things as an organisation-wide standard. We also need to remember what was actually done during those days. A consistent pattern that emerges is the attempt at applying standard procedures even though they did not really fit, to make use of the standard forms that were designed for a very different purpose, to try to

use the standard document management system to track relational data, and above all the strict compartmentalisation of tasks. This is a behaviour that was demonstrated across the entirety of the Government Offices and which exhibited itself in the form of the “someone else’s problem” mode of thinking described in the previous section. The last point in particular suggests a degree of *inflexibility* that borders on harmful for the overall effort to take care of stranded Swedes half-way around the globe.

As with the guiding principle, there certainly are a number of examples of breaking the norm – one of the first instructions given is to ignore the standard procedures for note-taking, just to start from the top. But what were the actual results of this instruction? Almost none. It does not take long for the responders to fall back into the flow of taking notes using pre-existing forms, even though this drastically slowed down the response time and even though the forms did not fit the problem very well. Much of the work done during the first week can actually be seen as a prolonged attempt at returning back to the standard order of doing things. The first instance may very well be attributed to a dawning realisation that no-one seemed to actually want the information that was provided by those who called in, or simply to a sense of duty towards doing the type of case reporting that was clearly called for, but from an analytical perspective it is nevertheless a return to standard procedures. In addition and irrespective of any such reasons, a flexibility-oriented work flow would strongly suggest that new templates and reporting structures would be invented to match the task at hand, rather than seeing obsolescent paper forms being unsuitably reused.

The final wrangling of the SRSA issue creates an interesting puzzle that somewhat contradicts the picture so far. On the one hand, we have one department that broke the supposedly regulatory guiding principle of letting the lead department lead, in order to push through the mission before time ran out, and in doing so also demonstrated some flexibility in how missions are decided on and funded. If the department in charge proves incapable, someone else may be willing and able to step in and get things done. This decision was undeniably easier to make since the minister in charge removed all limits on spending, but it still demonstrates a more flexible approach to getting things done quickly. In turn, this effectively means that the department got to formally make a decision that it had informally approved almost two days earlier, and with the *UD-KC* now paralysed by its workload, *UD-GS* could restore matters to their normal order and send SRSA off like they always do. At that point, though, the argument leans not just towards interdepartmental or bureaucratic politics, but starts to approach outright conspiracy theory especially since the contacts entirely excludes the management levels where these kinds of competition seems to exist the most. The truth probably lies somewhere in-between these extremes: yes, the *UD-GS* staff was used to getting SRSA missions underway, but was is done more to cut the proverbial Gordian knot than as a power play between two departments.

One final complicating matter in judging this aspect of the openness/closed-ness spectrum is the nature of the work done on a daily basis and which becomes the key concern during the crisis. The fundamental issue is this: what is the degree of freedom offered to the case-by-case judgement that is made according to the existing rules and regulations? The formulation of the model offers as one of its examples of flexibility the ability to adapt and adjust procedures on a case by case basis, and offers the adherence to standard operational procedures as a characteristic of rigidity. So where does that leave us if the SOP dictates a case-by-case flexibility? The opposite is simple enough: if as part of a highly flexible list of options, there is the possibility of applying an SOP, The SOP may be rigid, but then again, so is any single course of action once chosen and adhered to. The ability to choose whether or not to go for this one rigid option still means that the process as a whole is flexible. The potential rigidity in such a setup is just that: a potential, encapsulated in a larger array of viable choices – a simple way out for the unimaginative. Reverse the relationship and we have to ask, what are the boundaries of the encapsulated flexibility? Is it just a limited array of pre-vetted procedures where one should be chosen because it seems to fit the best – a thinly veiled flow chart or a multiple-choice question where the possible routes are still as rigid as can be? Or is it actually complete flexibility in disguise, only it is decreed in such a way as to ensure that no-one labours under the misapprehension that there is one true way of doing things?

We also return to the problem of distinguishing between the normal and the extraordinary. If we accept the notion that this is an ideal type and the ideal is what the organisation strives for under the best of circumstances, it may help clarify exactly what indicators we should look for, but it also rather disqualifies crises as a good or valuable data points. With the case in hand, we can therefore dismiss the at times free-wheeling nature of how the ministry chose to deal with matters during the crisis. The circumstances were not ideal; it was also not an added affordance to meet with the special demands of the period; it was the staff trying to apply their regular work habits and shedding the parts that simply were not feasible at the time. The ideal is still essentially one of ‘rigidity,’ even though it is designed to allow for some judgement calls to be made.

Preferred outcome

Contrary to expectations, the preferred outcome aspect of the open/closed divide is probably the simplest one to establish for the ministry. The existence of numerous gatekeepers of “proper” behaviour in the chronology, the way telephone responders – including the call centre staff – is equipped with standardised questionnaires, and the way at least *outgoing* information is screened and normalised all point towards a strong preference for consistency. This is itself consistent with the nature of the work done at the *UD-KC*: enacting public policy in strict accordance with the laws and guidelines that prescribe how such services should be offered. Once again,

though, we have the clash between the ideal type and a complex and at times seemingly contradictory reality. The tsunami case certainly exhibits all of the above characteristics, but it also presents us with a situation where the application of existing rules is incredibly inconsistent. Consular affairs are not exactly bywords for “lax” or “free of bureaucracy” – quite the opposite – and yet it does not take long before many of the stricter rules regarding how the consular department, and even the ministry as a whole, should act in relation to the individual were thrown out completely (if only temporarily). At first glance, this looks like the initial labelling of the ministry needs to be revised or at least provided with some nuance. In truth, though, the problem here is not with the application of the rules, but with our expectation of what it is we are observing.

The preferred outcome is consistency, but the question that has to be answered is consistency in *what*? We must not forget that, unlike the national agencies, this is very much an organisation under direct political control and as such, one of its key roles is political messaging. The changes in how rules are applied can pretty much universally be attributed to a drastically altered message. It is no longer an option to tell Swedes that “yes, we can help you, but this is a favour you will have to repay, and *do* be a bit more careful next time”. Instead, after three days of accidentally sending out the message that the government did not know and did not care about the ordinary citizen, the single acceptable message by the time the regular rules for assistance were thrown out was simply “yes, we will help you.” The preferred outcome of consistency in this case is not one of never changing, and certainly not one of always applying the same rules, but of consistently speaking a single, clear message with a single voice.

This also explains and encapsulates the internal consistency that is being enforced during the crisis: it all comes down to creating that singular voice and keeping rogue elements from contradicting the official message.

6.4.5 MESO usage

As previously mentioned, the tsunami crisis offers a much more complex actor than the FBI cases and this creates something of a challenge for how to measure the MESO-knowledge usage. Specifically, we have to consider the internal information flow as well as the external one; the same goes for the information needs that arise during the crisis. Just because *UD* as a whole has established contact with some form of expertise does not mean that this knowledge was actually being applied where it was needed. Perhaps one department “owned” the connection, but the need was in a different one, and neither knew of the other’s resources and needs. In particular, and similar to the situation at Waco, there were a couple of crucial information blockages at play that created artificial subdivisions in the organisational knowledge pool that did not quite follow the divisions visible in a regular organisational chart. Fortunately, this is exactly the kind of ambiguities and missing links that the three knowledge types are meant

to explore and expose. Another fortunate circumstance, but only really from an analytical perspective, is that the number of issue areas, expert actors, and connections in the tsunami case were fairly limited.

Meta-knowledge

The tsunami crisis is more about what the organisations do *not* know than about what they *do* know. Unfortunately this twists the already difficult-to-parse question of meta knowledge into something that starts to resemble pure word salad. Rather than asking if the different parts of the organisation know what they know and/or what they do not know, reading through the events of the tsunami crisis raises the question “don’t they know that they don’t know?”

Nowhere is this more clear than the upper management of *UD-KC*, where for the longest time there was a perception that from a Swedish perspective, the disaster was relatively minor and that the ministry was not running head-long into a major crisis. As a result, the knowledge of the situation, both abroad and in Stockholm, was rapidly diluted as we look higher and higher up in the chain of command. No-one seemed particularly interested in taking stock of what was actually known throughout the organisation. Instead, they assumed that others would inform them in full and that there was no information loss in the transition from one person to the next. On a regular day, there might have been some merit to this assumption as being present at the office would give you access to the general ambience and other cues that might suggest that things aren’t quite as quiet as some want to claim. This is also a reoccurring theme in the Disaster Commission Report, where several sections are spent discussing the difference between being available and being present (cf. Fi 2005a:14f, 19f, 195 ;Hirshfeldt et al. 2007:12f, 30ff). The report suggests that a major part of the miscommunication that occurred during the first day was due to the fact that the managers and political leadership were trying to stay informed via phone and SMS alone. The process had all the hallmarks of an identification paradox and the negative feedback loop it can generate: a poor knowledge of the situation at the *UD* offices leads to the faulty conclusion that everything was more or less working as intended, and that there were no important issues that need to be clarified. This in turn meant that nothing was done to address the situation, and soon it deteriorated to the point where no-one had either the time or the macro-perspective view required to correct that initial assessment. Since no updates were issued, things must still be working more or less as intended. The spiral was only broken when one director actually witnessed the chaotic work environment without having been caught up in it. This provided an opportunity to recalibrate the skewed perception that had been shared among the upper management and political level.

The on-going saga of *RKP* and the casualty databases is yet another example of poor meta-knowledge. In an ironic twist, the root of the problem was that

information could not be shared among those that needed it, and the most immediate solution was to reconfigure a pre-existing technical solution into something that everyone involved would at least be familiar with. When *RKP* entered the scene as an external party and genuine expert on the matter, their offer to help was dismissed. There are two key missed opportunities for applying meta-knowledge at play here. The first and most obvious one was the lack of insight into the organisation's own needs and into the capabilities of the tool they had chosen. This is what fed into the dismissal of *RKP*'s solution: it was not seen as necessary or as suitable, even though it would become clear only a few days later that it more than satisfied both those aspects. The other, more clumsy one, was the failure to understand the purely technical limitation of rolling out the document management system on a larger scale: only a relatively small amount of the available computers could even run the software.

A third part of the use of meta-knowledge is the ability to share knowledge across departmental boundaries, but this, too, was largely missing from the ministry. The hierarchical and status-bound structure created a heavily compartmentalised environment. Information mainly flowed upwards, and was shared at the mid and top management level. The problem was still, of course, that with very few exceptions, these management levels were not present and showed little interest in informing themselves of the state of affairs. The problem was further compounded by the specialisations of the different departments and the rather dissimilar type of work they do. For instance, a good understanding of the SRSA only existed in one place in *UD-GS*, and the fact that it existed *at all* was largely unknown outside of that particular department. This lack of meta-knowledge, combined with the practice of having lead departments that controlled all business pertaining to their area of expertise meant that they might need to make decisions on the deployment of assets and capacities that they were completely ignorant of – hardly an ideal set-up.

At this point the question is, were there no positive examples of meta-knowledge in use during the tsunami crisis? As it happens, there were a few, and of a limited scope, but they tended to be very localised and the knowledge gained soon became stuck in the general blockages that existed due to the management structure. The early morning of Boxing Day offered the most clear-cut examples, when representatives at the three key *UD* departments involved – *KC*, *GS*, and *ASO* – each on their own inquired about the disaster and its potential consequences. The unfamiliarity with earthquakes and/or tsunamis, depending on the department and its previous experiences, was identified and rectified, and each representative came up with a good estimate of how many Swedes might be involved. Note, however, that we are only really talking about identification of knowledge gaps here; had there been proper meta-knowledge at play, it would have been a concerted and distributed effort, and some of the inquiries would have become completely unnecessary since the knowledge already existed in-house.

Another interesting, but perhaps not entirely positive, example of meta-knowledge at work was the eyewitness report on December 28 from the ambassador to Bangkok. It qualifies as meta-knowledge in the sense that the embassies and consulates sort under the Foreign Ministry, and it also represented one of the key moments when critical knowledge inside this larger organisation was identified and shared among a number of individuals who needed it. As such, it is perhaps not strange that it came to redefine the perception of the disaster and of the still escalating crisis for the people present. The less than positive note is that, strictly speaking, none of this was new information. It already existed within the organisation through individual calls from the public, from direct friends of *UD* staffers, from businesses operating in the area, and from personnel connected to the both the ministry and many of the agencies that were at least obliquely connected to it. None of that information had been systematically inventoried or spread, however, and in spite of the sources, much of it was largely considered suspect. Above all, this is the one instance where the knowledge could conceivably be considered organisation-wide and thus qualify as a legitimate use of organisational knowledge. The rest are at best individual uses, where one person identified a *personal* rather than an organisational information gap that needs to be filled.

Empathic knowledge

Curiously enough, there are actually more examples of positive empathic knowledge use than of meta-knowledge, even though the former is supposed to be somewhat contingent on the latter. In this case, however, it is more a matter of there being no meta-knowledge use to speak of, which necessitates the use empathic knowledge to at least gain *some* understanding of what is happening around the organisation. Even then, and much in the same vein as the few instances of meta-knowledge use, it is more of an individual usage than something the organisation engaged in. Examples of this include the contacts made with *FÖ*, *SRSA*, or the agencies involved with the not yet operational National Air Medevac service (cf. Åbrandt & Lumsden 2005; SoS 2008).

If there is one more legitimate use of this type of knowledge, it is in the contacts made with SAS Airlines as part of the attempts to get an air bridge going and to jump-start the medevac flights. Here, the airline was not just asked to offer up its own airlift capacity, but also to broker contacts with other carriers and chartered aircraft. The use of SAS was in and of itself something of an expression of empathic knowledge. The airline is partially state-owned and has a clause in its charter to provide airlift capacity to the state should the need arise. It is therefore the natural place to go to – even if just the most trivial sense, it becomes that dependable “other party” that empathic knowledge is meant to reveal. A close candidate for a similar treatment would be the armed forces, except that no contact was made since their aircraft were deemed unsuitable for the purpose. It is interesting to note here that, at almost exactly the same time,

FÖ put those very same aircraft on alert status, not for the mission *UD* had in mind – the aircraft are indeed poorly suited for that – but for what at the time seemed to be an inevitable supply mission down to the disaster-stricken region. The connection was not quite there at this point, but the anticipation of what others might be planning and of what capacities the own organisation could offer is still very much present. The seeds of empathic knowledge use were there, but were not fully put to use.

While the examples of positive knowledge use are higher in this category than in the previous one, the outright failed examples are fewer. While the former is something of a curiosity, the latter case is much as expected: without a meta-knowledge base to build on, the opportunities for using empathic knowledge should be reduced as well. Since the number of opportunities is reduced, the number of times that those opportunities can be missed follows suit.

The two central missed opportunities both revolved around the work to register missing people and casualties. The first instance is a classic case of tripping up one's own organisation by failing to communicate how it is handling information, thereby causing further mismanagement. In an attempt to limit the availability and exposure of sensitive information, especially on those individuals suspected to be deceased, their entries were removed from the universally available repository. Based on decade-old experiences, the privileged information was only made available to a fairly small select group of trusted desk officers who had previous experience in handling sensitive matters. The problem was that information on these individuals was still being collected by, or volunteered to, the desk officers and operators staffing the phones, who dutifully (re)entered the information in the system. The set-up in and of itself is not a bad idea, but the lack of indicators of what was going on – the lack of empathic knowledge that someone else knows more on the topic of these particular entries – created a fair amount of duplicate and contradictory information. As mentioned in the methodology chapter, there may at times be difficulties in separating empathic and second-order knowledge, and this failure at making use of the former provides a good example of why. Had the process been better designed, it would have had the appearance of the phone operators knowing that there was more to know – that is, they would appear to have some second-order knowledge of the sensitive entries. The empathic knowledge of being aware of who else had access to this information would have been wholly encapsulated within this understanding. It is only in the failure of the second part of that equation that we notice that there are two parts at all.

The second empathic-knowledge failure related to these lists was a continuation of one of the meta-knowledge failures discussed in the previous section. In the discussions with *RKP* and the information consultants, there was initially a tone of almost boastful self-assuredness that *UD*'s newly created system was uniquely well-suited for what they were trying to do. The failure resides in the fact that no-one seemed to appreciate the expertise and competence the national police would *have to* have had in the area in order to even do their job. It is not

just a case of not knowing that someone else has expert insights to offer, but outright scoffing at the idea that anything of the kind might exist. *UD* was soon set straight on the matter as the outside consultants quickly concluded that not only was the other system more fit for purpose on the software side, it was also backed up by a well-functioning, well-led and proven work flow – none of which was really an appropriate description of *UD*'s processes.

Second-order knowledge

The two instances related to the database squabble are the only clear instances of anything resembling second-order knowledge usage. This is hardly surprising as we expect the three knowledge types to follow one from the other – if we see little of a previous step, we should see even less of the next one in line. Only once the internal knowledge resources have been used up (meta-knowledge) and the immediate surroundings canvassed for more (empathic knowledge) is it time to figure out where to go next, commonly by asking around in the knowledge network for more contacts. If there are no known knowledge gaps and no contacts to be queried, the opportunities for second-order knowledge usage rapidly dwindle into nothing. This is an apt description of what we are seeing in this case and why.

At a stretch, the collection of information on people in the region based on calls from the public could be seen as a prototypic instance of the idea: knowledge was needed about who had been affected, so how do you find out? You ask them to make contact – or as more commonly happened in this case, you sit by as they do it on their own accord. Even so, this was something that happened because the public made it happen, not because the organisation itself had set up a system to tap into the knowledge of the public. It is a coincidental usage at best rather than a carefully selected strategy.

6.4.6 Conclusions from the tsunami

The tsunami is often quite rightfully considered a seminal moment in modern crisis management in Sweden. This chapter has only looked at a thin slice of the first phase of *one* of the many crises that erupted in the wake of the disaster. Beyond what happened in and around the Foreign Ministry offices in Stockholm, a number of ministries and national agencies were involved, not to mention regional and local agencies. There is also the ensuing political crisis and the politicisation of the commissioned review process, both of which are only hinted at in the narrative presented here. The work done on site in the disaster-stricken areas is yet another story in and of itself. The slice examined here shows a ministry in chaos at every level, one that showed a brief promising start but which was so blocked up by organisational inefficiencies and defective leadership that it started to stumble almost immediately and never really caught up.

The culture of prideful self-sufficiency and prestige had its flip side exposed in almost every way possible, and yet, at the ground level, the amount of effort put out to try to right the listing organisation is staggering. As we will see in the next chapter, some of these issues received immediate and much-needed attention to ensure that a similar situation will not arise again, and the knowledge processing is at the heart of those changes.

In terms of answering the analytical questions, the Boxing Day tsunami crisis can be summarised as follows:

- It was most definitely a crisis for the principal actor.
- The processes being used *were not* anticipated.
- The principal actor *could not* maintain an open mode of operation.
- The principal actor demonstrated *very few* instances of MESO-knowledge, and even among those, most were failures.
- A negative reinforcement cycle that increases the degree of crisis *can* be observed.

Unlike the previous case where there were some potential ambiguities, these observations are trivial to convert to the binary states of the model:

- Degree of crisis: high.
- Degree of anticipation of process: low.
- Degree of closed-ness: high.
- Degree of MESO-usage: low.

The only variable that might conceivably be subject to discussion is some aspects of the closed-ness, but as described in the previous section, the factors that might muddy the waters are either by far drowned out by the behaviours that show the closed-ness of the organisation, or they are simply slightly curious or unexpected expressions of closed behaviour that have not been considered so far.

Chapter 7: The 2006 Lebanon Evacuation

The Arab-Israeli conflict has been a constant source of tension at least since the founding of the modern state of Israel in 1948 – arguably starting in the civil war of 1947 that eventually led to the establishment of the state a year later. While the intensity and individual belligerents of the conflict have both varied over the decades, it is neither a particularly new nor a very surprising source of violent episodes and threats to regional security and stability. In 1967, Israel initiated the pre-emptive Six-Day War in response to a military build-up in the surrounding nations of Syria, Jordan, and the United Arab Republic (later Egypt). This war netted Israel a number of new territorial claims, including the Golan Heights and Shebaa Farms along its northern borders to Syria and Lebanon. Some 40 years later, the conflict over the Shebaa Farms area, in particular, once again heated up after an increasing number of skirmishes between Israeli and Hezbollah troops had taken place. Usually these exchanges followed a pattern of raids or rocket or mortar fire from within Lebanese territory, answered by air strikes from Israel. By mid-2006, the conflict had been building over six years and had become an almost regular seasonal occurrence (*cf.* BBC 2001-07-01, 2004-01-20, 2005-06-29; CNN 2004-05-07; MFA 2006-06-01; Matthews 2012:15ff).

Still being a travelling people, and in spite of it being the middle of summer when the need to escape to warmer climes is not as strong, there were more than 8,000 Swedes in the Lebanon region. Since 2001, only an honorary consulate had been kept up and running in Beirut due to budgetary reasons, and the general area as a whole was managed from the embassy in Damascus, Syria (Kulling & Sigurdsson 2008:14, 24, 36). Meanwhile, 2,000 miles away, the government apparatus in Stockholm was in the middle of a reformation and learning process resulting from the tsunami disaster a year and a half earlier. When the low-intensity conflict escalated into a full-blown war, this apparatus, still comprised of the same agencies with the same responsibilities as during the tsunami, suddenly had to solve a very similar problem of scrambling together the means and resources to

evacuate the nation's citizens. This time, there was ample warning of what was about to happen and the distances involved were not nearly as remote, but on the other hand, the evacuation was from a war zone with hostilities still going on rather than from the scene of a completed natural disaster. It was also an election year, so the pressure to "do it right" this time was enormous.

7.1 Background

Only a few days after the 2004 tsunami, the seeds of what would be known as the "Disaster Commission" (*Katastrofkommissionen*) were planted, and on January 13, 2005, it bloomed into a formal investigation of the crisis management of, not just the government, but the entire Swedish crisis management system (Fi 2005a, b; Regeringskansliet 2005:15f, 26f, 35f, 93f; 2006:29f; Hirschfeldt et al. 2008). Throughout 2005, and in the midst of a political and media storm surrounding the foreign minister in particular, and the top political leadership of the ministry as a whole, the commission worked to piece together the stories of the actors involved – from government officials and bureaucrats, to entire organisations, to individual victims and their next of kin. Even before the report came out on December 1, 2005, a public narrative had been constructed where the farther away a given actor was from the top government political and policy decision-makers, the more they "did the right thing", with specific individuals and even entire private companies seen as the heroes of the story. The final commission report offered a slightly more nuanced picture of the events, but still presented scathing criticism against the Foreign Ministry (*UD*) in particular, the Government Offices (*RK*) in general, and indeed against the general uncoordinated nature of Swedish crisis management.

A lot of the criticism had been anticipated, and as the report was being put together, some immediate measures were already being taken to answer some of the more glaring issues that had become obvious, future commission reports notwithstanding. In particular, the tsunami disaster had revealed that the division of labour between a number of different agencies, including *UD*, was not as neat and clear-cut as previously assumed (Fi 2005c:509f; Regeringskansliet 2005:26f; 35f). *UD* ostensibly had the mandate to send Swedish aid, including personnel, abroad, but largely lacked any experience of the operational side of such affairs, whereas the agencies with said experience were hamstrung by having to go through convoluted proper channels. Similarly, the division of labour between the national and the county level turned out to rest on the rather flawed assumption that people only ever got into real large-scale emergencies at home, where it was the responsibility of the local or county level to handle those issues. Should something happen abroad, it was suddenly *UD*'s problem to deal with, and again, they lacked the experience, expertise, and staff to handle anything other than the odd lost passport, stolen travel funds, or run-ins with foreign law-enforcement. While the *UD* desk officers took pride in solving these personal crises on a daily

basis, tasks such as mass evacuations, the care and transport of hundreds of ill and injured, and the coordination of dozens of Swedish and foreign agencies was something very different.

It had also become clear that the history and culture at *UD* had left the Department for Consular Affairs (*UD-KC*) in a state of disrepair (Hirdman et al. 2005:363f; Fi 2005c:512ff; Regeringskansliet 2005:93f). This was the rather small office that handled actual operational matters, not the grandiose foreign policy issues; it dealt with Swedish nationals in a bind, not foreign dignitaries; it was an extension of the social safety net, rather than a projection of Sweden on the international arena. The political and public-relations repercussions of this culture now had made themselves known, and it turned out that the Swedish people expected the beleaguered desk officers at this small unit to help them by the thousands, with time-critical life-and-death issues, just as well as they did with a handful of cases of lost travel documents. At the same time, the very same desk officers were the ones who had to support the embassy and consulate staff abroad, who of course had been inundated to the same degree at their local offices.

The immediate solution to these problems was to set up a number of emergency teams or functions to fill in the gaps, should a similarly large crisis abroad ever happen again (Hirdman et al. 2005:373; Regeringskansliet 2006:83; UD 2005, 2006:4). From *UD*'s point of view, three such functions were of particular importance:

- A *rapid response team*, consisting of personnel from a large number of agencies that would provide proper on-site coordination of efforts, as well report back to the various Stockholm offices of those agencies.
- A *disaster readiness team*, specifically meant to reinforce and support the embassy and consular staff abroad in the event of a crisis in the local area.
- An *on-call decision-making function* where someone was given the authority and obligation to expedite operational decisions, should the regular channels be blocked or otherwise unavailable.

The two latter points were specifically critical as a quick patch for the issues identified at *UD-KC*; the top management that did not quite have the ear of its minister (be it for personal reasons or because its issues were deemed low priority), and a lack of redundancy in its ability to staff not just its own offices but also the many offices abroad (Brändström 2016:50ff; Hirdman et al. 2005:363f; Fi 2005c:514f; KU 2006:128ff).

7.1.1 *New actors in the mix*

The rapid response team was something slightly different: an attempt to achieve greater crisis coordination of efforts, not just between the various ministries, but between the ministries and their agencies, and between then national, regional,

and local levels. In particular, it had been noted that while some connections already existed, such as between the well-travelled Swedish Rescue Services Agency's (SRSA) own disaster response teams and *UD*, or between *UD* and the Ministry of Defence (*FÖ*, the ministry to which SRSA formally reported), there were numerous other connections at the agency level that would be served well by being more centralised (UD 2005-11-12).

The tsunami crisis had quickly revealed the expertise and resources of the National Police Board (*RPS*) to be invaluable, and along with SRSA it offered an avenue of contact into its numerous local and regional agencies who would eventually and inevitably be the ones to handle the cases once Swedish nationals returned home. The coordination with these local agencies was yet another deficiency in the national system that had been uncovered and which would receive criticism in the commission report – not so much in terms of the information passed between the agencies themselves, but in how there was little understanding or preparedness at the central and national level for what the regional and local agencies needed in order to do their job. Two national agencies in particular had shared the task of coordinating between agencies and between levels in the system: the Swedish Emergency Management Agency, and the National Board of Health and Welfare – the need to include them in this new rapid response team was indisputable (UD 2005-11-12).

The Swedish Emergency Management Agency (SEMA)

Contrary to what its English name might suggest, the Swedish Emergency Management Agency was not responsible for any kind of emergency management. The Swedish name, *Krisberedskapsmyndigheten (KBM)* – literally “the Crisis Preparedness Agency” – was slightly more accurate in that it rather indicates the support role of the agency. In practice, it dealt with gathering and coordinating information about past and current crises, and supporting other agencies in their planning, training, information sharing, and similar knowledge needs (Fi 2005a:137; KU 2006:135).

This role as a central crisis information clearing house also tended to make SEMA a natural coordination centre for multi-level and multi-agency activities, since its day-to-day mission already was to keep all these agencies informed of what was going on. Its operative staff consisted mainly of analysts and researchers, as well as a technical section to manage and oversee a number of national technical support systems. As far as operative participation goes, SEMA personnel would regularly appear as observers or provide information support for missions run by agencies such as SRSA and *SoS*.

The National Board of Health and Welfare (SoS)

Somewhere in-between the SRSA and SEMA in both nature and focus, but with a different professional basis, the National Board of Health and Welfare

(*Socialstyrelsen*, or *SoS*) was, and remains to this day, the Swedish central agency for social services, public health, health services, and the prevention of infectious diseases. Whereas the SRSA slanted more towards operational expertise in rescue services, SoS leaned more towards the research and analysis side, and towards various forms of individual care. Like SRSA, SoS maintained a pool of experts for emergency consultations in the event of a crisis, only the SoS pool mainly contained practicing physicians and medical researchers (Fi 2005a:138; KU 2006:142; Koraeus 2009).

Similar to SEMA, but with a clear focus on public health issues, it also maintained a pool of observers in the field of disaster medicine (“*Katastrofmedicinska observatörsstudier*”) who studied and reported on the health-care facet of major crises, and presented their findings in the so-called *KAMEDO* report publication series. Since major disasters are generally rare in Sweden, these pools of experts were poised to be deployed around the world where their analytical expertise and professional knowledge were needed in order to collect more data for their studies (Koraeus 2009). Not being as operationally focused as SRSA, and with its efforts being more aimed towards evaluating and distilling best practices for use in Swedish crisis management, SoS lacked the international brand recognition of SRSA outside of a niche group of researchers that shared interests with the *KAMEDO* group. At the same time, SoS had even more freedom to deploy its personnel abroad, since it did not entail an official Swedish government operation within another sovereign nation. It was a form of free and open academic research rather than a projection of Swedish foreign policy, and consequently fewer diplomatic formalities and niceties needed to be observed.

Nationally, and on an every-day basis, the agency acted more in a supervisory and oversight role, providing expert guidelines for the health-care sector and for its lead department within the Government Offices, the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs. Besides the *KAMEDO* teams, the agency maintained a number of expert groups and knowledge centres where the focus lay on crisis management in the field of public health, including evaluation of threats to public health, consequence analyses, and monitoring of world events. While the actual health care itself was administered at the county level, the inner workings and needs of that system and of its patients were not always universally understood by other actors, so the expert groups were also meant to provide support to other local and national agencies in all matters related to health care, such as the coordination of information, and guidance on the topic of the Swedish health care system (Koraeus 2009).

Along with SRSA, *SoS* was also responsible for the implementation of municipal ‘*POSOM*’-groups: teams of experts in psychosocial care, aimed to help individuals caught in disasters or other larger emergencies. Both agencies had noticed a need for a comprehensive approach in caring for not just the victims of a disaster, but their families, friends and even to whole communities. Again, the actual care was administered at the municipal level rather than by either

of the two agencies, but as “parents” of the system and with their role as both subject-matter experts and supervising agencies of the related policy areas, they were still closely involved with how the groups are being employed throughout the nation (Kulling & Sigurdsson 2008:33f; 50ff). The need for this kind of care, and for the coordination of regular health-care of Swedes returning to their home counties from facilities abroad had been revealed as highly critical in the aftermath of the 2004 tsunami, including the need to coordinate medical transportation. Here, too, the close connection between SRSA and *SoS* became apparent as both agencies were the main actors in maintaining the not-yet up-and-running Swedish National Air Medevac function (SNAM, cf. Åbrandt & Lumsden 2005:25; Fi 2005a:272; Kulling & Sigurdsson 2008:32, 53f; SoS 2008:66f).

For the newly created rapid response team, the role of *SoS* was largely a formalisation of the role it had naturally taken during the tsunami aftermath: on-site observation, recommendations to regional health-care agencies back home, and providing direct contact channels with medical professionals, when necessary. By 2006, the work to make SNAM fully operational had not just improved the readiness of actual air-lifting capabilities, but had also created yet another pool of personnel to call on for more hands-on operational tasks. Actually getting it in the air would still be a complicated matter since the responsibility for the different components of the function was distributed between the *SoS* (function coordinator, especially for finding qualified medical staff), the Swedish Civil Aviation Authority (in charge of capability assessments), the Västerbotten county council (the coordinating body for the national health care side, in particular for the distribution and transport of patients to their final destination), and the Norrland University Hospital in Umeå (the national specialist, and informal lead agency, on air medevac equipment and service development). In practice, any one of these could raise the question of whether SNAM should be activated, but all parties needed to give their go-ahead and ensure that they could provide their part of the service. And, of course, there was the matter of securing funding for any such activation, where the responsibility would vary depending on exactly how, why, and where the function was needed.

7.1.2 *The political aftermath of the commission report*

All these changes took place over a longer period of time, but the final release of the Disaster Commission report on the handling of the tsunami established that the measures taken so far would not be enough. In particular the report pointed towards the need for a much more centralised crisis management function, both at the ministerial level and at the national agency level (Hirdman et al. 2005:370ff). While it often took on a similar role, SEMA’s mission and mandate did not fully cover such a function, and the Government Offices lacked any formal crisis coordination – at best *ad hoc* ministerial or collegial meetings or meetings that might fill that need, but as the tsunami crisis had shown, this

was far too dependent on key individuals to be systemically reliable. This conclusion was further emphasised as the public pressure on the government and on the foreign minister in particular increased steadily during the year after the tsunami (*cf.* Brändström 2016:107; Daléus 2005:99ff, 109ff; DN 2005-02-13; SR 2005-12-02; SvD 2005-12-02; KU 2006:105ff, 114ff). By March 2006, her position as foreign minister had become untenable and she resigned. She was replaced by the acting President of the United Nations General Assembly.

It was also an election year, and the tsunami was still a yoke on the shoulders of the incumbent government – replacing perhaps *the* most criticised member of the cabinet might assuage some of the voters, but the image of the government as incapable of handling crises still lingered. During the summer, the election circuit would start to heat up, and it was not hard to guess what issue would continue to take centre-stage during the proceedings, at least unless some solid evidence could be conjured up that things had improved, drastically. Aside from the new coordination functions in the Government Offices, a number of laws underwent significant revision to further clarify the roles and responsibilities of various national and local government actors, as well as for numerous agencies. In particular, the function of “on-duty desk officer” – a dedicated 24/7 point-of-contact role that already existed in some of the more crisis-focused agencies – was formalised and made universal throughout the entire national crisis management system (Prop. 2005/06:133).

7.2 Chronology of Events

Fairly predictably by the pattern of the preceding years, July of 2006 sees an increase in hostilities along the Lebanese-Israeli border, and in particular surrounding the Shebaa Farms territory. The Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) have been anticipating an attack some time during the first couple of days of the month, but in spite of presenting an obvious target for the Hezbollah, nothing has happened to the forces deployed in the area (Matthews 2012:28f, 33f). Instead, on July 12, something completely new happens: an Israeli vehicle column is ambushed by Hezbollah forces on the Israeli side of the border, and two soldiers travelling in the column are captured in the ensuing chaos. The Hezbollah team retreats to the Lebanon side of the border with their captives, and the IDF in pursuit suffer further casualties as they run into additional ambushes on Lebanese territory (MFA 2006-07-12a, 2006-07-12b).

Israeli officials declare the abduction and the further killings an act of war, and without waiting for a response from the Cabinet, the IDF starts shelling and conducting bombing raids against Lebanese infrastructure and against known Hezbollah bases and positions. Among these first strikes, the Rafic Hariri International Airport in Beirut is one of the targets, and at the same time, naval forces move in to attack similar targets in Beirut and along the southern coast, cutting off the larger sea routes out of the country.

No formal declaration of war takes place, and although there are some early attempts to blame the Hezbollah attack on the Lebanese government, the government quickly denounces the initial raid and declares that this is a conflict between Israel and Hezbollah only, but also warns that it will respond if the IDF starts attacking Lebanese official buildings or tries to push too hard or moves too far north. The Lebanese government calls for a UN-backed cease-fire on July 14, but the drafting of such a resolution drags on, and it takes until August 11 until a full resolution can be written and adopted by the UN. It then takes another three days for the resolution to take effect and almost another full month – until September 8 – before the Israeli naval blockade is lifted (MFA 2006-07-12b; UD 2006:5).

In the meantime, both Hezbollah and Israeli forces continue to target each other's infrastructure, as well as direct military targets. As a consequence, as the war drags on, travel inside and out of Lebanon becomes increasingly difficult, perilous, and unpredictable, as roads, bridges, railways, and runways are put out of commission, and as air and sea traffic risk being misidentified and getting caught in the cross-fire. The Hezbollah are better armed and trained than expected, which causes a number of initial setbacks for the Israeli forces, On July 14, a navy corvette is forced to withdraw after being hit by an anti-ship missile thereby demonstrating an escalated threat level, and in response, Israel escalates to a full ground-war by July 20 (MFA 2006-07-12b; UD 2006:6f).

7.2.1 *Responding to a crisis*

Still in early July, as tension in the region rises, SRSA decides to send a team to Cyprus to reinforce an existing mission in the region and to expand it to also include observations of the escalating violence in Lebanon. The team arrives on July 11, and start monitoring the situation (Kulling & Sigurdsson 2008:42). The very next day, the actual war breaks out. By the 13th, the escalation of the situation is beyond any doubt, especially since a number of key transport routes have been taken out of commission by Israeli air- and artillery strikes, which will undoubtedly have an impact on any attempts to render aid to the region. This fact is reported back to the SRSA situational assessment unit back home in Sweden. One part of this unit is an analysis group tied to *SoS*, acting as liaison between the two agencies on matters related to observations of world events. One of the *SoS* analysts in this group contacts the central office with a request that they start a "remote magnitude assessment" of the situation, and in particular the potential need for medical support, which is approved (Kulling & Sigurdsson 2008:14, 37f, 44f).

During the day, the on-duty desk officer at *UD* notes that the ministry is receiving a substantial amount of phone calls inquiring about the situation in Lebanon. The still fresh experience of the tsunami soon evokes the realisation that the regular four-person strong reserve for reinforcing the telephone exchange will

not be sufficient, and further staff is called in. In addition, a special call centre and registration unit working in shifts is set up to handle the actual calls themselves. Within the next week, it has expanded to employ over 120 individuals over the course of a full day (UD 2006:7f, 17). A meeting is held to assess what is going on, where the immediate conclusion is that a full-on war may break out at any moment, and that a fair amount of Swedish citizens may be in the area. An early estimate suggests that some 1,000 people may require evacuation, and that the evacuation routes are rapidly diminishing in number. By chance, a UD desk officer is in Beirut on holiday at this very moment, and is immediately detached to the honorary consulate to assume direct control there. However, it is still just a consulate and is far too small to be able to handle this kind of situation, especially since the security of the site cannot even be guaranteed and it may soon be cut off along with the rest of Beirut. A decision is made that, while the Beirut consulate could definitely need to be supported with additional disaster readiness staff, the much larger embassy in Damascus will be the central local office for handling the escalating crisis and will be the main recipient of any reinforcements. For now, until the logistics of getting more personnel in place, the one desk officer already on site will be the reinforcement for the Beirut consulate (Kulling & Sigurdsson 2008:16; UD 2006:7f).

That evening, *UD* contacts *SRSA* to request additional support personnel for the embassy, but also to further reinforce the team already in place in Cyprus, since that is likely to be a destination for people fleeing Lebanon by sea (SoS 2006:3f). A rapid response team is to be convened for the next morning to start coordinating the many issues related to the war and to the inevitable evacuation effort. At this early stage, the team only consists of representatives from various units and departments within *UD* itself, and its first task during July 14 is to try to establish means of communication with the belligerents in order to secure a safe evacuation route, and to get in contact with as many Swedes as possible (Kulling & Sigurdsson 2008:14; UD 2006:8). The use of mass-SMS was met with some success during the tsunami, and working routines have since been established at *UD*, but the question is how many will receive those messages considering that key infrastructures, including communication facilities, are among the high-priority targets (UD 2006:5, 8).

Attempts are also made to find out what measures other EU countries, as well as private travel agencies, are taking and if there are any opportunities to coordinate those efforts, especially when it comes to chartering ships and similar means of mass transportation. The matter is shown to have a fair bit more political priority than what was seen during the first days of the tsunami, as the Foreign Minister is an active participant in the EU-level discussions. Inquiries are also directed to the companies as to whether they are able to provide contact information for their customers. The reports from the Beirut consulate are disconcerting: air transport is no longer viable, and most of the larger roads have been bombed, the main exception being some of the roads leading north. The city of Aleppo in

northern Syria is selected as a candidate for a first stop in the evacuation. Once there, and out of harm's way, more options are available for further transportation (SoS 2006:5f; Kulling & Sigurdsson 2008:38; UD 2006:8). However, until some means of transportation *into* Beirut can be established, such efforts have to be arranged and coordinated by and from the understaffed consulate, which may be more than the small team there can manage. The desk officer is therefore granted permission to try to shore up the staff by hiring locals – the same goes for arranging the actual transportation. In the afternoon, the topic of this precarious situation and the need to find immediate solutions is brought up at a cabinet meeting, where it is quickly decided that additional funds will be allocated to the *UD* budget for the purpose of managing the escalating crisis. The matter is no longer internal to just *UD*, but has spread to include a number of different ministries that may soon be involved in the crisis management – notably the Defence Ministry (the ministry to which both SRSA and SEMA report), the Ministry of Justice (*RPS*'s ministry), and the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs (the reporting ministry of *SoS*) – and the issue has been raised to the political level at the Government Offices (UD 2006:8f, 14).

At *SoS*, a crisis team is set up, and measures are taken to enumerate the key points of contact with the major city councils. Anticipating a further escalation of the conflict and an increase in the support needed, the agency also starts taking stock of what personnel is available in its different staff pools for immediate deployment abroad (SoS 2006:3f; Kulling & Sigurdsson 2008:38). Over at SRSA, work is underway to put together a support team, most likely headed for Cyprus. SRSA requests additional support from *SoS* and *RPS*, the latter mainly to provide security for the team. Later in the day, this mission is expanded into a larger, more comprehensive support mission for the various Swedish delegations in place or on route. The expanded mission also includes the handling of customs and immigration matters, and the identification of refugees from the area who might carry Swedish visas. These tasks are delegated to *RPS*, who thus becomes involved in the efforts beyond simply providing security, and onto actual police matters that require coordination with the relevant agencies back in Sweden. For its part, *SoS* suggests to *UD* that it put together a small assessment team for now, and start preparing a larger medical team for later deployment. Since there are no current reports of any injured Swedes in need of immediate medical attention – although it is likely that some psychosocial care will be needed on arrival – this suggestion is met with *UD*'s approval (SoS 2006:3f; Kulling & Sigurdsson 2008:43).

On Saturday, July 15, *UD* more formally extends the *RPS* part of the mission to include the various identification tasks, addressing the agency directly rather than using SRSA as a go-between. Meanwhile, the first SRSA team takes off, along with a handful of *UD* disaster readiness staff, but they are all initially headed for Damascus since that is where the additional support is needed the most at the moment – anyone who finds their own way out of Beirut will most likely

arrive there and be in need of immediate assistance after the treacherous journey. But even as this team leaves, it is decided that a lot more is needed to cover the presumed escape routes, notably Nicosia and Larnaca in Cyprus, and Aleppo (SoS 2006:5f; UD 2006:9). While *UD* will arrange the actual transportation, the on-site logistics of getting everyone on and off the chain of boats, buses, and airplanes will be handled by SRSA personnel. As such, the rapid response team is drastically expanded, and SRSA is tasked with finding as many reserves as it can from its emergency staff pools. All in all, 55 people are engaged in the team. The first of which arrive in Cyprus that evening. From the initial collection of *UD* units and departments, the coordination effort has now expanded to include the Prime Minister's Office, the Government Office's administrative department, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, the administrative department of the Parliament, the Swedish Armed Forces, the National Criminal Police (*RKP*), *SøS* and SRSA (UD 2006:9, 14).

By the end of the day, two ships have been requisitioned to transport evacuees from Beirut to Larnaca, with a combined capacity of 1,650 individuals. These ships will also transport the personnel into Beirut to aid the consulate and to provide further logistical support in the city. In addition, the three parties in the war have all guaranteed safe passage for a bus convoy headed north to Aleppo, arranged by the Damascus embassy and Beirut consulate. With the pieces of the logistics puzzle largely in place, the actual evacuation effort can now begin (SoS 2006:5f; UD 2006:9).

7.2.2 *Bringing people home*

On Sunday, July 16, the bus convoy heads for Aleppo, carrying some 750 individuals. They are met by the *UD* and SRSA personnel flown in during the day, who arrange for further transport to Sweden. Most of the evacuees arrive in Sweden by air the next day. While the sea route could potentially carry larger volumes, the security situation is unclear, especially when taking into account an anti-ship missile attack against an Israeli corvette just two days earlier. At the same time, the estimates for the number of people in the region are continuously adjusted – at least a couple of hundred additional individuals are now said to be trapped in southern Lebanon, where the majority of the combat action is taking place. The means for getting them out is still unclear (Kulling & Sigurdsson 2008:39; UD 2006:9f). Four days into the war, Swedes start arriving back home, and they have less than kind words to say about how the government has handled the situation so far. The evacuations are chaotic; information is scarce; the personnel handling the evacuation and trying to manage the large groups of evacuees are described as disorganised and generally unprepared for the task at hand. The initial media reporting suggests that this may not just be a second tsunami, but actually something even *worse* in terms of how ill-prepared the national agencies are (cf. Expressen 2006-07-16; Dagen 2006-07-17; GP 2006-07-17,

2006-07-18; Helsingborgs Dagblad 2006-07-17). While the foreign minister has certainly not been laying idle, the unstated question seems to be how involved he really is in the crisis management effort. The first major meeting with the crisis management group is reported to have taken place on the day before, a full three days into the war. Some of the Mediterranean EU countries have already made great strides in getting their citizens out of the region. In spite of the large transportation capacity that has been secured and the EU coordination efforts a few days earlier, Sweden is seen as lagging behind (cf. Expressen 2006-07-16; GP 2006-07-16; TT 2006-07-16).

Also during the 16th, *SoS* decides to activate two of its medical teams and to send them to Aleppo and Larnaca. These are the main reception areas where evacuees will need medical attention and where the medical staff can assess what needs should be communicated to hospitals back in Sweden and whether more advanced care will be required (SoS 2006:6ff; Kulling & Sigurdsson 2008:14ff, 39). When discussing the matter with SRSA and SEMA, the conclusion is that *SoS* is better positioned to coordinate the information with the counties and municipalities in Sweden, and to arrange the reception back home. At first, SEMA takes on the task of maintaining and distributing the passenger lists to all parties involved, but it soon turns out that *RPS* already has working systems for assembling such lists, and means of distributing them on the county- and municipality level. The *RPS* process entails letting the information spread to the County Police Commissioners, who would then pass it on to the counties, who in turn would deliver it to the individual municipalities and local levels. In short, it would let the structure of the Swedish emergency management system work as a distributed self-informed sorting device to make sure the proper information reached the right end user. This as opposed to the SEMA system of trying to handle all the sorting and filtering centrally and in bulk. The agencies also discuss the potential need to activate SNAM, but the assessment is that there is no particular need for that kind of advanced medical care (SoS 2006:6ff; Kulling & Sigurdsson 2008:75f). Aside from getting the issue of information sharing sorted, Sunday and Monday are spent shoring up the detachments in Cyprus, in Syria, and in Lebanon itself.

By Monday, assurances have been given that the ships will be allowed safe passage, which both allows a team of 14 to arrive in Beirut and drastically reinforce the consulate, and to get a first load of evacuees to Cyprus. Over the next week, most evacuations are made by boat, and the buses previously used for the convoy to Aleppo are now used to get the evacuees down to the harbour instead. Private companies, and in particular most of the travel agencies trying to get their customers out of the conflict zone, still mainly rely on bus transports headed north. However, between the convoy and this first shipment to Larnaca, it becomes obvious that the initial estimate of 1,000 Swedes is grossly understated (UD 2006:10). Similarly, some cracks in the coordination efforts start to appear. While *SoS* is responsible for coordinating the care-giving both abroad and on

the local and regional level in Sweden, there is a lingering assumption that it should be responsible for the passenger lists, even though SEMA (temporarily) has taken over that responsibility. This message has apparently not gotten through to everyone (SoS 2006:11ff).

As responsibility for the passenger lists is transferred to SEMA and then to RPS, another crack in the system appears. Their respective systems have been designed to store and convey the information that the respective agencies need for their daily work; for example, place of residence, so the right local and regional actors can be contacted and coordinated, and various biometric information so their identity can be checked and confirmed. However, to fulfil the needs of SoS, both at the national level and at the reception areas in Cyprus and Syria, information related to the health of the prospective patient is of key importance. This information is recorded by their observers and medical teams, but is lost in transmission as there is no way to record it in the other agencies' systems. Similarly, back at the UD call centre, the routines for registering information about individuals who might be trapped in the war zone is still largely paper based, just like during the tsunami, and a second-tier team is fully employed with transferring this data from paper form into a shared database, causing delays and additional opportunities for errors (SoS 2006:14ff, 18ff; Kulling & Sigurdsson 2008:61ff; UD 2006:18ff).

Nevertheless, the measures in place seem to be working, and Tuesday, July 18 continues much as the day before as far as the Swedish efforts are concerned. The effort to quickly secure sea transportation has paid off as far as not needing to rely all that much on other countries for mass evacuation, but that work is still limited to Beirut – other areas in southern Lebanon now prove to be more troublesome. Fortunately, a deal is made and the Danish and Norwegian efforts in the care are utilised to bring people out of the southern areas, and on July 19th, another group is bused to safety (UD 2006:11). At the same time, the high-capacity sea lines of communication and the reinforcements arriving at the Beirut successfully reduced the workload at the consulate to manageable levels as evacuees are now beginning to arrive in Cyprus *en masse*.

Meanwhile, and perhaps as a consequence of these efforts, the initially very critical media narrative starts to turn. The foreign minister makes several appearances to soberly assess the situation and explain why things have happened the way they have so far (cf. SvD 2006-07-17, 2006-07-18; TT 2006-07-17; DN 2006-07-19; GP 2006-07-20; Aftonbladet 2006-07-22). Editorial pieces start appearing with the suggestion that, maybe he cannot be blamed for a situation that is rooted in half-decade old decisions, and that, on the whole, he is taking a very hands-on approach to the situation and is seen as wanting to address some of the more critical gaps and vulnerabilities that have been exposed during the last couple of days. The criticism is rather pushed downwards, towards to the operative level and to the organisations dealing with the practicalities of the evacuation. While it now seems relatively easy to get people out of the war zone,

at least when considering the inherent chaos and danger that such a situation entails, the problem is instead in the evacuation centres and in carrying out the final leg bound back to Sweden. These centres are *not* situated in a war zone, but are nevertheless chaotic, and many evacuees report that they feel stranded in a limbo where they have no idea what (and when) will happen next (cf. Aftonbladet 2006-07-19; .Helsingborgs Dagblad 2006-07-19; ÖP 2006-07-19).

Over the next couple of days, some 4,000 individuals pass through on their way home (SoS 2006:29ff; Kulling & Sigurdsson 2008:15f, 17f, 70ff; UD 2006:10f). However, reports are filtering back to SoS that some of the later arrivals at the Swedish airports are much worse off than they were at the beginning of the crisis. The question of activating SNAM is raised again, but the assessment is still that the need is not really there. Instead, it is suggested that only the nurses attached to the program are called in to accompany the evacuees on the final flight home. This would allow them to administer light care, to assess the conditions of the evacuees in more detail, and to perform some limited triage in preparation for the landing, should any special needs become apparent. Additionally, this measure would help circumvent the issue of medical information not surviving intact as it passes through the IT systems set up to catalogue evacuees.

As with many of the initial questions in the tsunami case, the issue with activating anything related to SNAM is simply one of financing. The staff is selected and commissioned by SoS – that is the agency's overall role in the SNAM function – but the current mission is headed by SRSA on a UD mandate. SoS receives its funding from the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs; SRSA sorts under the Ministry of Defence; and UD is yet a third ministry that just happens to have existing mechanisms for sending funds SRSA's way. This time, however, the need for expedience is better understood, and the inter-agency and inter-ministry co-operation has been given more leeway. Consequently, there is more trust that it will all be sorted out in the end so the matter is resolved within a couple of hours. That evening, eight nurses are flown down to the reception areas in Cyprus and Syria, and they are followed by two more the next morning (Kulling & Sigurdsson 2008:18, 53ff). In the end, the SNAM mechanism is only used to select and call in qualified personnel to the region, either to monitor and triage evacuees as they arrive at the harbours, bus stops, and airports that will take them out of the war zone, or to provide assistance on flights headed for Sweden. Initially intended as a full-service air medevac service, the system proves to offer enough flexibility to allow for a more customised rapid response to the particular needs of this situation (Kulling & Sigurdsson 2008:78). Similar flexibility is exhibited by UD in a decision to grant temporary Swedish passports to any foreign nationals with Swedish residence permits but who lacked travel papers, so as to expedite – or even bypass – any regular bureaucratic wrangling of such issues. The focus is to afford people who are allowed to go to Sweden to get to safety there as quickly as possible. Meanwhile, the air transport chain back to Sweden is now up and running, making some 20 flights between July 19 and

July 23, with a near-constant stream going from the harbour to collection points in the area and then onwards to the airport at Larnaca. Here, the frustration starts to mount among the evacuees since almost a thousand of them have to be shepherded through the process each day, at times only aided by as few as four or five SRSA staffers (SoS 2006:32ff; Kulling & Sigurdsson 2008:17f, 40).

By June 20, the land war has started in earnest in southern Lebanon, and at the same time, the last ship sails from Beirut. By now, some 5,000 individuals have been evacuated – five times the original estimate – and more are known to be trapped in the southern region. The Beirut UN office is evacuated by ship the same day, and some 80 more Swedes are allowed on board. More and more, other means of transportation have to be arranged, often in cooperation with other EU nations (UD 2006:11).

On the 21st, another bus convoy arranged by the Danish government is used to get Swedes out of the southern region, and the number of individuals showing up at the reception points in Beirut and Damascus starts to drop off considerably. The bus transports previously procured to take people to Aleppo and to the ships in the harbour are decommissioned on July 23. Evacuations made after that are either done using other nations' transports, or are arranged privately. In addition to the drastically lower volume of evacuees, the teams in place at the reception areas have now established working routines for new arrivals, which further reduces the workload. Consequently, the reinforcement and support teams are slowly being scaled back (UD 2006:11f). At the same time, the narrative of the crisis management is almost completely turned around. Even the more critical news outlets now start to describe the evacuation as a success, all things considered, and that while there may have been problems and struggles on an individual level, the government effort appears to have made marked improvement over what happened in 2004. Unlike then, the political message has been one of acknowledging problems and trying to fix them, as opposed to the blame-shifting and avoidance that marked the tsunami from day one.

7.2.3 Success (?)

The last meeting of the rapid response team is held on July 31, and several of the reception teams are dismantled the week earlier. While the evacuees keep coming until the cease-fire takes effect in mid-August, it is more of a slow drip than a constant stream, and can be dealt with by the regular staff detachment and in accordance with these new routines. As the war comes to an end, the daily workload at the consulate leans more and more towards Lebanese citizens looking to acquire visas or asylum in Sweden. In total, some 8,400 individuals are evacuated from the region over the scant month the conflict has lasted (UD 2006:12).

The public story of the crisis is still somewhat split. The evacuees themselves still express the same points of criticism as they did from the very start, similar

to what was said during the tsunami, but the political commentators instead look at the mechanisms involved in the whole operation and highlight numerous improvements in form and function.

The government agencies and ministries, and *UD* in particular, offer up a much more unified positive image of what had happened. Information was shared, issues were addressed, pragmatism overruled formal correctness, and timely decisions were made that secured critical assets and competences at an early stage. As the political commentary turns its way, the government rolls out a message of improvement and success. This is redemption for, and genuine learning from, the tsunami failure. Dissenting opinions are offered by other – mainly non-governmental – organisations that were on the ground, who describe the agencies' activities as confused, unfocused, at times even unprofessional (*cf.* DN 2006-08-12; UD 2006:4f, 13ff; Murray 2011:137). However, the surviving larger narrative remains that of a successful bit of crisis management and national cooperation.

7.3 Aftermath

In spite of this reported success and the many new means and methods of cooperation that the episode created, less than half of the main actors involved were around for very long after the evacuation. The incumbent left-wing government was still encumbered by the tsunami failure and the political storm that ensued. The Lebanon evacuation may have restored some faith in the system, but the general election in the autumn of 2006 still handed power over to a right-wing coalition. Soon after coming into office, the wounds of the tsunami were once more ripped open as the existence of the so-called “tsunami tapes” was revealed: backup tapes of data traffic on the proceedings during the crisis that had been assumed lost and could shed light on some of the remaining controversies regarding who knew what, and when, during the first few days of the crisis (Hirschfeldt et al. 2007). The Disaster Commission was reconvened to study this material and potentially change its conclusions. While the main thrust of the report remained the same after some adjustments, additional criticism was levelled against the upper echelon at *UD* for being even less prepared and in the know than had previously been assumed.

The two events demonstrated the close relatedness between the agencies SEMA and SRSA, and since two weeks before the Lebanon war, a report had been in the works that would later go on to suggest that the two agencies merge, along with the tiny National Board for Psychological Defence, into a new agency geared more towards actual crisis management (Fö 2006a, b). This new joint agency – the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (*MSB*) – became a reality on January 1, 2009.

Hoping to improve the flow of information between the ministries and between the central government and the national agencies, the new government

also took to heart the idea from the Disaster Commission Report to create a crisis coordination function within the Government Offices, sorting directly under the Prime Minister's Office (Regeringskansliet 2006:29f; Salomonson 2007). In many ways, this was envisioned as a complement to – maybe even a replacement for – the multi-agency rapid response team constructed at the ministry level, especially when combined with the information and expertise that *MSB* was meant to provide.

A curious late addendum arrived almost three years later in the form of the Swedish TV docu-drama “*Diplomaterna*” (The Diplomats). Green-lit by *UD* in 2005 and shown during the spring of 2009, the series followed a diplomat in Abu Dabi who, in one of the episodes, quite accidentally became a coordinator for the evacuation effort. The Lebanon-focused episode reignited the criticism levelled against the evacuation, as it showed scenes of confusion, chaos, and general unpreparedness among the *UD* staff. Missing equipment, a general lack of understanding of the mission, and an overall inexperience of working with Swedish citizens as opposed to foreign dignitaries was broadcast on prime time, alongside images of the staffers and diplomats enjoying what looked more like an extended vacation with cocktail parties and lounging on sandy beaches. *UD* was also accused of trying to use its editorial influence to pretty up the events of the episode through the addition of information cards telling the now-standard narrative of success, although ultimately, the producers decided against any such alterations (cf. SvD 2009-01-23; DN 2009-03-03). Nevertheless, there is a rift between the glamour of international relations on one hand, and the operational chaos of dealing with the consular woes of the regular citizen on the other – an image that found a receptive audience among the viewers, and which briefly forces *UD* to once again go into image maintenance mode to explain that they are indeed there to serve the individual as well as the nation.

7.4 Analysis

The Lebanon evacuation is a curious – almost self-contradictory – case of prolonged rapid response. Since it involved pretty much exactly the same organisations, and in many cases the exact same individuals, and a fairly similar type of crisis as the tsunami case, it should offer the same kind of complex and intertwined interactions between the various agencies. However, a lot had changed in the year and a half that separate the two events. Deliberate measures had been taken to disentangle the complexities that caused so many problems in 2004. In particular, a genuine attempt was made to streamline and coordinate the decision-making processes in the various agencies involved, and to try to focus on solving the issue at hand rather than whose issue it was to solve.

It may at first seem strange to say that a war is the same type of crisis as a natural disaster, but it is reiterating that neither the war nor the tsunami were crises for the actors involved in and of themselves – at least not on the organisational

level of analysis chosen for this study. Rather, the crisis in both cases was one of getting Swedish nationals out of harm's way as quickly as possible when they were stuck in a foreign country. The issue was also one of understanding and coordinating the capabilities of dozens of actors on all levels of government, and some in the private sector, from within the (still) small offices of an offbeat department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Some of those issues may have been resolved through sheer experience and learning, but as we shall see, those effects are largely short-circuited by the solution chosen by the principal actors in the story.

At the same time, there is a lot in the scenario to contradict the supposed success story that the Lebanon evacuation is often presented as. While the system as a whole may have worked better – and this, too, will be a matter for later discussion – some of the individual parts seem to have performed worse. The most immediate example is the initial estimate of the scope of the crisis: the on-duty desk officer who received the first reports of the tsunami was off in her estimates of how many might be affected by maybe 10%, and later estimates of the workload *UD* would have to suffer were about as accurate. The problem was that these estimates never reached the decision-makers who could have reacted to this huge number. By comparison, the first estimates of how many would be affected by the Lebanon war were off by a whopping 750%. The estimate still suggested that a large problem was at hand, and it was quickly heard by the necessary decision-makers who reacted appropriately, but the estimate was still almost an order of magnitude wrong. As luck would have it, one of those early decisions was to procure as much logistical capacity as possible, which neatly ended up nullifying that misjudgement.

A less immediate, but far more obvious example, as was noted at the time, was that the “early” judgement still came pretty late. The tsunami happened early on a Sunday morning during Christmas, in a completely different time zone; by Monday – the very next day – decisions were made and mission plans drawn up; by Tuesday, teams were in the air and Swedes started returning home. All this after a sudden and unforeseen event at perhaps the most inopportune time imaginable. In comparison, the hostilities along the Lebanese-Israeli border had become a predictable seasonal affair, and while it may have in the middle of the Swedish summer vacation, the war started on a regular Wednesday. Even with that forewarning, with an observer team accidentally already in place, and with staff even more accidentally on location at the centre of things, it still took two days from the start of the war until any real decision-making could take place. It then took two days more before the logistical machinery started to work. While no-one at *UD* really missed the war starting, the issue it would grow into only became clear as the telephones started ringing off the hook – a situation very similar to how the tsunami crisis escalated in its early stages. So where is the improvement and success?

7.4.1 Organisational context

The first place to look is in the newly established structures for reporting and sharing information, and also in a new-found willingness to initiate action. That is not to say that the boundaries of old had been razed, but rather that they were a bit more flexible than before. The close cooperation between SRSA and *SoS* through their assessment units already offers a short-cut between the two very different ministries they report to, and while *UD* is initially outside of that particular loop, its inner, inter-departmental communication had improved considerably, again short-circuiting a barrier for coordination that existed during the previous crisis. As this structure was put into place explicitly to be expanded and to include other agencies, it is not surprising that these two loops soon are intertwined, and that information is shared more readily.

Here, we can note the first lesson learned: that issue ownership was not a hard and fast rule. That is, *UD-KC* should not necessarily have the only say in all consular matters, at least not the ones that involve other agencies. Since it was largely unaware of the capabilities of those other organisations (for instance the SRSA), decisions that involved the deployment of those agencies needed to be made in collaboration with other departments that better understood exactly how, and in what capacity, the agencies could best be deployed. For their part, the close connection between SRSA and *SoS* meant that, even if SRSA had not been directly approached, it would have become involved the very moment *SoS* got into contact with *UD* or vice versa, which happened at a very early stage. So the need to include others in the decision-making process would necessarily require a process that allowed for *yet more* parties to get involved, quite unlike the insular and narrow-focused decision-making that was present during the tsunami crisis.

The main question here, then, is whether this can qualify as a significant cultural change at *UD*, or whether it is more in the nature of the burgeoning crisis and how it triggers memories of a very similar situation during the tsunami crisis. If it is the former, then some deeper learning has taken place, and we can expect the ease of including various external actors to continue. If it is the latter, then it is more a matter of the type of analogous cognitive processes described by Khong (1992), with all the potential pitfalls this entails. Unfortunately, the material is not extensive or detailed enough to allow for a definitive answer on this question. For our purposes, however, it suffices to note that an arena of interaction has sprung up within the organisation, where the exchange of knowledge can take place.

A more distinct and marked improvement over the handling of the tsunami is how the organisations involved seem a lot more comfortable in yielding responsibility to better suited actors. During the tsunami, we saw *UD-KC* and *RKP* compete over who would ultimately manage the lists of identified individuals, whereas in the Lebanon case, *UD* delegated all such matters. At first, it

goes to *SoS*, because of its natural connection to the county-based health care system, then it is passed to SEMA, because of their more encompassing role as information coordinators in the larger crisis management system, and finally it ends up at *RPS*, because it does the same thing, only more organically. Granted, there are some kinks in the system. This rapid passing of the torch makes other actors lose track of who is actually responsible for maintaining the passenger lists until SEMA takes it on as one of its information coordination tasks. Another issue is the inadvertent loss of information that simply does not fit into the database schema employed the *RPS*. It may be argued whether this is more a case of yielding or of dodging responsibility, especially with the initial fiasco of the tsunami identified persons lists, but I would argue that if it were a case of trying to dodge responsibilities, we would have seen the baton being passed on more times than this, and we would also not have seen *SoS* make later measures to supplement the information flow with its own information feed to the health care actors. In a sense, *SoS* ended up doing exactly what it intended to do at the very beginning, but without the effort of actually collecting *all* the personal information. Instead, it could leave that part in the hands of the identification expertise of *RPS*, and concentrate on adding its own medicine-specific knowledge wherever it was needed.

7.4.2 *The nature of the crisis*

As mentioned earlier, the Lebanon evacuation is in many ways very similar to the tsunami a year and a half earlier: the same actors are involved in solving the same kind of problem – the transportation and care of thousands of Swedes caught in a disaster abroad – while under intense political and public pressure. While the cast of characters has been expanded for the case description, the actor chosen remains *UD*, not just because it offers a straighter point of comparison between the cases, but because it is still at the centre of the kinds of structures that are of interest for this study. The tsunami had been a crisis, not just for the top political level, but for the organisation as a whole, and it exposed a number of deficiencies in how the ministry went about its business. Irrespective of the changes at the top, Lebanon became a second test for that same organisation – the question was to what extent it was still the same after the reorganisation and optimisations that had happened during the preceding year.

As discussed in Chapter 3, however, the nature of the material and of the crisis itself is such that the balance of the narrative does not follow this central actor as closely as the material on the tsunami. As expected, in a success story everyone talks about their own accomplishments; in a failure, the scapegoat – whether the title is deserved or not – gets all the attention. Even so, the scattered sources offer enough insight to discuss the key issues at stake for this analysis.

Time pressure

Unlike the tsunami case, the time pressure in the evacuation is more of a classic ticking-clock scenario. The Swedes in the region are caught in the middle of an escalating war, and the longer they remained there, the worse the odds that they will end up injured, wounded, or killed. *On top of this*, there is also a time pressure that directly echoes the pressure the government was under during the tsunami: being able to provide the service expected by the Swedish citizens from their government. This aspect comes with the added twist of being directly comparable against the events of 2004, and the expectation that matters should have improved since then. The actual services demanded were much the same: information about the situation, information about how to get out, and the purely practical matter of *finding* an actual way out of the region. A final twist was the fact that there was a potential for competition over resources. Unlike in South-east Asia, where in spite of the devastation, it was reasonably easy to actually get air transport to the location and fly people out (meaning the transport capacity could potentially be sourced almost from anywhere around the world), the options available in Lebanon were much more limited. Not only was the threat still very much active, but the expedient solution of direct air lifting was completely out of the question. While not as directly under threat, trains relied on static and sensitive infrastructure that itself became a target on both sides of the conflict. That left boats and road transport, neither of which is quickly sourced nor entirely safe unless security guarantees could be obtained from the belligerents.

At the same time, the time pressure really should be a lot lower due to the nature of the underlying threat: the Shebaa Farms conflict had become a regular occurrence for the last six years, so while it may have come as a surprise that it would flare up into a full-blown war, some preventive measures could have been taken to ensure that travellers in this particular region at this time of year had some extra backup. In a way, *UD* had “solved” this issue already long before the tsunami, and even more vocally afterwards in the explicit policies and laws governing travellers’ right and obligations when they venture into unstable regions. It is in large part *their* legal responsibility to have a backup plan of things heat up. Thus, the time pressure release that might have come from having made arrangements beforehand was largely beyond the ministry’s control.

Even so, it is telling that the very earliest efforts were focused on procuring means of transportation in and out of the region, even if unconventional methods had to be used. Even though he got help from the embassy in Damascus, the fact that a desk officer who happened to be at the centre of things was given very free reigns to procure and coordinate some kind of transport highlights the perceived importance of solving this issue as soon as possible. Some of this may be due to the relatively late start in getting a response going – the ministry was already behind the curve, trying to catch up. It is also telling that a pattern from

the tsunami repeats itself here: both times, the ministry weighs a timely response against an *informed* response. In Thailand, it takes the ambassador's eye-witness report to really set things in motion; in Lebanon, it takes the desk officer's report from the half-beleaguered city to set everyone's priorities straight. However, once that situational picture is established, there is considerable swiftness thereafter. Ships and buses are procured, and guarantees for their safe passage are arranged from parties who really have more pressing issues at hand.

In the aftermath, both the criticism and the praise is well-founded. It took longer for the Swedish government to act, but once they acted, they did so more efficiently than many others. *Actual safe* delivery of the stranded individuals takes precedence over a speedy one, even if this means drawing down additional criticism for seemingly just as slow as last time, or maybe even slower. At the same time, great expedience and speed is afforded the attempts to improve the local presence, which again becomes a double-edged sword. On the one hand, this means the many contingents can aid in solving the uncertainty issue earlier, but on the other hand, some of the personnel may not have been fully briefed or not up to the task at hand. It should be noted that a consistent theme in the reports on the evacuation is that SRSA's fortuitous early presence gave them a head start on evaluating the situation. *SoS* comes a close second due to its analysts being hooked directly into the SRSA observation effort. *UD*'s fondness for accounts from trusted sources – that is, *UD* personnel – on the ground means that while it had access to both SRSA's and *SoS* information from an early stage, it was not enough on its own to act on other than to approve the agencies' closer observation of the situation. The first request to the two agencies also mainly entails support for these observation efforts. Only as more trusted reports come in describing the critical condition is a decision made to actually make use of agency-specific expertise, notably medical staff to care for evacuees, police personnel to deal with identification and customs issues, and SRSA personnel for logistical and technical issues. Not until SEMA enters the scene are any of the agencies really trusted with observation and information sharing, even though observation in particular, is a forte of both SRSA and *SoS*.

At any rate, there is no doubt that there are multiple time pressures at play for *UD*, and that it mainly becomes a matter of priority in which pressures are more important to resolve first. Establishing a reliable situational picture comes very near the top.

Uncertainty

The fact that situational awareness is such a top priority suggests that uncertainty is the one factor *UD* abhors the most, yet feels there is a lot of. The actual understanding of the war, the geography, the political arena the root causes to the escalation is encapsulated in an entire department dedicated to the region. Instead, it is once again the more practical, operational matters that stump the ministry. How many

Swedish nationals are in the region? What means of transportation are available? Where is everyone going? How can we establish secure lines of travel and communication? What is everyone else doing, and how does that affect our options? Together these present more ambiguity regarding potential outcomes than the outright uncertainty about what is actually going on – wars and evacuations are known, if unpredictable, entities. The fact that the event itself is a known entity and that practical and process matters are the main source of uncertainty means that there are no immediate identification paradoxes at play. We would have to dig a bit deeper and unduly stretch the concept to really find one.

One point of uncertainty that caused numerous headaches during the tsunami is dealt with very early on and then treated as more of a nuisance than an absolute hindrance: financing. Almost from the very start, the government approves additional financing to deal with the evacuation, which certainly provides a comforting buffer for future wranglings. Figuring out exactly who will pay what takes a second seat to having the right people actually approve the planned cause of action – since the money is there already, the exact details can be figured out later. A similar source of uncertainty that seems to have been left by the wayside is the distrust in other organisations' practices and methods that was present during the tsunami. It turned out that *UD* was not the only one who knew what it was doing and who might even be allowed to continue to do its thing. This conclusion may have been further buttressed by the steps towards a more inclusive atmosphere inside *UD*, where it was no longer quite as necessary to be in a competition for status with the other departments. The establishment of both the rapid response teams and the disaster readiness teams point towards a blooming realisation that all the subject-matter expertise at the ministry works best in some kind of synergy or larger context provided by some other subject matter.

However, while those are marked improvements, they are significantly counter-balanced by the massive misestimation of the scope of the operation. Unfortunately, the material offers no deeper insight into the reasons behind this mistake. It could just be that tourists are easier to track and that their travel data is fairly trivially collected from industry sources, whereas trips to Lebanon happen for different reasons that do not leave as big of a mark in the databases. At the same time, it is perhaps not entirely accurate to label this as uncertainty or ambiguity. After all, they had an answer, and thus the uncertainty was resolved. Just because the answer turned out to be *wrong* does not mean it did not exist. At a stretch, the estimate might be considered a mild identification paradox: the ministry was not aware that it should perhaps look more closely into how many individuals they it be expected to help, but the core feature of the paradox is that one does not even know that a question exists to be asked. Here, it was accurately identified as a key issue; the question was known and it was asked, and while it did not receive the best of answers, it was still something they could work with, plan from, and expand on as time went by. As new information came in, the estimate was revised, but even then, the uncertainty lay more with the

consequences of this re-evaluation than with the number itself. Once transports had been secured, the decision was rather to go “by gut feeling” than to worry about if the number was right or not. If more people showed up, then they could be transported at a decent rate too; if fewer did, the operation could slowly be scaled back. So while there may have been some ambiguity of choice, it does not seem to have been one that induces the complexities, conflicts, or trade-offs that are the hallmark of the uncertainty-as-analytical-term in the crisis definition. Much like how the FBI chose not to make time a factor in Montana, it seems that – at least on this particular point – *UD* chose not to make precise estimates of evacuees a cause for stress.

Nevertheless, and as repeatedly noted in the analysis of time pressure, there is a fairly clear attempt from the ministry to resolve the inherent crisis conflict triangle by trading away time to lessen ambiguity. While this would have been an easy choice if there were no real time pressures to begin with, we have already seen that this is not the case. Instead, a better understanding of the situation is simply a higher valued commodity than time – a slightly delayed action is the lesser evil. That is not to say that this is the *only* way that particular trade happens, only that it is the general trend. With the decision to give the Beirut and Damascus stations free hands to try to sort something out, in spite of the consulate only really being staffed by a regular desk officer as its one proper *UD* representative, they chose to introduce a fair amount of risk and uncertainty into the proceedings rather than to wait until the station staff could receive proper reinforcements. Some of this can certainly be explained by the fact that waiting would itself introduce risks and uncertainties. At the time, there was no telling when – if at all – the Beirut consulate could be reached from the outside, and there was a definite risk that the station would be lost and thus of no use at all if they waited for a better time. So instead, *UD* played the hand it was dealt since, while it was perhaps a bit of a gamble, it still offered more knowns than what the next day might bring.

So it is beyond question that uncertainties and ambiguities existed. They were prime targets for swift resolution, but they could not be fully opted out of or ignored – only prioritised and weighed against other options.

Critical values at stake

A complicating factor in all of this is that time and expedience were in and of themselves components in the values at stake. Due to the similarity of circumstances, the actual values at stake within the various *UD* departments are almost blueprint copies of what we saw in the tsunami, but the fact that the tsunami had happened added an additional layer on top of this. Now the ministry as a whole critically needs to convey that it can actually work *as a whole* rather than as a collection of disparate entities. Perhaps more than the individual wants and needs of the departments, what was at stake this time was the reputation of the

ministry itself, and each department simply must perform better towards its “customers” this time around.

Exactly who the recipient is for each of the departments has not changed much. For *UD-KC*, it is the Swedes stranded in the region; for *UD-GS*, it is largely the other agencies and ministries, in Sweden and abroad; and for the department of this geographic region – the Middle East and North Africa (*UD-MENA*), as opposed to *UD-ASO* in the tsunami case – it is the actual belligerents. This time, they are all in the public eye, which at the same time makes the press office less of a shield to effectively hide behind, but also demands that the office will have a lot more to do in providing an accurate picture of what is being done.

A small factor of relief is that since the event is an escalating war rather than a natural disaster, there is less of a conflict between projecting the image of Sweden as a supplier of aid to other nations and the need to help its own citizens. At a later stage, there might be a call for Swedish support for UN interventions or for post-war activities such as mine-clearing, but while the conflict is hot, sending direct humanitarian aid is not a top priority. This helps focusing on the task *UD* has ahead of it, across all departments. In the short term, it is very clearly about aiding Swedish citizens. In the mid- and long term, depending on the events and outcomes of the conflict, more classic foreign aid might be needed, but that will be a question for the future and by then, the matter of providing aid to Swedes will hopefully have been fully resolved. Thus, it rather becomes a question of proving that the newly instated support and response mechanisms work and are effectuated.

In the end, the heart of the matter is still one of preserving – or perhaps of *restoring* – the ministry’s self-image after the battering it took during the tsunami crisis. The newly replaced foreign minister position helps a little in offering a fresh start as far as high-level decision-making goes, but the ministry is still its own separate bureaucratic organisation with its own history and prestige, all detached from whatever minister is temporary in the top seat. It was imperative to show that *UD* is actually capable of taking the lead in this kind of situation, and to coordinate the numerous national and international actors involved, and not have the whole thing collapse within a week. But it is important to once again note exactly what part of this image took the fore-front. As mentioned, expedience and speed were crucial components in the criticism that had been levelled against the government, including *UD*, during and after the tsunami. However, that criticism was more focused on a handful of key decision-makers than on the organisation as a whole. From the ministry’s perspective, the blame for the delays can pretty universally be shifted onto others (although they may not always agree). When the Lebanon situation arose, restoring the self-image, at least internally, meant to do things *right* – expediently, yes, but doing them right and ensuring good outcomes was a higher priority. Function was a more critical value than speed. But more than that, this time, though, function and “doing it right” was not analogous to following proper procedure. A good out-

come was valued higher than strict adherence to routines and regulations. No laws should be broken, of course, but mere policy and tradition were not good enough reasons to avoid a workable solution. Luckily, as with the chosen solution for manning the Beirut consulate, this new flexible attitude also happened to save a fair amount of time.

As previously mentioned, some of this confidence is no doubt borne from the fact that the ever-pressing matter of funding was sorted out at a very early stage, leaving the question of who should pay for what as a matter of accounting to be sorted at a less stressful point in time in the future. The prime example of this is the issue of figuring out how to deploy the SNAM nurses. What might otherwise have been a drawn-out haggling session between four agencies and three ministries was compressed into convincing everyone that the money was there; the services would be paid for; and if everyone just signed at the dotted line, the more time-critical matter of getting the nurses in the air could be resolved immediately, and the administrative details could be straightened out later.

So while there is once again no doubt that critical values were at stake, it was also fairly clear how these values were prioritised. The key issue was repairing the ministry's image by managing to solve the problem of getting people home. The exact formalities of this solution were less important than the end result, and while it may have stung to be lambasted for being even slower than during the tsunami, avoiding mistakes took priority over doing things quickly, unless not acting quickly meant risking an opportunity that could be lost. There was also a distinct lack of clashing values between the different departments and between the different actors involved, which further helped in clarifying these priorities.

All in all, the evacuation definitely represented a crisis for *UD*, but it ended up being a fairly mild one due to the clarity of the task at hand. It may not be the complete self-defined, non-crisis the FBI managed to chose in Montana, but it was also not the completely unknown and uncontrollable chaos of the tsunami. There was a clear time pressure, especially in terms of improving situational awareness, but there was also a strongly sense of satisficing in the strategies adopted to get this awareness. *UD* had to wait to get *some* reliable information, but after that, "some" was enough. At most some criticism could be levelled against their perception of what it constituted 'reliable' information; the sense that only *UD* itself could really provide such information still lingered. Likewise, there were some clear points of uncertainty, or at least of ambiguity of choice, but there was also a definite order of priority between these ambiguities that kept them from causing a deadlock, and the highest priority was one that could be traded against time, which was available to a reasonable degree. Similarly, while there were clearly several values at stake, these too existed on a ladder of priority and while the time factor could have been a potential case for conflict, it was such a low priority that it did not cause the whole machinery to deadlock from wavering indecision.

7.4.3 Anticipation of due process

In terms of anticipation, the Lebanon evacuation is a very different beast from the tsunami. The event itself was in some ways anticipated – the Shebaa Farms conflict had been brewing for years, and was always a potential powder keg waiting to be set off. The fact that the SRSA was already in Cyprus to monitor the situation more closely shows that it was not an sudden, wholly unpredictable affair. The degree to which it would affect Sweden, on the other hand, was more surprising, as is shown not just by the relatively slow response at *UD*, but by its failure to even remotely accurately estimate how many citizens were in the area. The war itself was obvious, and of some concern, but it was once again by means of getting inundated by phone calls that the ministry discovered that this would be another large-scale evacuation crisis. Here, though, experience shows its advantage. Setting aside all other changes, over the past year and a half, the fact that it was now faced with the same challenge of responding to a huge volume of consular cases, of figuring out a way to get everyone home safely, and of providing information for next of kin back in Sweden should in and of itself mean that the process that would ensue could be anticipated.

But more than that, the processes and procedures had just been given a thorough revision and refinement in an attempt to identify and fix the procedural shortcomings the tsunami had unveiled. Much like for FBI after Waco, one of the more critical realisations was that some processes cannot – indeed *should* not – be anticipated, but rather be loosely guided by general principles aimed at achieving some end goal. Following the rules and procedures should not be a goal in and of itself in these kinds of dynamic situations since no rigid bureaucracy can ever be constructed to fully map out in strict processes all the kinds of problems that might arise when thousands of individuals need to be processed, in a war zone, in just a few days.

Instead, in learning from the tsunami, *UD* had adopted deliberately flexible aid functions that assumed from the get-go that its actual composition could not be known ahead of time. This meant that, while the every-day procedures at *UD* might still be fully at work within the confines of its own walls, it should always anticipate a need to collaborate with any number of other actors, and not even just governmental agencies, which will all have their own processes and procedures. In what might almost be seen as a Zen-like paradox, the ministry adopted a due process of anticipating that the due process could not be anticipated. That is not to say that it was all unknowable – for the most part, *UD would* work with other governmental agencies, in particular ones its had previously worked with, all of which shared the same fundamental administrative roots and traditions. *UD* also seemingly learned that the every-day processes for consular matters would require some modifications in order to also work when processing large volumes, but more than that, the ministry learned that it was not always necessarily *UD's* job to do the processing to begin with. During the

tsunami, there was a week-long tug-of-war as to who would who would work on the processing, using what system, and for what purpose. In the Lebanon, case, a lot of the processing was decentralised and delegated to other agencies as long as there was no actual consular-affair issue that needed to be resolved. The ministry still had to act as one of the primary information hubs for the public as far as the state of the evacuation and the state of the war, but rather than trying to be the centre of everything, a lot of the information dissemination was handed over to SEMA. Similarly, the processing and distribution of evacuee lists was delegated to the *RPS*, and the reception, transportation, and similar logistical matters were in to a large extent handled by *SRSA* and *SoS*.

In other words, there seemed to be a new-found trust in the abilities of other agencies' abilities to use *their* particular processes, and that any information that was needed could then be queried from them rather than having everything stored centrally at *UD*. While some issues certainly arose from this mix of methods and systems – notably the medical information that was lost in transmission – they were no worse than the haphazard chaos that grew out of the ministry's attempt to do everything during the tsunami.

The willingness to step away from the regular hierarchies and decision-making processes was also made apparent by how the Beirut consulate matter and the financing was handled. While the former may have been a source for criticism from other actors – it turns out that there might be some sound foundation to the idea of seniority position and a professionally progression, all of which was bypassed by having a fairly junior desk officer be in charge. For the purposes of this study, it is a clear example of *UD* temporarily eschewing its regular, strictly hierarchical culture. The partial *SNAM* activation likewise showed a similar willingness to get something going, and worrying about crossing the t:s and dotting the i:s later, again going against the grain of the normally very bureaucratic culture at the ministry. At the same time, both instances demonstrate that this was not just the ministry playing fast and loose with the rules. The Beirut station was properly reinforced as soon as it was possible, and the exact details of the *SNAM* deal were ironed out during the following days. Both are instances of *UD* not shying away from an opportunity when it presented itself, yet still making sure that, in the end, something as close as possible to normalcy was maintained.

By introducing the new support and rapid response functions, the ministry had implicitly accepted that other organisational cultures were simply something they would have to deal with and that ambiguities would arise, but that this was not an unsolvable problem. There was a markedly higher trust in not just the collaborators and their competences, but in the collaboration process in and of itself, to the point where it had become a formalised *ad-hoc* structure that *UD* personnel must be aware of.

This means that almost all the deviations listed in Section 2.6 have been nullified before the fact, leaving little to no cause for any kind of “procedural surprise.” The type-7 deviation – a requirement to go through a generalist intermediary

– is not really applicable to this particular case, since the subject-matter that the ministry needed to communicate was well within its own field of competence. Had the subject of analysis been *SoS* rather than *UD*, however, a very clear example of this deviation would have been the use of the *RPS* IT systems and its inability to properly retain the medical data that the doctors and nurses in the field gathered. Even then, the parties involved fairly quickly found a solution to this problem, making any process issues short-lived and either way, this episode never directly affected *UD*. It is still worth bringing up, though, since the ministry was the coordinating authority that assembled the various agencies, and from that perspective, it offers a hint of the lack of understanding of the needs of those other parties. The ministry simply solved the issue by washing its hands of it by delegating the matter to *SEMA* and *RPS* to sort out to the best of *their* ability. In a bit of an ironic twist, this instance of indirectly causing process issues for other agencies ends up demonstrating a higher degree of procedural flexibility and lack of surprise on *UD*'s part. Overall, then, the changes made since the tsunami have, if not completely removed all kinds of procedural surprise, then at least significantly improved the ministry's ability to anticipate and adapt to unknown processes that will come into play during a crisis.

7.4.4 Organisational closed-ness

As with the previous case, it tempting to look at the change in procedures, at the many unusual solutions employed by the ministry, or – in a meta-reading of the text – just at the fact that we have a before-and-after comparison of an organisation that has reformed itself following a crisis, and based on this start ticking the boxes for the open organisation. However, as before, this is still the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. While tarnished, its image as a high-prestige organisation dealing with the very formal world of international relations remains and this is indeed one of the factors motivating its behaviour during the crisis. So it is perhaps best to resist the temptation and instead consider how the organisation acted throughout the crisis. As mentioned in the previous chapter, though, we should perhaps not expect to be able to extrapolate too far from the unusual circumstances that a crisis entails – it is an inherently dynamic and unfamiliar situation, which will most likely create all kinds of odd solutions that may act as black swans in our attempt at categorising the organisational behaviour.

Guiding principle

When we look back at the highlights of the case with a mind towards discovering the ministry's guiding principles, this problem quickly becomes obvious. The narrative contains a number of instances where *UD* goes outside the normal order of business: the delegation of authority to *SRSA* and *RPS*; assigning junior staff to manage a consulate; and approving teams and missions without the usual

formality and adherence to hierarchy. The whole rapid response team concept in and of itself is centred on the idea that normal processes will not suffice in a crisis situation. With all that in mind, it is easy to think that this is an organisation that has embraced informality as its guiding principle.

However, drawing such a conclusion would be to gloss over the larger context of each of the individual incidents. Yes, tasks were handed off to other agencies, but it was largely done so based on the experience from the tsunami, which taught the ministry that these tasks, while ostensible related to the work done at *UD-KC*, are not what the department is really good at or at times even trained for. The other organisations had already established procedures for that type of work, whereas, in comparison, similar efforts at the ministry would need to be largely unscripted or improvised to cope with the anticipated volume of cases. It is almost the exact opposite of turning away from regulation. Instead, it is the ministry concedes that the regulations it usually adheres to are not actually fit for purpose in a crisis situation so sticking with them will inevitably mean that the regulations have to be abandoned at some point. Meanwhile, the regulations of the other actors involved are not just fit for purpose but are *specifically designed* to deal with extraordinary circumstances. Thus, in temporarily adopting or incorporating those foreign, “crisis-hardened” regulations, UD can stay in a regulation-bound mode much longer and much more consistently. In fact, the situation becomes *even more* to regulation-bound this way – just not to the regulations that *UD* would normally apply.

For the consulate and expedited mission approval, it is important to note that these were very temporary measures, approved to cease an opportunity that might otherwise be lost, but that measures were taken to restore normal order and ensure that as the work continued to be done “by the book” as soon as possible. In a slightly longer perspective, the same phenomenon can be observed in how the offices in Damascus and Nicosia were reinforced. At first, all manners of additional support was needed from a wide range of agencies, but they were there to take the brunt of the initial shock wave and to establish working routines. It barely took a week before the flow of evacuees had lessened and the existing *UD* staff was up to speed on the routines, at which point the support effort was dismantled. Soon, it was a regular *UD* office doing regular *UD* work, albeit in a slightly irregular situation. Thus, the change was not one away from regulation, but more a pragmatic realisation that what was already in place would again be insufficient to handle the expected volume of cases.

A similar interpretation, writ large, also explains the rapid response and disaster readiness setup. Temporary set-ups are meant to deal with extraordinary circumstances, but *these set-ups are themselves regulated*. They, too, do not represent a step away from regulations, but a way to regulate how to handle the extraordinary. They are what Lindkvist et al. (2014) call “*ad-hoc* formal” structures – that is, a prepared temporary measure that is regulated in much the same way as any other organisational structure, and which is a known, but normally inactive

part of the regular structure. The ministry goes slightly beyond this particular terminology by allowing for a wide range of different compositions of actors, but that is more a matter of a flexible work flow than of lacking regulation. As before, this should probably not surprise us in the case of *UD*. Its mission, its area of expertise, and its age-old culture are all geared towards strict and formal regulation and organisational behaviour. Temporary solutions are just that: temporary, not informal. At most, the rapid response structure may introduce a bit of informality between the different departments at the ministry compared to before or compared to how they work on an every-day basis, as does the introduction of the on-call decision-making function, but the fact that these are still pre-planned and regulated functions means that, on the whole, the Ministry of Foreign affairs retains ‘regulation’ as its guiding principle.

Instrumental work flow

As already mentioned, the one thing the new crisis measures offer is a drastically increased flexibility in how work is handled, not just internal to the ministry, but in its relations with other ministries, agencies, local and regional authorities, and private-sector actors. Here, the fact that these measures turn out to be a part of an overarching regulatory mindset just strengthens the indication that this is now an accepted part of the organisational behaviour and not just an isolated anomaly. Yes, their use is limited to extraordinary circumstances, but that still means that the organisation intends to adapt according to circumstances, rather than to steadfastly stick to its regular structure and methods.

In particular, the ad-hoc structures allow for a more flexible work force to tackle a more dynamic and evolving situation; it allows for direct contact between actors that would normally not communicate to any greater extent; and it allows for a more flexible work schedule where task priorities are allowed to change over time, and where there is a better shared situational awareness. Here, more than in the case of the guiding principle, the anomalous decisions regarding staffing and financing point towards a truly open organisational mindset. Yes, everything should return to normal as soon as possible, but until then, abnormalities are accepted and the larger the gain, the larger the anomaly is allowed to be. It is also worth reiterating the point made in the previous chapter: just because any given course of action is rigid once it is enacted does not necessarily mean that the setup as a whole is rigid – it may just mean that there is really only one way of enacting that particular option, but that there is a great flexibility in exactly which option is chosen. There may be some hard-to-define boundary where a large number of prepared strategies are essentially just a part of a larger and still very rigid decision-making process, but this is a semantic question for another time.

Here, though, it is clear that the extraordinary crisis measures are there specifically to allow for “unscripted” and untried strategies, as long as they seem sane enough to work so we neatly avoid the definitional problem in the Lebanon

case. Whereas in the tsunami case, we saw the anomalies in how work was done as exactly that: anomalies, the introduction of the special crisis measures means that the anomalous has become part of the acceptable work-flow. Normalcy should eventually prevail, but it is counter-productive to try to force the issue before circumstances allow for it, so instead, affording everyone a more flexible approach to problem-solving is seen as taking advantage of what opportunities and temporary benefits can be achieved. Even so, it does not mean that the solutions are chosen completely at a whim – the ministry’s choice to sacrifice a bit of time to get a clearer situational picture suggests that it still wants to at least be aware of what “solution space” is available. It is sometimes said that, in crises, a bad decision today is better than a good one tomorrow, but *UD* does not seem to fully subscribe to that saying. Rather, it seems to go by the logic that, before you make a bad decision today, see how bad it is in comparison with what else you can decide at the moment. It is not a total flexibility, but rather a flexibility tempered by a kind of information satisficing.

Unlike in the tsunami case, then, the distinction we had to struggle with as far as distinguishing true flexibility from rigid rules that simply were not applicable is no longer a problem. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has very kindly already made that distinction for us. Any normal rules that *are* applicable, are applied; for everything else, the new *ad-hoc* structures are there specifically to find flexible solutions and alternatives. Here, some minor tendency towards rigidity may be observed. The goal of these processes is to quickly find a routine to deal with the unforeseen problems that have come up. It is an attempt to still adhere to the administrative norms and to maintain an acceptable level of rule of law.

On the whole, this is the only real arguments that can be made to support the notion that the ministry falls into the rigid category, but it is a fairly weak one. It is more an indication of the established focus on regulations as a guiding principle, or maybe of consistency as a preferred outcome, not on rigid adherence to those regulations. The solutions are still temporary – adapted for the specific moment – and therefore cannot really be considered as a type of rigidity. At most it turns into a semantic argument over what constitutes normalcy – that is, to a state of affairs where rigidity can be maintained – and how much effort is put into returning to that state, but in the end, every larger decision made in relation to the rapid response and disaster readiness teams is one of finding a flexible solution to a new problem using every tool at the disposal of these teams.

The mere fact that a decision was made to institute these teams is almost enough on its own to reject a ‘rigidity’ classification. It also implicitly gets rid of the “someone else’s problem” mode of thinking that plagued the tsunami case, since it is the response team’s shared responsibility to figure out solutions, and everyone is in it together. Thus the flexibility in joining up may be somewhat forced, but again that does nullify the fact that the flexibility is there – it may be less flexible than it would be if everyone felt fully invested in the affair, but that is just a difference in degrees, not a complete reversal into rigidity.

With the caveat that these are measures solely meant to be employed under extraordinary circumstances, then, everything points to ‘flexibility’ as being the instrumental work flow for the ministry during the Lebanon evacuation, and the caveat is itself rather an argument in favour of this label. A rigid organisation would not have implemented such special-case measures but would have struggled to the end to keep doing things the way it had always done them.

Preferred outcome

We have already touched on one indication that consistency is the preferred outcome for *UD*. This should perhaps not surprise us since it is part of the bureaucratic and administrative tradition of not just the ministry but of the entire Swedish model for government agencies and indeed with the fundamental idea of rule of law. Agencies should always strive to be consistent in their interpretation and implementation of laws and instructions. In truth, very little has changed on this point since the tsunami. The means of getting to that outcome may have been afforded a bit more freedom, but at the end of the day, there is very little in the case to support the notion that the assessments and outcomes should differ from one detachment or office to the next, or that judgements should be much different than they normally would.

It is only in this distinction between crisis and normalcy that we may find any indication of wanting to adjust the outcome. On the whole, it is supposed to be the individual’s personal responsibility to ensure their safety and ability to travel. *UD-KC* issues travel advisories to help people avoid volatile areas where they may get into sticky situations, Technically speaking, there is no obligation to actually evacuate anyone from a dangerous area, but in practice, this is not a politically tenable position. Thus, an argument could be made that the evacuation as a whole represents a kind of dynamic outcome, but such a conclusion falls afoul of three key words: “as a whole.” The response was actually consistently applied to everyone who was affected. Likewise, the one large decision made to make an exception to standard procedures and afford anyone with a Swedish residence permit a temporary passport to simplify the process of leaving the war zone. The ministry is a policy-driven bureaucracy, and both of these instances are simply new policies that should be consistently applied to everyone. They are not attempts at finding tailor-made solutions for each individual.

At a stretch, the work done by the rapid response and disaster support teams might be seen as a form of dynamic outcome since they *do* have to be tailored for the specifics of the moment, but again, these are also simply policies to be consistently applied, should the situation call for it. The teams are a tool, and a temporary one at that – not an outcome. Again, it should be clarified that the consistency of the outcome does not mean that everyone will receive the same answer when interacting with *UD*, but rather that the rules and guidelines applicable to their case will be used with a high degree of consistency. Hence why

even very extraordinary measures can be considered consistent. It might not be consistent with every-day proceedings to be given a temporary Swedish passport, but under these specific circumstances, the special-case rules and guidelines for doing so are supposed to be consistently applied for any and enquirers,

7.4.5 MESO usage

An unfortunate consequence of the supposed success story of the Lebanon evacuation is that the material does not go into quite as much detail as to who discussed what with whom, which makes a good MESO analysis that much more difficult. Unlike FBI in Montana, this case is simply known for being a success and for using better inter-agency coordination, not for any specific use of knowledge to solve a particularly tricky knowledge-based problem. As mentioned on several occasions, the actual event itself was already well within the established and explicit area of competence of the ministry, which somewhat obscures the interactions and knowledge sharing that nevertheless took place. Instead, it has to be gleaned from reports by other actors and in the ways *UD* approached a handful of specific issues.

Meta-knowledge

Somewhat paradoxically, it is in the field of meta-knowledge that we find both the high-point and the low-point of the ministry's knowledge management. Throughout the crisis, the ministry consistently identifies and tries to resolve a number of knowledge gaps regarding the situation in Lebanon and in particular Beirut. The organisational tradition of preferring reports from its own staff is still alive and well, and while there is a lot of knowledge to go around among the other agencies and organisations that are already en route to or in place around the war zone (all of which are known to *UD* since it had to approve a number of them), the beleaguered state of the city is not fully appreciated until contact is made with the junior desk officer visiting the city. As with the case of Thailand the year before, none of this really should have been new information at this point, which suggests that in spite of its emphasis on seeking information, the organisation still had problem taking inventory of what was already available. Something similar is also the only reason that can be deduced for the initial estimate of how many individuals might need to be evacuated from the area. The estimate was seemingly made without any attempt to check against other sources that might have offered a more accurate appraisal. While lucky circumstances would allow these issues to pass by without causing any acute problems, they still illustrate a lack of critical reflection on what is supposedly known. This is something of a backside of the kind of satisficing logic that is normally praiseworthy in crises: do not wait for perfect information when good enough is already at hand. But how do you determine whether what you know is good enough? As mentioned

earlier, it is not quite an identification paradox, since an knowledge gap was actually correctly identified and a sensible and informed question was asked to fill that gap – the problem is rather that the answer was not critically assessed.

A fortuitous detail was that these two issues conspired to actually create a solution to a brewing problem before the problem could fully develop. By demanding that staff in Beirut and Damascus took care to monitor the situation and to make their own arrangements for transport, irrespective of whatever could be worked out from Stockholm, and that they stay in place rather than join to try to create a single, better-staffed office, an apparent transport over-capacity was created just as it was revealed that this capacity was actually needed. Had the decision been made to simply trust the estimate and to either rely on just a single ship and/or may two trips with the bus convoy, the evacuation would have become much more time consuming and stressful. Indeed, based on that the first estimate and on what was later found out about the logistical solutions among other Nordic countries, it may have seemed sensible to just tag along with their convoys. Instead, two wrongs made a right: by not clarifying how many needed to be evacuated and by not fully trusting the reports of others, someone was on site to discover that far more Swedes had turned up, and that there was now both enough shipping capacity to carry them in large groups, and enough busing capacity to get everyone to the ships.

In contrast to this lucky self-nullifying knowledge gap, there was the coordination done between the Swedish agencies in conjunction with the rapid response team effort. The team itself is an interesting knowledge arena that we will get back to in a bit, but from a pure meta-knowledge perspective, it is interesting in that it demonstrates a kind of self-awareness that the ministry had not shown the last time. Specifically, this meta-knowledge manifests itself in the assignment of the various tasks associated with the evacuation effort. Instead of wanting to appear as the omnipotent Ministry of Foreign (or indeed *any and all*) Affairs, it was made clear that *UD* would mainly take on the role of communicating with other nations and with the Swedish public, and to resolve the consular matters which was its role to handle anyway. Experience had taught the organisation that its competence did not lie in identifying and cataloguing thousands of people; in micro-managing logistics; or in disseminating information to regional and local agencies. So these competences were sought elsewhere and assigned to other agencies. Also, while maybe not a meta-knowledge issue in the strictest sense, *UD* knew that the whole endeavour would be funded, at least for now, which freed up some decision-making capacity to deal with finding solutions to any actual evacuation issues that might arise. Being able to pay is perhaps not seen as a regular competence, but is far from an insignificant factor in making things happen.

This is a rather different, yet in many ways more illuminating, form of knowledge than has been discussed in the other cases. For those, the intuitive understanding of the term was sufficient in describing what the organisations

did and did not know in relation to the specific case. But in the Lebanon case, and especially when comparing it to the 2004 tsunami, it is worth remembering Polyani's (1966) original analytical definition as the process of interpreting, understanding, and *making use of* available information. The ministry had access to a lot of information, but it could not make good use of it and was aware of this fact. This awareness is something the organisation had acquired after the tsunami débâcle, demonstrating not just an instance of learning in a classic sense, but of improving its knowledge management skills and, from the point of view of the framework used for this study, in improving its meta-knowledge.

On the whole, we have a meta-knowledge situation that is almost the mirror image of what we saw during the tsunami. There are a handful of negative examples, weighed against numerous positive ones. The main reason why it is only "almost" a mirror image is that the negative examples in the Lebanon case are far more severe than the positive ones from the tsunami. However, aside from the encouraging signs of self-awareness shown in the how the ministry chose to largely limit itself to its areas of competence, there is also the rapid response team as a concept. Initially, the team only consisted of representatives from various departments within the ministry, which means that it is in and of itself a type of meta-knowledge usage: it is the organisation figuring out what its different parts know and are capable of. So while there certainly were a couple of significant knowledge gaps, there were more than enough instances of properly used meta-knowledge that the net total becomes a fairly positive affair.

Empathic knowledge

Beyond its initial role of being an example of extracting some meta-knowledge from the organisation, *UD's* decision to expand the rapid response team to over a dozen different agencies and governmental actors also made it an arena for creating empathic knowledge. This was an area where, in spite of everything, the ministry had already fared fairly well during the tsunami, but by formally establishing this function as an *ad-hoc* extension of its regular procedures, the empathic knowledge use becomes almost systemic throughout the organisation.

It needs to be emphasised that there is no inherent contradiction in first saying that the ministry did not seem to fully trust the reports of other agencies, and then saying that the organisation had improved its empathic knowledge. The latter is an observation that the ministry had a better understanding of what kind of knowledge the other agencies could provide, and what they needed in return to do their respective jobs; the former is simply a result of *UD's* choice not to make use of the knowledge it knew was available. This is a very important illustration of the both the intersection and the difference between empathic and meta-knowledge. If you know that someone else possesses some particular piece of knowledge (empathic knowledge), but you also know that you have no need of that knowledge at the moment, or perhaps even that you know it

better than they do (meta-knowledge) then not making use of what they know is not something negative or paradoxical; it is simply a case of not bothering with something irrelevant. Of course, the complication in the Lebanon case is that the supposed meta-knowledge in question was somewhat presumptuous, or even outright wrong, but that is a slightly different matter.

A similar distinction between the two concepts can be noted in relation to the division of labour: *UD* took on a specific set of tasks based on its competence in those areas, but it also delegated a number of tasks to other actors based on *their* competences. It is a fairly trivial, but still illuminating example of how the two knowledge types differ, even when dealing with the exact same event.

The case material offers a distinct – almost suspicious – lack of failed empathic knowledge use, at least as far as *UD* goes. Some of this can undoubtedly be attributed to the narrative of success that has been constructed surrounding the event, in particular if the ministry is to be believed. Without being overly conspiratorial, there is reason to believe that the reports focus on what has improved since the tsunami, which still leaves plenty of room for things that work as poorly as they did before, but which are left unmentioned because they are not considered noteworthy. This is just how those things work. Even then, it may be seen as a positive sign that at least nothing seems to have *become worse* in the preceding year, or it would have generated more attention. An example of this that is unrelated to the work done by the ministry can be found in the reports compiled by *SoS*. Since it had to suffer the consequences of this particular setback, it is only natural that its reports mention how important patient data went missing as it was being stored and transferred through the *RPS* IT systems. Here, we see that *RPS* did not fully understand the knowledge needs of *SoS* and of the health-care system, and conversely, *SoS* did not fully recognise that there was such a knowledge gap in *RPS* until after the fact. It was a mutual lack of understanding of the needs and capabilities of the other.

All that said, and aside from the positive development of the rapid response team and the consistent and general use of it as a source of knowledge what everyone was doing, there is still only a handful of real examples of successful empathic knowledge use on *UD*'s behalf. Even then, it is only really the same usage, repeated over and over again. In particular this entails its use of competences from *SRSA*, *SoS*, and *RPS* to create support teams for the existing *UD* efforts in Nicosia, Damascus, and Aleppo. These uses were certainly valuable to the crisis management effort, but they are not nearly as interesting in terms of untangling some otherwise unfathomable mystery the way FBI had to approach the millennialist movements in Texas and Montana. To a large extent, this is due to the fact that the ministry is faced with a known and familiar type of event, and that the expertise to understand this situation already exists in-house. Instead, it is a rather mundane matter of figuring out competences and areas of expertise related to the evacuation effort, and assigning tasks in accordance with those. As such, it is difficult to definitively say whether the empathic knowledge use has improved

since Christmas 2004 – we can simply state that there is definite evidence that empathic knowledge is consistently being used.

Second-order knowledge

As a direct consequence of the lack of a grand mystery, and of the division of labour between the different agencies, there is just as little evidence of any second-order knowledge usage during the Lebanon evacuation as we could find during the tsunami crisis. The logic here is the same as it was back then: unless there is no meta-knowledge available to solve a given problem, and unless empathic knowledge has unsuccessfully been employed in finding any immediate solution, there is no real need to start to look further afield in an attempt to locate new sources of knowledge that might help you understand the problem at hand. None of these situations were fully actualised for *UD* during the evacuation, at least not in practice. A strong case could be made for the incorrect estimation of the number evacuees. Here, the ministry could have been well served by trying to find some new source of information. However, as mentioned, such use is predicated on understanding that the information already available is inaccurate, and by the time this was understood, the whole matter had lost most of its relevance because a working solution had already been found.

For a more direct but still fairly minor example from the case as a whole, we once again have to look beyond *UD* and onto the continued woes of *SoS*, in particular, the confusing episode when the responsibility for the passenger lists shifted from *SoS* to *SEMA* and then to *RPS*. Throughout this process, many lost track of exactly who had what information – a question that was further complicated by the fact that *SoS* separately attempts to collect and distribute patient information to the regional health-care authorities. Before additional measures were taken by *SEMA* to properly coordinate the information dissemination, *SoS* had to repeatedly act as a knowledge broker between agencies looking for information on the evacuees, and *RPS* who had taken over the role of maintaining that database. As a more detailed study of second-order knowledge usage, this might be an interesting case, but it is far removed from *UD* and its involvement in the evacuation, and thus is merely a curio for the purposes of this study.

7.4.6 Conclusions from the Lebanon evacuation

The Lebanon evacuation has gone down in history as something along the lines of the anti-tsunami. It may have failed to fully redeem the incumbent government for its failure a year and a half earlier, and may have come too late in the election season to make much of a difference, but it is still touted as a successful example of crisis management. Then again, it is debatable how much of an influence *either* of the events really had on the election (the left-wing block lost to a right-wing coalition), and had the evacuation been a failure, it would at most have changed

the margin by which the left-wing block lost. As a success story, it probably mattered more on the ministerial level, as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs now had something to point to and say that it could indeed handle a large-scale disaster abroad. Still, there is some reason to question this narrative. The early media reports were less favourable, as were scattered reports from NGOs and private individuals, but later, the reporting turned around to paint the episode as more of a success, and especially as a victory for the newly appointed foreign minister.

Even so, the actual handling of the situation shows some significant deficiencies that were not present during the tsunami. It took almost two full days before the war was properly identified as a potential crisis, and only then because of the increased volume of phone calls to *UD*. It then took three more days before any real evacuation efforts were underway and one day more before those evacuated finally arrived back home in Sweden. This can be compared against the tsunami, where the crisis was identified within a matter of hours at the analytical level, and the volume of phone calls merely served to confirm the worst fears about the scope of what was going to take place in the following weeks. It took two and a half days before the first evacuees arrived from in Sweden. In other words, it took as much time during the Lebanon crisis to simply identify that there was a problem and to start thinking about some kind of solution as to it took after the tsunami to go from a cold start (through what was generally considered the most horribly delayed crisis responses in modern times) to finally getting people home. The analytical level that was off to such a good start early on during the tsunami, only to stumble at the finishing line as it was blocked at the political level, did not even manage to tie its shoe laces properly, metaphorically speaking, in the Lebanon case. The entire assumed premise for action was wrong and the estimated scope of the event was off by an order of magnitude.

That is not to say that the success narrative is completely wrong. This time, the upper management and the political level were quick to act, and the many alterations made to the structures and processes turned out to work really well. Almost all of the systemic deficiencies and pathologies had been resolved. It was certainly a success on a political-symbolic level as well as on a procedural level, slow start notwithstanding. We will have reason to return to this discrepancy between the practical execution and the political and bureaucratic definition of success.

In terms of the analytical questions, the Lebanon evacuation can be summarised as follows:

- It was a crisis for the principal actor, but not a very severe one.
- The processes used were anticipated.
- The principal actor could only partially maintain an open mode of operation.
- The principal actor demonstrated numerous instances of MESO-knowledge, but also a couple of significant failures.
- No significant reinforcement cycle that increased the degree of crisis can be observed.

For the last point, it should still be noted that some of the MESO-knowledge failures created a significant potential for a deteriorated crisis situation, but that potential was not actualised.

There are a couple of ambiguities that create problems when converting these observations into the binary states of the model. While it is undoubtedly a crisis situation, it does not suffer from any feedback and the ministry manages to set its priorities in such a way that the value conflicts are reduced. The organisation is still closed, by and large, but has definitely opened up since the tsunami. And finally, just like in the Montana case, only two of the three knowledge types are really present as far as MESO-usage goes.

Thus we arrive at the following variable values for Lebanon:

- Degree of crisis: high.
- Degree of anticipation of process: high.
- Degree of closed-ness: high, but with a noteworthy tendency towards more openness.
- Degree of MESO-usage: more high than low.

Again, as we will shortly see, a purely binary division would remove a small but significant change that will play an important role in the case comparison in Chapter 8. The degree of closed-ness, in particular, is critical to note, in part because it highlights a methodological problem that warrants further discussion, and in part because of how it affects the outcome of the hypothesised link between closed-ness and MESO-usage.

Chapter 8: Conclusions

This chapter will answer the main questions posed by the thesis. How do crises affect organisations' level of closed-ness? How do unfamiliar externally imposed work processes affect the same? And how does the level of closed-ness affect an organisation's ability to make use of its MESO-skills?

This will be answered by testing three hypotheses:

- i) Organisations will fall back on well known, prescribed, and preferably consistent problem-solving procedures when subjected to the stress of a crisis. Crises will thus push organisations towards a more closed behaviour.
- ii) Unless already anticipated and incorporated in how the organisation interacts with outside actors, a sudden presence of an externally enforced process will thus push organisations towards a more closed behaviour.
- iii) The degree to which an organisation is open or closed decides how well and how willingly an organisation makes use of external knowledge. An organisation that moves towards increased closed-ness will thus lose its ability to apply its MESO-knowledge.

Along with these questions, it is also worth recalling the conditions for falsifying the hypotheses set up in the introduction. The main thrust of the thesis is that open organisations will be more willing to source and graft new knowledge into their problem-solving processes, so seeing the same behaviour in closed organisations would render the hypothesis void. The question then turns to what, exactly, causes an organisation to be open or closed. This thesis offers the suggestions that crises and/or a requirement to adopt to unfamiliar work processes will, independently of each other and for different reasons, push organisations towards well known, consistent, and "safe" behaviour – i.e. towards closed-ness. Thus, should we see closed behaviour even in the absence of crises and where the processes are well-known, either or both of these suggestions will lose their

explanatory power. While this might not nullify the model as a whole quite as severely as the loss of a link between closed-ness and the (in)ability to make use of external expertise, it would still render half of the model void and leave us with a dire need to find another explanation to fill the void left behind. That is not to say that there might not be additional factors that generate the same kind of change more or less independently of crises and formal settings, but those are beyond the scope of this thesis.

8.1 Questions and answers

In this section, we will go through and present the results of the case analyses, side by side, to find answers to these hypotheses without much of immediate comment. In the next section, the findings will be scrutinised more closely to offer up a bit more nuance and qualification as to what has actually been found and to the answers to the research questions.

8.1.1 Hypothesis I: Varying degrees of crisis

For the four cases, we generally find that a high degree of crisis coincides with a higher degree of closed-ness. We have two cases – the tsunami and Waco – that are most definitely crises; one case – Lebanon – that is still a crisis, but which is reasonably well-managed; and one case where the tensions are occasionally high, but on the whole, it was as minor a crisis as an event could conceivably be and still entail a siege-like situation between two heavily armed opponents. On the other side of the equation, we have two cases that exhibit a highly closed behaviour in the principal actor – tsunami and Waco – and two cases that exhibit a markedly more open behaviour – Lebanon and Montana.

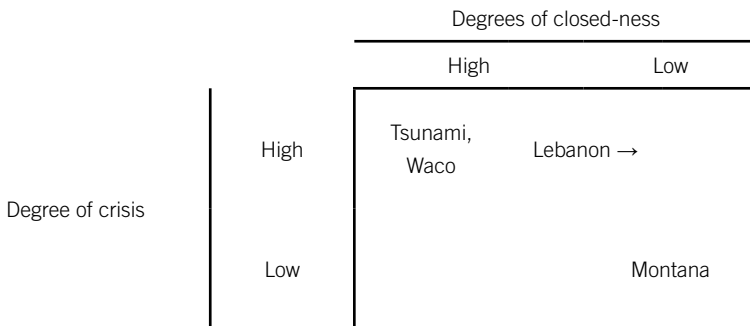


Figure 8: The relationship between crisis and closed-ness

The main outlier is the Lebanon case, the reasons for which will be discussed in the next section, but which still fits the general hypothesised pattern. As such, based on these cases, and subject to the qualifications that we will get into shortly, we have *no reason to reject Hypothesis I*.

8.1.2 Hypothesis II: varying degrees of anticipation of process

Next, we can conclude that between the cases, we generally find that a low anticipation of process coincides with a higher degree of closed-ness. We have two cases where the anticipation was low: Waco and the tsunami; and two cases where the anticipation was high: Lebanon and Montana. The other side remains the same as before, with Waco and the tsunami being high closed-ness cases; Montana being low closed-ness; and Lebanon being somewhat awkwardly stuck in the middle of the two extremes.

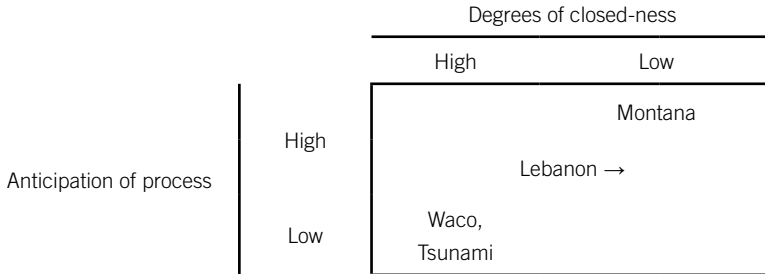


Figure 9: The relationship between anticipation of process and closed-ness

Again, while the Lebanon case is an outlier with its simple trend towards a more opened behaviour, it still fits the predicted general pattern. Based on this, we have *no reason to reject Hypothesis II*.

8.1.3 Hypothesis III: varying degrees of closed-ness

Finally, we can conclude that as a general rule, higher degree of closed-ness corresponds to a lower MESO-usage. On the one hand, we have the two cases showing a highly closed behaviour – the Tsunami and Waco – contrasted against the markedly more open Lebanon case and the very open Montana case. On the other hand, we have two instance of low MESO-usage – again, the tsunami and Waco pair – and two instances of high usage – Lebanon and Montana.

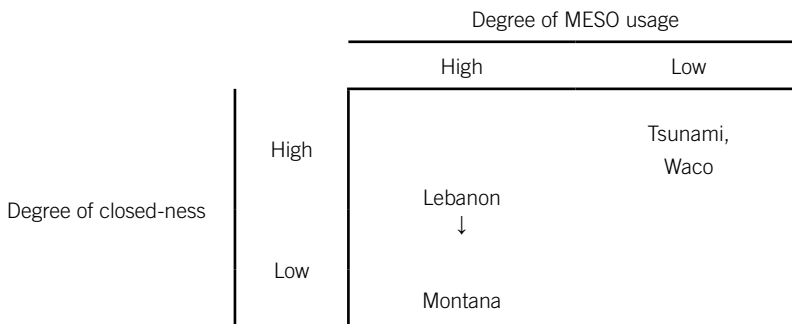


Figure 10: The relationship between closed-ness and MESO-usage

Here, the mere “trend towards” an open behaviour in the Lebanon case proves to have a significant effect on the knowledge use, where, although it is debatable – and will indeed momentarily be debated – exactly how open or closed the principal actor is. Nevertheless, we can state that it is at any rate higher and more open than the tsunami and Waco cases, and that this shift towards an open behaviour has the result predicted by the hypothesis. Thus, we have *no reason to reject Hypothesis III*.

8.2 Qualifications on the case comparisons.

It is worth reiterating that the case selection is such that we do not have fully symmetric pairs of cases to compare. As described in the initial case analyses in the previous chapter, there is only one case where the crisis component is truly missing – the Montana Freeman standoff – and likewise, there is an unfortunate co-variation in the anticipation of process between the “successful” cases of Montana and Lebanon. These are also the cases where the organisations exhibit an increased degree of openness. As such, the examples illustrating more closed behaviour are a bit lopsided, and some additional care should be taken in the analysis since comparisons purely along the crisis and formality axes will also compare across political systems and policy domains – differences that might have an impact on the final result.

Due to the asymmetric nature of the cases studied, this last point it worth highlighting further. There are multiple independent paths to the same outcome, and each factor on its own will not be able to predict the behaviour we see in the organisation – some other factor may explain that behaviour. Likewise, crises or formal arrangements might be the natural environment for some organisations, which means that they are somewhat “inoculated” against their effects. It is also important to note that we are not looking at a binary state, but rather a sliding scale between the improbable extremes of, on the one hand, completely ignoring all kinds of external input, and on the other hand never listening to any kind of internalised knowledge within the existing organisation. As a result, the presence of a crisis situation alone, for instance, does not tell us much about the openness or closed-ness of an organisation. It may still exhibit some fairly open behaviour, which would at first glance seem to contradict the notion that crises lead to closed-ness, but in reality, it is just that we have never studied that organisation in its non-crisis mode where it would indeed show to be even more open. When attempting to falsify the hypotheses, therefore, the question should not really be whether or not we simply see open or closed behaviour, but whether or not we see increased openness or closed-ness, and whether or not there might be some other explanation for any such changes.

8.2.1 Examining Hypothesis 1

As noted in the individual case assessments in the preceding chapters, we have three examples of crises among the cases: the 2004 tsunami, the Lebanon evacuation and the Waco siege, and we have but one example of a non-crisis: the Montana Freeman standoff. Between the four, we also have two examples of increased closed behaviour: the tsunami and the Waco siege. Put another way, we have one case of a non-crisis, and this also turns out to be a case of open (or non-closed) behaviour but as discussed in chapter 3, this weak *modus tollens* needs some further qualification. As mentioned earlier, we cannot really deduce anything from variation in closed-ness between the tsunami and Lebanon cases as a function of crisis, because they were both crisis events. At most, we can hypothesise that there is some other factor at play to cause that variation. One such factor could be the MESO-induced feedback loop that deepened the crisis in the tsunami case, but which was completely absent in Lebanon. While Lebanon is slotted into the “high crisis” box here, it is slightly unfair to suggest that it was a crisis on the same level as the tsunami. At the same time, it could not really be said to be a low-crisis or a non-crisis affair like Montana. The Lebanon case is also slightly problematic in that, on the whole, its principal actor still exhibited predominantly closed behaviour, but in comparison to how it was in the previous case, it became significantly more open. So when the case is placed in the “low closed-ness” corner, it must be interpreted as a *historical “trend towards,”* rather than as an absolute value at the time of the crisis.

What we can observe, then, is that there are rather different versions of closed-ness involved even among the crisis cases. While the Lebanon evacuation may be classified as more open compared to its sister case, the 2004 tsunami, it is still far more closed compared to the other open case, the Freeman standoff. The Lebanon evacuation was handled by a select group of organisations that did not particularly change during the course of events, many of which had worked in this constellation before, so the openness was limited to the actors already present in that setup. Compare this limited openness to the shifting set of actors involved in the Freeman case, where third-party negotiators came and went and stayed for drastically different lengths of times as the usefulness of their services was constantly reappraised, and the difference in what we might qualify as being “open” becomes quite stark. Yes, while the Lebanon evacuation might be an example of more open behaviour compared to how the 2004 tsunami was handled, it rather seems that being a crisis meant that even the Lebanon evacuation was an example of more closed behaviour when compared – admittedly across both policy domains and national boundaries – to the Freeman case. The model would suggest that the presence of a crisis has already pushed the actors towards a more closed behaviour in both the Lebanon and the tsunami cases, and that some other factor pushed the tsunami case even further down the same road, which is consistent with the kinds of outcomes the cases present.

At the same time, the Freeman case offers something of a causal conundrum. Suggesting that it was an example of ‘normalcy’ might be stretching the semantics of the word somewhat, but as Chapter 5 argued, it cannot really be seen as a crisis either. The model would suggest that the low intensity allowed the FBI to remain open, and that the openness in turn allowed them to make use of their MESO-knowledge skill set to come up with a solution for the problem at hand. However, the actual chain of events raises the question of an alternative interpretation: had it still remained a non-crisis without those skills? It could be argued that it was kept from being a crisis due to the lack of time pressure, but the Waco siege took a very long time to go through its paces as well, and the key difference between the two is that the agency explored more options in Montana. So was the Freeman standoff a non-crisis because the FBI had the right MESO-skills, or could the FBI make use of the right MESO-skills because it was a non-crisis? Or was it a self-reinforcing cycle where a slight let-up in pressure at some point let the whole thing snowball in a positive direction?

The last option perhaps seems more likely, but there is still a chicken-and-egg kind of a mystery hovering in the background that needs to be unravelled. In truth, the MESO skill set is a theoretical construct – it is a different aspect of organisational knowledge and organisational learning invented to highlight particular lessons an organisation can draw about its environment, and it was specifically invented to study certain facets of crisis decision-making. As such, it will obviously be a factor in how that organisation approaches problem-solving in crises, including how they choose to frame a given situation to the point where it might not even in the strictest sense be a crisis any more. The FBI did not escalate the Freeman standoff into a full-blown crisis because previous experiences and existing frameworks for acquiring knowledge let the FBI manage – if not entirely eliminate – the uncertainty side of the crisis triangle. This decision, in turn, let the bureau maintain a degree of control over all uncertainty factors throughout the (non-)crisis through the (further) use of MESO-skills. In Waco, in contrast, the initial uncertainty never went away and the agency was locked in a mind-set and a set of expertise that never allowed for new interpretations that might have demystified its opponents’ actions and motivations. Had it not been as deliberate and explicit a strategy from some of the key actors, it would have been a text-book case of group-think.

So what about the Lebanon evacuation? Why does it not follow the same pattern of letting the agencies involved “define away” the crisis when they had obviously learned from the tsunami and acquired some much-needed MESO-skills to deal with similar situations? For one, it was because the crisis was not entirely theirs to define. While there was intense initial media interest in the Freeman standoff and the presence of the militia had affected a large number of people in the region, the siege itself only really involved the FBI, the Freeman and the negotiators the agency brought in. In the Lebanon evacuation, there were two countries in armed conflict with each other in a region with multiple con-

flicting factions, and multiple agencies had to cooperate across multiple national boundaries. The core task was to mitigate the crisis felt by the evacuees. Both the initial response and the aftermath of the tsunami had taught these agencies that trying to define away such an event on the behalf of the actual victims would only cause an even bigger crisis to erupt. Even so, the skills acquired arguably still had the effect of at least lessening the crisis felt by those actors as they now had some means of combating uncertainty, much like the FBI, albeit to a much lesser degree. Finally, and perhaps most obviously, the Lebanon evacuation was an event triggered externally by a mutual escalation of violence in an already volatile region, whereas the Montana standoff was something initiated by the FBI itself. It is undoubtedly easier to prepare for your own actions, contemplate the consequences, and consider available options for dealing with them before you begin.

Thus, there might be a limitation to the pre-crisis applicability of these skills, as a function of the scope of the crisis to be handled, which in turn might help resolve the circular nature of the effects discussed above. While MESO-knowledge might quite simply provide some feeling of assurance and confidence in the crisis managers, positive thinking will only carry them so far until the sheer complexity and difficulty of operational matters become overwhelming. It is at this point that the in-crisis skill set is needed to allow new knowledge to be mixed into the crisis management organisation and yield new solutions to unfamiliar problems, but until – and possibly beyond – that point, they remain a source of uncertainty that can keep the crisis alive in the minds of the decision-makers. In a sense, then, the existence of MESO-knowledge within the organisation imbues the crisis managers with another cognitive heuristic along the lines of the “mental slides” of naturalistic decision-making theory (*cf.* Zsombok & Klein 1997; Cohen, Freeman & Wolf 1996). The decision-maker initially recognises the situation for what it is – namely something wholly unfamiliar – and has a well-known strategy in mind to deal with exactly that kind of situation. This should indeed help remove some of the confusion and ambiguity of the detection and sense-making phases of a crisis, which under optimal circumstances will be enough to make the crisis as a whole entirely manageable. In most cases, though, it is more likely to work as the kind of instant-learning methodology the MESO-knowledge set was initially envisioned to provide, and will “merely” act as a decision support function in the normal course of the crisis management.

In all, there is little in the cases to base a rejection of the hypothesis on. We see organisations become more closed when suffering a crisis, and when we see (relative) openness in spite of a crisis, the behaviour is still far more closed than in the crisis-free case. Thus, this suggests that the crisis has indeed instilled a minimum lower bound on how closed the organisation can become – or, perhaps more intuitively, that it creates an upper bound on how open the organisation can stay during the crisis. Ideally, as mentioned in chapter 3, a third pair of events involving the same actors showing a crisis-free event as a point of comparison

could have provided further confirmation, but runs afoul of the problem of finding something that does not distinguish itself in any way and analysing it as something apart from the noise of all other everyday activities.

Such a study would be an excellent topic for further examination, as would the aforementioned distinction between preparatory MESO-knowledge (that might even be enough to quell a crisis entirely), and operative MESO-knowledge (used during a crisis to keep ambiguity and uncertainty in check). However, all of this largely still relies on the presumption that openness actually does influence the ability to make use of external knowledge, but remains to be seen. What seems clear is that crises put a damper on that openness, and that there is some sort of influence on the crises themselves from the ability to call on experts for answers.

8.2.2 Examining Hypothesis II

For the comparison between anticipation of process and degree of closed-ness, the distribution is entirely symmetrical, but to the point where it almost becomes a problem. There is a high degree of covariation between the two variables, which means that very little can be gleaned by contrasting the US cases to the Swedish ones when looking at this factor in isolation. We would need to proceed to a multivariate analysis using both crises and processes as factors for closed-ness to build a good picture of how these two factors interact, which again means we would ideally need at least one additional pair of crises to add to the mix. However, much like the distinction between the two high-crisis states of the tsunami and Lebanon cases, we might be able to get some mileage out of the fact that the Montana case exhibited a feedback loop where MESO-usage helped improve the anticipation of process. While the variables are still binary, we might tentatively suggest that there is at least a distinction in practice between how much the actors in the two cases managed to anticipate the events to follow, with Montana having that imperceptibly higher degree of anticipation.

So here too, there is little to reject the hypothesis – a higher anticipation of process does indeed seem to be conducive with maintaining a higher degree of openness. In addition, Hypothesis II offers an explanation for the variation we previously observed between the tsunami and Lebanon cases in spite of both them being crises, where the variation is explained by the variation of anticipation of process. This in turn lets us deduce that the combination of high anticipation *and* low crisis has a higher impact than either of the two factors alone. As we may recall, Lebanon is only classified as “low closed-ness” as a *trend towards*, rather than as an absolute value since, in practice, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs still fulfilled two out of three conditions for closed behaviour, which was still one less than it managed during the tsunami. Perhaps if this case had also been a non-crisis, the trend would have been even greater and *UD* would have been able to operate in a fully open mode, much like FBI did in Montana.

8.2.3 Examining Hypothesis III

The final assumption that needs to be tested is to what degree closed-ness has an impact on how well organisations are able to introduce new knowledge into their decision-making processes. One of the immediate observations to be made for this comparison is that the case pairs are mismatched in one potentially critical area. The decision-making process, duties, and liabilities were all split between a number of different actors in the tsunami and Lebanon cases, in the form of levels and departments and to some extent the participation of outside agencies. Meanwhile, the Waco and Montana cases dealt with a single – if not entirely monolithic – actor, then at least one with a standardised operational practice and a unified policy. Even though the focus of this study in the former two cases lies on the Foreign Ministry, the complexity of the crisis and the division of labour between the different ministries in the Swedish government mean that it is entirely possible to come across issues where the ministry simply was not supposed to deal with a given question. The question of what, exactly entails external knowledge – the resource that MESO usage is meant to help find and graft onto the existing decision-making process – becomes somewhat fuzzy.

The case descriptions offer an argumentation for why these values are used, but it is still worth noting that there may be a qualitative difference between what constitutes complete MESO usage for a constellation such as UD – with the political level directly above it, the many other agencies attached to it, and the often very different departments within it – and a more clearly defined organisation such as the FBI.

It should also be noted that while both the Lebanon and the Montana cases are labelled as “high MESO”, the reality is that they both only scored two out of the three indicators: second-order knowledge was largely absent in both instances. And finally, there is the matter of the hidden quantitative difference between the degrees of closed-ness in the Montana and Lebanon cases. Again, both are given the same value, but as mentioned the Lebanon case only really gets that label in comparison because of how the organisation has evolved from the state it was in during the tsunami. However, as we shall see, these factors do not actually present much of a problem for the purpose of answering Hypothesis III – quite the opposite.

Even though *UD* is teetering on the edge of complete closed-ness in the Lebanon case, it seems that the remaining sliver of open-mode operation is enough to deliver a significant amount of MESO usage. In particular, as the case description shows, it manages to increase the amount of meta-knowledge applied to the crisis, which was almost completely absent during the tsunami. At this point, it may also be worth remembering that FBI’s classification as open in the Montana case is also not unequivocal. It scored two out of three indicators for openness, and yet, it only marginally outperformed *UD* in terms of MESO

usage. If we go beyond the initial conception of these variables as binaries and instead count indicators, allowing for some partial or attempted uses, we get the following “scoreboard” for the two variables:

	Degree of closed-ness	Degree of MESO usage
Montana	1	2.5
Lebanon	2	2
Waco	3	1
Tsunami	3	0.5

Table 3: Scoring closed-ness and MESO-usage

Hypothesis III is perhaps not as categorical as first conceived, but it is still not falsified. Fully closed organisations are categorically far worse at using any kind of MESO-knowledge than even a slightly open organisation, and as the openness increases, so does the usage of MESO-knowledge. Still, this relationship and the hypothesis it rests on *is* indeed less clear-cut than the other ones. The way both the variables and the underlying concepts have been formulated also creates a fair amount of wiggle-room for any one case, where even a small qualitative difference can significantly (perhaps even overly) affect the final valuation. With a more refined methodology and more cases, this relationship might even be a candidate for a quantitative study of cause and effect.

8.3 Further considerations

The main thrust of this study is an examination of the impact of two stress factors on the behaviour of organisations. As always, though, there are numerous other aspects at play in the actual cases that have some more or less peripheral influence on the outcome and which may warrant an examination and explanation from a different perspective. The case selection has been strategic in that it picks a two internally very consistent and comparable events, but that leaves the question of how well the *two pairs themselves* can be compared given the differences between them. There are also some internal aspects that differ between all four cases that are worth looking closer at, as well as a couple of the underlying theoretical assumptions, now that we have some empirics to test them against.

8.3.1 *Foreign and domestic arenas*

Perhaps the most obvious difference between the cases is that the US pair deals with a very specific, well-outlined issue area in a domestic arena, whereas the Swedish cases deal with a highly complex multi-issue and multi-agency problem as events unroll in a foreign arena. On the one hand, we have the FBI dealing with what are clearly FBI matters, albeit with an unconventional opponent in an unfamiliar setting; on the other hand, we have large sections of the entire Swedish civil society dealing with the fallout of war and disaster on foreign soil, ostensibly centrally managed by the highly generalist and not at all operationally focused Foreign Ministry. Setting aside for a moment the specific areas of expertise of the two actors, and how well it maps to the problem they are tasked with solving, the nature of the two arenas themselves – domestic versus foreign – should reasonably have an impact on both the “problem space” and the “solution space” available to the actors. That is, the range and scope of potential problems that might arise in dealing with the different crises, as well as the potential and available solutions that need to be considered are drastically different between the two pairs.

At the end of the day, the FBI simply has to do what it always does, broadly speaking: enforce federal law in collaboration with local agencies, and with direct oversight by the Justice Department and the attorney general. The bureau’s jurisdiction, chain of command, and hierarchy of responsibility are, while not exactly simple, at least codified and clarified in law, instructions, and similar official policy documents. If there are transgressions, they can fairly easily be identified and defined using those documents as a baseline, and indeed, the Waco case demonstrates this in almost every way possible. The use of untested equipment and tactics borrowed from the armed forces, skirting the Posse Comitatus Act by the narrowest margin, became an immediate point of contention in the legal proceedings that followed the crisis, and as blame was assigned, it followed the chain of command in a very straight fashion. Compare this to the complexities of the equivalent Swedish case, where it was a constant point of contention during the tsunami crisis whether or not the Foreign Ministry should even be the one to coordinate, much less actually *do* any of the tasks it took upon itself. While the ministry certainly has the responsibility to render assistance to Swedes who run into difficulties abroad, the extent of that assistance was not well defined, nor well known either within the ministry or among the citizens who clamoured for aid. Layered on top of this confusion was the added issue of offering disaster relief to a number of stricken nations, many of which were not on the usual recipient list for that kind of aid. Instead, other agencies sorting under other ministries had the experience and expertise in these areas, but were now strangely contingent on approval and funding from the Foreign Ministry to go ahead with aid missions that would have seen a near-automatic approval under almost any other circumstances. The “foreign arena” was something the

Foreign Ministry considered “its own,” and as such, irrespective of how much other agencies already operated in that arena, this was not the time when they would be allowed to do so without the ministry’s approval. This was because, layered on top of everything was the fundamental issue of international relations, which certainly was the ministry’s specialty, but which now collided with its role as the local representation of the Swedish government for Swedes abroad.

In short, the problem was that the arena encompassed so many different issues, and such a volume of individual cases to be handled, that it completely overwhelmed the ministry’s ability to handle them all – an issue that remained during the Lebanon crisis, but where the inter-agency and inter-ministry coordination and cooperation had been (somewhat) clarified before the fact. Overlaps and interdependencies had been investigated, and while not every potential problem might have been mapped out, at least attempts had been made to raise awareness of the fact that such problems could arise and a formal forum had been set up to deal with them. Compared to the FBI cases, again, this is a much smaller shift, both in complexity and in the solutions employed, than what we see in the transition from Waco to Montana. In the latter case, there was some internal reshuffling and re-strategising as far as how FBI teams should operate, and agency policies were relaxed when it came to what kind of external aid the bureau would accept. But all of it is very localised within the bureau itself – there is little to no change extending outwards from there, since it was a single domestic law-enforcement issue all along. In contrast, there was an enormous overhaul in Sweden in the wake of the tsunami, with a slew of new laws and instructions to agencies; numerous clarifications as to who has what responsibility (even on foreign soil), a massive revamp of the entire national crisis management system with a new national agency, and a new section within the Government Offices established to specifically deal with the multi-level, inter-agency, and inter-ministerial coordination that the tsunami had revealed to be necessary.

The question is, then, what this difference means for the model constructed for this study? Is it equally applicable to both arenas, or are we looking at a problematic mismatch in the cases? One thing that we can immediately conclude from this comparison is that we are dealing with two very different levels of knowledge needs for our principal actors. The FBI needed to adjust existing methods to take into account a different psychological and motivational profile of the opposition, which, as at least the Waco case shows, is mainly a matter of fighting organisational inertia as far as methods and core assumptions. What was learned by the time of the Montana standoff is that the standard model of purely criminal motivations needed to be reassessed on a case-by-case basis, and that other motivations might require a different frame of analysis that the bureau will not have – indeed, *should not* have – in-house. The knowledge need is therefore mainly one of understanding the limits of capabilities and capacities, and figuring out a way to fill the gaps should the need arise. Not a small task, by any means, but still a task that is an extension of what the bureau is already doing.

In the Swedish case, however, it was a matter of not just finding new knowledge and/or figuring out new interfaces for plugging that knowledge into an existing structure. Rather, it required a reassessment of the organisation's role, and *only then* figuring out what knowledge is actually needed for that role. There are two aspects to this that warrant further discussion. One is that this difference sounds awful lot like the distinction between single-loop and double-loop learning as it is discussed within organisational learning theory (*cf.* Argyris & Schön 1978; 1996), and we will get back to this point later on in this chapter. The other is that it highlights a significant difference in the need for knowledge auditing and, in the language introduced in this study, the need for meta-knowledge.

We can thus refine the initial question to one of whether or not the different knowledge needs, and in particular the “volume” of knowledge (for the lack of a better term), devalue the conclusions drawn from the case comparison. It also triggers two follow-up questions of whether the domestic arena is somehow less complex than the foreign one, or if there is some other reason for the difference between the case pairs. Tackling the second follow-up question first, and to cause a momentary point of controversy and outrage among political scientists, the answer is quite simply “yes,” *but* it is so by design rather than by inherent nature. Specifically, it is an artefact of the institutional set-up of the two governments, which warrants its own discussion and clarification, and will be addressed later on in this chapter. For now, and with that blunt answer in hand, we instead turn to the question of what it means for the model that the two arenas studied put such different requirements on the knowledge workers involved.

At first glance, such a variation in the volume of knowledge needed should not actually make a huge difference for the model: it does not care about the difficulty of the task, only the circumstances and the effects of good knowledge usage. Arguably, the higher the demand, the trickier it may be to source and apply the requisite knowledge, but the fundamental proposed correlation between organisational stress, open/closed-ness, and MESO usage is still just as applicable. The higher knowledge demand of the foreign arena would in this model show up as a form of increased stress. There is more uncertainty in the crisis, or there are more processes that cannot be anticipated, and we might therefore predict that a foreign-arena issue will tend towards more closed-ness and worse MESO usage. It is an after-thought, but it is one that bears out in the empirics: the Swedish foreign-arena cases *did* show this tendency. It does not mean that the case pairs are incomparable, but it means that one has a position of advantage in terms of exactly how highly it can score on those two traits. It also means that we may have found a good candidate for a least-likely type of study to further hone and refine the model, and it should be re-emphasised that even in this worst-case scenario, we saw the exact kind of correlation the model would suggest, just more weakly expressed than in the relatively simpler domestic case. In a different sense, this difference in knowledge demands may be seen as a reinforcement mechanism for the identification paradox discussed in Section 2.1. A more complex issue

arena creates a feedback loop where larger knowledge needs simply mean that a smaller portion of those needs can be met, creating more uncertainties that end up further stifling the ability to sort out the few needs that remain. Much as suggested by the cybernetic approach (Steinbruner 1974; 2002), the coping mechanism for increased uncertainty is to go even further towards the familiar, the known, and the “safe” choice – that is, it seeks the consistency that characterises a closed behaviour.

In short, the difference between the arena is not a problem as such for the model or for the case comparison, but it rather means that the higher closed-ness observed in the Swedish cases is perhaps something that we should have been able to predict from the very start. The question is more one of how generalisable this observation is: should we expect it in *all* organisations that deal with the foreign arena as opposed to the domestic one? We will return to this question later in this chapter.

8.3.2 *Institutional differences*

So what about the outrageous claim of the foreign arena being more complex that led us down this path to begin with? It is not really a normative or value claim, but rather an observation of, and a consequence of, the institutional design of the two governments involved. In both the U.S. and in Sweden, there is a specific department or ministry for foreign policy, and the breadth of issues that sort under this umbrella is nothing short of staggering. This is typically the design in which the work demanded of the state is divided. All manner of domestic issues will have their own ministry; anything related to foreign policy only has one or two, if defence is included. In practice, of course, the distinction is not as clear-cut, as domestic issues will spill over into, or be affected by, what goes on in other parts of the world, and it would even be unrealistic to expect supposedly domestic agencies to have no foreign connections at all. Indeed, in the Swedish cases, it was the sudden realisation that the Foreign Ministry was not the only ministry dealing with matters in foreign countries that tripped up a lot of the early response. But herein lies another potentially complicating factor in the case comparison: the Swedish cases involved not just the foreign arena itself, but also this cross-over between foreign and domestic, with all the policy confusion entails. Meanwhile, the U.S. cases were very clear-cut: they were purely domestic issues handled by a domestic agency – or at least a domestic branch of that agency, since the FBI as a whole has an explicit role in more clandestine dealings with other nations through its capacity as the primary counter-espionage agency.

Another crucial difference is just that: the FBI is after all just an agency sorting under a larger department, whereas the principal actor in the Swedish cases is *UD* – a ministry situated in a completely different spot in the overarching governmental web of institutions. This means that, once again, we should perhaps not expect them to have the same kind of pressures – internal or external – or the same level

of knowledge needs. The FBI simply needed to understand how the Davidians and the Montana Freemen differed from the regular crop of armed and barricaded hosta-taking criminals that the bureau was used to handle. *UD*, on the other hand, had a long laundry list of issues it needed to understand the nature of a natural disaster and a war; the competences and capabilities of dozens of agencies and local and regional authorities that did not even sort under the ministry; the operative needs of thousands of individuals caught up in the events, in spite of not being an operative agency, at least not in dealing with that volume of people; and it had to deal far more directly with the political aspects, since that is what the ministry does in its role as an extension of the government.

Setting aside the matter of politics for a moment, this difference alone raises a question that is very similar to the matter of the foreign-domestic divide. Even without the differing complexities of the arena, which are mostly due to how policy arenas in general are divided up, does the difference in situation cause issues with the model or with the comparison? Fortunately, the answer also appears to be very similar: no, it is more a factor in deciding the exact scope and nature of the uncertainty and anticipation that sets up the context for the cases, rather than some essential difference that makes them incomparable.

So far, the differences have mostly been discussed in terms of the “problem space” for the actors involved – that is, the span of issues that they have to deal with – but the institutional difference is perhaps even better illustrated by the other end of the spectrum: by the span of *solutions* available to the respective parties. The FBI may be lower down in the hierarchy of governmental departments and agencies, and the field offices, teams, and task forces lower still in the internal hierarchy of the FBI itself, but this also means that the bureau is far closer to the actual problem solving. Indeed, the special agents *are* the operational tip of the spear to deal with the crises that erupt. The bureau is certainly bound by policy and laws and to some extent even direct political control, but it is still an independent agency with a fairly free rein to solve problems within its specific domain. This means that the “solution space” is far more clear-cut, both in terms of exactly what means and methods are available, but also in terms of being free to *choose* those means. In a sense, the difference between the Waco and the Montana cases is a realisation on the FBI’s part that both of those spaces are larger than they might have previously thought. There are some criminal-looking groups that it will have to deal with, without necessarily having standard criminal motives in mind, and there are some pretty inventive solutions that can be employed without going out of bounds of what might be considered proper FBI procedure. It is the benefit of being that independent agency. Meanwhile, *UD* had to take a slightly different journey from a different starting point. While it, too, had to reassess and expand on its problem space after the tsunami, a part of the learning process was a *narrowing* of the solution space. The self-image of the ministry was that it solved crises every day and could handle everything had to be shed. At the same time, the *actual* capabilities and competences of the ministry

had to be mapped out and clarified. While some new specific techniques and solutions were certainly conceived, the net effect of the learning process was that some tasks that the ministry previously thought itself capable of proved to be best left to others. With the unfair benefit of hindsight, this might not seem all that surprising. The role of the ministry is to issue instructions to agencies and local offices, and to distribute funding, not to be operative problem solvers. At the same time, an important lesson was that there *was* an operational branch of the organisation: the Department of Consular Affairs. The fact that it was this operational nature that had kept its internal status down in the organisation as a whole, was yet another important lesson, if nothing else because it highlighted the limited capability of this small office.

An important aspect to note in this, which may further complicate a specific comparison between the U.S. and Sweden, is the Swedish prohibition on ministerial rule over the independent agencies. The exact extent of application of this rule may be debatable. There are numerous highly publicised instances where ministers have broken the rule, and it is definitely not uncommon for ministers to “discuss” current issues with the heads of agencies, where the distinction between discussion and direct orders may be reduced to mere semantics. Even so, it is still a far cry from the direct involvement of the attorney general in the FBI cases, where she ultimately was the one to approve or deny which specific strategies should be employed. However, all this distinction really does is that it narrows down the solution space for both principal actors in the cases, albeit from different angles. For the FBI, and despite its overall freedom to pick the exact strategy to employ, there was a restriction on how they ultimately could bring the two cases to an end. The attorney general’s involvement in the resolution of the Waco siege is the more obvious example, but even the relative hands-off approach of the Freeman standoff had its limits, as costs escalated and local political pressure for a conclusion slowly mounted. For *UD*, its institutional situation had similar effects but for almost the exact opposite reason. With little to no real operative capability of its own, and with little to no formal control over those who *did* have that capacity, the ministry was limited in what solutions it could even start working on or even know about. In addition, its closeness to the national political leadership and its strongly traditional and hierarchical internal structure, meant that before any potential solution could even be offered, it had to be vetted by numerous decision-making layers, each capable of vetoing any politically sensitive or inconvenient suggestion. Even as the vetoing powers of the middle levels were in the process of being scaled back following the tsunami crisis, the many layers of decision-making still remained during the Lebanon evacuation,

Perhaps it can be argued that, with all that in mind, the institutional situatedness and setup might not matter all that much. By its very nature, governmental bureaucracy will entail restrictions in the solution space in one form or another. Whether they are limitations from above on what decisions are “allowed” or limitations from below on what strategies and decisions can actually be implemented

and realised, is a minor contextual detail. However, it does make an important difference for the model. The restrictions for the FBI were well known and well understood – direct political control in a high-profile case was not something new, and the forms for doing so were already established. This means that the institutional arrangement offered very little deviation from the anticipated process. There were other deviations in other processes, but they resulted from the specific case rather than from the system design. By contrast, and contrary to what one might have expected for a top-echelon organisation in the national bureaucracy, the tsunami case highlighted a significant lack of anticipation of the processes that would ensue, in many ways because of where the Foreign Ministry is situated. Had it just been a matter of foreign aid, foreign policy, or plain old diplomacy, anticipations may have been met, but not when all these other ministries and national agencies and regular citizens suddenly got involved. Some of this confusion can be directly attributed to a form of identification paradox: handling Swedes stranded, or even deceased, abroad may very well have seemed like the sort of thing that *UD* deals with – indeed, that is what *UD-KC* does on a daily basis – so regular processes might ostensibly work. It was just that it did not work *when subjected to these volumes*. Nor did it work *if the regular channels of delegation and coordination were disrupted* or if local capacities were destroyed by the very same disaster that the Swedes were fleeing from. It also did not work cooperate well with the need to coordinate with Swedish regional and municipal authorities to handle the sudden flood of people in need of care. Whether or not matters were ultimately handled more satisfactorily during the Lebanon evacuation is a different discussion, but at least in this – in the anticipation of what processes would be involved – it was a marked improvement over the handling of the tsunami. All the aforementioned issues with the standard procedures had been identified and some tentative solutions had been devised.

In the end, the matter of institutional differences between the principal actors studied manifests itself in the model in the form of differing abilities to anticipate the process. The broader scope of the Foreign Ministry's area of responsibility means that more actors might get involved and make new, strange demands, whereas the FBI's role as an operative agency inherently means that there are not just fewer institutional connections to manage, but also that the connections are better known before the fact. In much the same way, the difference shows up as differing levels of uncertainty and ambiguity in the respective crises, in particular in regards to what options are available and the consequences of picking any one of those options. These are direct effects of one actor being an operative agency and the other being a central ministry, and thus should hold true irrespective of the difference in domestic and foreign arena layered on top of it.

An interesting detail to consider here is a recurring pattern on a sub-organisational, perhaps bureaucratic, level. One of the defining characteristics of the Waco case was the internal conflict between the different FBI teams on the scene. In the analysis, this was mainly discussed in terms of how this affected the knowledge

usage, in particular how it precluded proper meta-knowledge to be obtained. A similar effect, and a similar discussion, could be observed in relation to the tsunami case, where the differing status levels between the *UD* departments and between the hierarchical tiers caused knowledge not to be shared. However, this pattern has been observed in other cases and through other lenses before. Perhaps most notably, this effect is commonly discussed in relation to bureau politics, where the competition between units and departments is highlighted as the main cause (cf. Allison 1971; Allison & Zelikow 1999). This raises the question of whether such competition might have an impact on, not just the MESO usage directly, but on the preceding open/closed variable, and that the MESO-usage effects might only be an indirect consequence of that more direct effect. In other words, could it be the case that fierce competition between units cause an organisation to close up in some form or another? From this study alone, little can be said on the matter, and based purely on the definitions of openness and closed-ness, it could intuitively go either way depending on how one assume that an organisation functions. One school of thought would perhaps suggest the exact opposite: that competition would foster more flexibility and dynamics as the competitors try to be “better” than everyone else. On the other hand, and perhaps more in line with the bureau-political line of thinking, the organisation is not really meant to be a competitive arena, but becomes one anyway. “Being better” might not actually mean an improvement, as such, but may rather simply imply that other parts of the organisation are doing worse. This would flip the equation around completely. Such competition would be characterised by trying to circumscribe a competing department with more rules and restrictions. It would entail a logic of correctness and appropriateness, as opposed to a logic governed by effectiveness and consequences. In other words, it would promote sticking to the rules and regulations – perhaps adding even more of them – and showing that the competitor is much worse at following those rules. Such behaviour would be more consistent with, and push further towards, the ideals of closed-ness. Coincidentally, the four cases studied here include two where such competition existed, and both were characterised by high degrees of closed-ness. Conversely, the two cases other cases, where the units and departments worked in unison, were both characterised by high degrees of openness. It is tempting to jump to the conclusion that we have another cause and effect here, but we would have to revisit the cases to fully map out the bureau-political positions and struggles to really argue that point with any greater conviction.

Of course, there still is that additional layer, and it is a weakness of this particular study that the two cannot be separated empirically. Ideally, a second pair of actors with the opposite dynamic should have been studied as well: a ministry dealing exclusively with domestic matters, and an operative agency with a strong foreign-arena focus or presence. For now, it is therefore impossible to say exactly how the policy domain and the institutional factors combine, interact, or reinforce each others, other than that it stands to reason that a lower, more

operative level should effect much the same kind of uncertainty and ability to anticipate as would a more narrowly defined policy and problem arena, and that at any rate, the two should not be in a position to cancel each other out. Based on this, we could probably anticipate more closed behaviour and lower degrees of MESO usage when the policy arena is more complex and further away from the action on the ground.

8.3.3 Politicisation

The closeness to the political level is another factor that differentiates the two case pairs, and it is also a factor that somewhat changes the overall historical narrative of the different events. It is telling that, while Waco was a *débâcle* in many ways in its own right, one thing that clearly separates it from the Freeman standoff is the presence of the political leadership in the central decision-making process. As mentioned, a new attorney general had just entered office as the crisis erupted, and her first case to handle was an already highly public fumble from a different federal agency. The fact that the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives sorted under the Treasury Department at the time¹⁸ meant that at least the initial raid on the Davidian compound was not her immediate headache, but the FBI's handling of the siege became a thorn in the side of the Justice Department throughout the spring of 1993. Not only had the raid – entirely intentionally, but ultimately for the wrong reasons – garnered lots of media attention, but the reasons for the raid and the nature of the siege were entangled in fundamental cultural issues such as gun control and freedom of religion, while also being entangled in accusations of sexual abuse of children and production and distribution of drugs. It simply *could not* avoid being politically charged, and as a member of cabinet got involved in selecting strategies, that politicisation now threaded its way all the way into the White House. As such, the failure to bring the siege to a peaceful conclusion became not just an operative failure on the FBI's part, but also a political failure for the newly installed Clinton administration. In an interesting twist, and in spite of offering such an easy avenue of attack, the subsequent congressional hearings were less split down party lines and more along where the hearing members stood on these contentious issues, which perhaps further raised the awareness of the case as something rather special. The hearings are in and of themselves a chapter of the story that is worthy of a deeper study, and in particular how the members positioned themselves along the spectrum of strong law enforcement versus individual rights versus the various (ultimately disproved) accusations of morality crimes.

18 The ATF was shifted to the Department of Justice through the Homeland Security Act in 2002 as part of a larger move to consolidate many of the law enforcement agencies under either the newly founded Department of Homeland Security, or under the existing Justice Department.

All of this is an aspect that is almost completely absent in the Montana case. While the media interest was initially high, if nothing else than because it bore all the hallmarks of being another Waco, it was truly a stand-off in every sense of the term: the FBI took a more stand-off approach to the Justus Township, and the Department of Justice and the attorney general took a stand-off approach to the FBI's choice of tactics. Nationally, interest waned very quickly as nothing happened, and only local and state media paid any real attention to it. Similarly, the political involvement only reached as far as one member Montana House of Representatives when Karl Ohs became a key part of the negotiation effort rather than a part of the decision-making chain. There were certainly attempts made by various right-wing and militia organisations to raise the spectre of Waco and to reignite the same debate on gun control and religious rights, but on the whole, the case did not offer much of a stage for that kind of grand-standing, and their involvement in the effort was short-lived. The eventual operative success of the stand-off obviously helps, but the lack of a high-profile political component is yet another factor as to why the case is fairly obscure outside of the groups that were directly involved. Much like a deeper study into the hearings on Waco, it would be interesting to delve further into the exact nature of these dynamics: how much of the success was due to the fact that FBI did not have political pressure from above, and how much of the lack of political pressure was due to the fact that the FBI was very explicit from the very start that it would not repeat the mistakes of Waco? This pressure has only been obliquely represented in this study through the general definition of the crises: that there was some time pressure and some values at stake, but the exact nature of that pressure was somewhat outside the scope and theoretical focus of the inquiry as it the focus of the study was the operative stage rather than the political aftermath.

From a knowledge management perspective, the political level of these cases is interesting in that, while Waco was an obvious case of the political level wanting to know more but not getting good answers, the attorney general also stood for perhaps the most earnest attempt at actually figuring out what was going on and at reaching a more knowledgeable answer. It was simply unfortunate that the FBI was not able to see any omissions in the information it would provide. In the aftermath, this too became a point of contention, as the FBI leadership was not too subtly accused of withholding information from the attorney general, wilfully or just due to ignorance, by not honestly pursuing the questions she was asking. Three years later, and perhaps largely owing to the bureau having a new director without that particular personal and political baggage, the interaction between agency and department was more on a reporting basis, giving the FBI full freedom but also full responsibility for its actions.

The Swedish cases almost completely reverse this dynamic between the operative side and the political component. The crises were to a large part just that: a political crisis – or the potential for one in the case of the Lebanon evacuation. For example, in the tsunami case, while the operative component was obviously

key in determining how the crises evolved, the fact that we are directly dealing with the Government Offices, with a prestigious ministry, and with cabinet members (who do not get involved until things have spiralled out of control), and with their cabinet and state secretaries (who let that happen), all means that this political component was mixed in from day one. Indeed, the long-shadow political crisis of the tsunami lingered until *after* the Lebanon crisis was over, and after the subsequent election where the incumbent government was voted out of office, both of which far beyond the scope of this study. Nevertheless, what was only a vague and even secondary contextual factor in the FBI cases here becomes perhaps *the* most critical value at stake: trust in the government and in the politicians in charge. Consequently, and even more clearly than in Waco, the operative failure was also inherently a political failure. The central government had quite simply not done its job, and over the coming months, heads would figuratively roll. Also much like at Waco, the knowledge management aspect of it is very clear: bottlenecks in the prestige-filled hierarchy prevented information from flowing and kept the politicians out of the loop to the point where they almost seemed to be the last people to know and to act – hardly the image a well-functioning government wants to convey.

In a sense, then, the politicisation of the tsunami crisis is almost too apparent to be interesting; the failure is too obvious, as are the consequences of that failure. The more interesting aspect is what the political context this failure sets up for the Lebanon evacuation. The appointment of a highly respected and highly merited former UN ambassador and ambassador to the U.S. as the new foreign minister was a very clear attempt of wiping the slate clean. The new appointee was a foreign-policy professional with decades-long experience, not just another politician. That is not to say that the new minister had no party ties – far from it, since he had been a political advisor to the prime minister as far back as the early 1980s – but rather that his career was not one within the party like most other ministers had. Similarly, the slight restructuring of the Foreign Ministry itself and the establishment of functions to coordinate work between the Government Offices and various national agencies was a clear signal that the nature of political control had changed.

The irony of trying to use de-politicisation as a political signal is better left for another time, as is the debate as to how much the tsunami crisis ultimately affected the 2006 general election, but it is safe to say that it was politically *mandatory* for the Lebanon evacuation to be a success in order to roll back some of that earlier failure. It would be cynical to suggest that the success story portrayed in official reports and documentation afterwards is just a product of this requirement, especially since the perception of the handling of the evacuation turned positive even as the crisis unfolded. Nevertheless, it is important to note the development of that particular narrative. From the ministry and the foreign minister, the message was pretty consistent throughout: this episode would be handled and everyone would get home – it would not be another tsunami. At

first, media commentators offered an at best guarded view of these promises. It was not until the first evacuees safely arrived back home that the promise seemed to bear out, and the handling of the situation started to receive some praise. But this is also where the story converges: on the one hand, the political commentary praised the administration and in particular the new foreign minister. On the other hand, the *personal* commentary from the evacuees – both those who have already arrived and those still waiting in the war zone – contained sharper criticism. Once again, there is a deeper study to be made here to figure out if this is difference in perspective between: “it was not as bad as we had imagined” versus “...but we are still stuck in a war zone;” sober assessment versus feelings of entitlement; or a utilitarian measure of total systemic performance versus the individual horror stories, all of which were selected and presented by the media outlets to speak to their respective audiences. Whatever the explanation, there certainly seems to be an expectations gap, and the exact extent and nature of that gap seems to have differed from one commentator to the next. If the expectation was for some improvement over how the tsunami was handled, that expectation was definitely fulfilled. If the expectation was for the Swedish government to immediately pull you out of the burning fire, it was definitely not.

But perspectives aside, there is still an interesting mismatch between the actual performance in the two crises and the image that has been preserved. Unlike the sudden earthquake and tsunami, *UD* had plenty of fore-warning of the Lebanon conflict, but it still took three to four days before a response time was fully assembled and staff reinforcements were shipped out to the area. It took one more day before the means and methods of evacuation were secured. In the supposedly mismanaged and delayed handling of the tsunami, this was all done in the first two days. Even as an in-case comparison, *UD*'s response was slow: *SRSA* took note of the escalating tension and the historical hostility almost a week before the war broke out, and a monitoring team arrived one day before the Israeli attack. *SRSA*'s information sharing with *SoS* and *RPS* was up and running while *UD* was still trying to set up lines of communication with the local offices to stay informed of what happens in the region. Similarly, and again in sharp contrast to the “slow” tsunami response, the assessment of the scope of the situation at *UD* in Stockholm was slow and inaccurate. Only hours after the tsunami hit the beaches in Southeast Asia, a very accurate estimate was done of how many Swedes may be directly affected, of how many friends and relatives back home would be affected *indirectly*, and of what this meant in terms of work volume for the ministry. In comparison, the early estimate of the scope of the Lebanon evacuation was off by an order of magnitude, and consequently so was the estimated need for transport capacity, care, and support back in Sweden. This estimate grew daily and was not nearly accurate until the last transport has already left the war zone. Even with new strategies like sending mass-SMS, the information sharing was perceived as lacklustre and even outright inaccurate by the evacuees still in the area.

In terms of these kinds of performance metrics, the response to the Lebanon crisis was almost categorically worse than that following the tsunami, but what *had* improved is the information flow within the Government Offices. The assessments may have been slow and inaccurate, but they immediately reached central decision-makers, who could then indicate an awareness of the situation and describe how it was being handled to the best of the government's ability. From the outside, of course, a quick and accurate assessment and handling of the situation that is caught up in the bureaucracy will appear just as bungled, or worse, than one that is slow and an inaccurate but immediately communicated, especially when the reasons for the apparent slowness in the former case are revealed. So where the tsunami was a political crisis caused, not by operational error, but by deeply flawed information sharing, the Lebanon case was a *political* success brought on by good information sharing but with some significant hidden operational errors. The former became politicised because the politicians could not give timely and informed answers; the latter was less politicised because this time, they could provide those answers, and any inaccuracies could be explained away as a fairly natural consequence of the fog of literal war.

In a very real way, the immediate political fallout of the two events mirrors the kind of positive and negative reinforcements suggested by the theoretical model: a lack of knowledge leads to further pressure, causing missteps and a highly criticised outcome, whereas good knowledge management deflates the same pressure, allowing for more room to breathe and an outcome that is perceived as successful. There might be reason for worry, though, since the cases almost make it appear as if the quality and accuracy of the information is of secondary importance, but then, that is also an issue inherent in the fundamental crisis definition used here. A *perceived* low uncertainty should by all rights alleviate the stress of a crisis according to this subjective view, with all the benefits that follow, so of course the less accurate information will do the job. If it is good enough to actually see the management through to a satisfactory resolution of the crisis, then so much the better, but in terms of shaping the stress that causes the problems envisioned by the theoretical model, a comforting foundation is all that is needed to let the more open approach prevail, which will then hopefully, iteratively, produce better and better information as events move along. The politicisation of the two events follow a very similar logic. Unsurprisingly, an apparently proactive and to-the-best-of-our-knowledge approach wins more favour and is much harder to criticise than a reactive one where the decision-maker never seems to know anything. In the end, the operative response will of course also matter, but gaining that early support will – again to no-one's surprise – offer more room to manoeuvre and more freedom of choice for the actual decision-making in a crisis.

8.3.4 *The learning and cybernetic aspects*

In the many changes that happened between the tsunami and the Lebanon evacuation, perhaps the most outwardly obvious lesson learned was that it is politically imperative to look in control. However, under the surface, this is obviously not the only learning that has taken place. Indeed, in both case pairs, the learning aspect is one that needs some closer examination before we can fully appreciate the hypotheses posed in this thesis. In particular, a criticism that can be levelled against the entire approach is that, yes, MESO-knowledge and organisational stress are conceptually interesting, but is this not just a matter of good old-fashioned organisational learning? The Swedish cases look like good candidates for single-loop learning, where new and improved methods are devised to deal with hitherto unknown problems, and the FBI cases look like an instance of double-loop learning, where the bureau reassesses not just the problem itself, but its own role and fundamental approach to problem-solving. The fact that the operational performance was reduced between the Swedish cases, and the fact that solving the supposed critical flaw at Waco did not turn out to be all that necessary for bringing the Freeman standoff to a close are both ultimately of subordinate interest. At the end of the day, in both case pairs, the actors involved improved their *crisis management* from one event to the next – it is just that the lessons learned were not what one might have intuitively expected, which, in a sense, just further demonstrates that they are genuine cases of actual learning.

Going back to the fundamentals of the subjective crisis definition, the issue that both organisations solved – or at least successfully managed – was to pull the legs out from under the trilemma illustrated back in Figure 4 on page 50. At *UD*, and in the Government Offices in general, the critical value at stake was almost entirely a political one, albeit with some practical underpinnings: avoiding the appearance of being caught flat-footed and incapable of dealing with the situation. Instrumental change was put into place to solve exactly that problem, and in spite of some initial criticism, the final narrative of the crisis is one of accomplishment and success. It may not have been enough to keep the incumbent government in power in the election the same year, but for a time, at least, past failures had been vindicated. In particular, the systemic flaws that had been identified in the disaster commission report had almost all been addressed. Yet the odd bird of *UD-KC*, with its operative, non-diplomatic, non-foreign policy focus was no longer treated quite as much as a lesser assignment for less competent managers. Formalised means of contact and cooperation had been prepared for when the ministry needed to coordinate with domestic agencies and, of course, the much-maligned foreign minister had been replaced by someone whose apparent primary interest was not to build or further a political career, but to solve problems on the international arena. These are cultural changes, structural and policy changes, and leadership changes, respectively – all meant to remove old bottlenecks and improve the problem-solving capabilities of the

ministry. What we *do not* see are any changes in the overall problem definition that would suggest that this is an instance of double-loop learning (Cangelosi & Dill 1965; Argyris & Schön 1978, 1996; Huber 1991). At most, the realisation that the Foreign Ministry might occasionally deal with domestic – or at least domestic-like – matters might count, but this was hardly news. Even at the time, the cliché that “abroad” was the largest Swedish county was alive and well, and the tsunami crisis simply drove home what this cliché meant in practical terms of having to care for a large number of people. Indeed, the arrangements made after the crisis largely reinforce the notion that it is *not actually* the ministry’s job to care for these individuals, but rather to expedite their return into the waiting arms of their home counties and municipalities, where the regular social safety net would take over.

By contrast, the FBI’s lesson from Waco was that, while it was ostensibly – and under most ordinary circumstances – a law enforcement agency, this did not mean that every problem it would encounter in the field was strictly one of law enforcement. Not every hostage barricade situation would have any hostage takers that the bureau negotiators could negotiate with for the release of the hostages, because the hostages might not exist either. Nor might there be a barricade for the tactical team to breach, should those negotiations fail. In fact, Waco demonstrated that highly trained negotiators might not even be the best suited for those negotiations to begin with. From a historical point of view, the failure of military involvement and the use of military tactics at Waco, and the subsequent lack of both in Montana, also offers an interesting counter-example to the militarisation of U.S. law enforcement that was in full swing during the 1980:s and 1990:s (*cf.* Balko 2006; Kohn 2008; Gregory 2014). The learning here is not just about figuring out new structures and strategies or about sorting out a cultural divide between different branches, although that certainly happened too. The establishment of internal and external groups (like CIRG and CIAG), and the new policy of intermediary negotiators are some of the examples of that. But all of those changes are in service of a fairly drastic redefinition of one of the fundamental problems the bureau is meant to solve, as well as of a subtly redefined role for the bureau itself in that problem-solving effort. Ultimately, the task may still be seen as one of enforcing the law and bringing miscreants to justice, but methods for doing so and the reasons behind those methods – rooted in a difference of *world view and philosophy*, rather than just regular criminal behaviour – had to be revisited to be fully adept at that task.

Curiously enough, while the learning literature may make this distinction between single-loop and double-loop learning, it can also be illustrated in a very similar way using the terminology of Steinbruner’s cybernetic approach. As we may recall from Section 2.5, there are two essential modes of operating: Track I, where problems are analysed and categorised, and solutions picked from a fairly fixed and pre-defined set of problem frames; and Track II, where every problem is continuously given a trial-and-error treatment, and a specific solution is evolved

through rapid iteration. In this perspective, the Swedish cases demonstrate an organisation that has a Track I-style behaviour, and where the major change between the two cases is that new categories and new solutions have been added to the repertoire. Some strategies that were tested during the tsunami crisis had become standard procedures by the time the Lebanon war came along. Other strategies had been conceived of, but the opportunity was missed the first time around, so they were rolled out during the Lebanon crisis before it is too late. The consistency of a known problem with a known solution is very much at play here, and the appearance of these kinds of standard practices is perhaps not all that surprising when we are dealing with such a large organisation that has to operate in so many places at once, with a constant risk of losing contact between the different offices. It is the stereotypical bureaucratic rigidity in action: even if the solution might not always be optimal, at least it removes the uncertainty of having inconsistencies in how the supposedly unitary government interacts with the individual citizen.

Again this can be contrasted against the U.S. cases, which more represent a move from Track I to Track II behaviour. Where the FBI approach was previously heavily regimented and directed by standard operating practices (SOP), but where the core assumptions turned out to be disastrously inconsistent with the reality the special agents were facing, it was later altered to be more accepting of and attentive to those inconsistencies, so that the procedures could be constantly tweaked and (hopefully) improved on to meet the latest challenge. The fear that this Track II behaviour might revert to Track I remains unrealised because of the conscious effort to let things take time and to spend that time on trial-and-error experimentation for reducing the very uncertainty that might otherwise trigger the move back to pure consistency-seeking. The Track II behaviour becomes self-sustaining – perhaps even self-reinforcing – through a cycle of defusing the time pressure of the crisis, using that lowered pressure to experiment, and removing ambiguity and uncertainty through the experimentation, which then further defuses the pressure of the crisis. The change is not just one of new solutions, but of a new logic of problem-solving. The difference between the two cases is unfortunately such that we cannot fully know what the effects would have been if the uncertainty and ambiguity in dealing with the Freeman had increased and thus triggered the same undynamic behaviour exhibited at Waco. Still, there are some hints to that effect. As time wore on and the negotiations seemed as stalled as they ever were with the Davidians, old ideas of repressive tactics such as the deprivation of electrical power and direct contact with the outside world resurfaced and were put into action. From an experimental standpoint, it is almost unfortunate that this Track I-style reversion coincided within a few days with the Track II-style experiment in the form of a completely new negotiation approach, using the CAUSE lawyers as an intermediary. The latter proved highly constructive, the influence of the former was left uncertain, and the stand-off was brought to an end within a matter of days.

The learning and cybernetic perspectives on what changes between the events, and how the two case pairs differ from each other, are interesting in their own right and even complementary to each other. We can not only describe a learning process or a difference in approach, but also start to explain exactly what was changed in the process and what caused the difference in mindset to occur between otherwise very similar cases. So why is this not enough? Why do we need to muddy the waters by bringing in the idea of knowledge, especially with the new conceptualisation offered through the distinction between meta-knowledge, empathic knowledge, and second-order knowledge? What does knowledge management bring to the table that is not already there?

For one, this combination still does not really explain what has been learned other than some broadly defined behaviours and potentially ambiguous structural changes. As briefly discussed in Chapter 2, there are numerous artefacts of apparent learning that turn out to be almost completely vacuous. Fantasy documents show that on-paper change of structures and procedures may have little to no effect on how things are really done, and the concept of superstitious learning suggests that actual change may just be done for the sake of change, without any real practical applicability to the actual problems at hand. It is one thing to say that an organisation has begun relying on Track II-style experimentation to deal with a dynamic problem space; it tells us nothing as to whether that experimentation is really appropriate for the situation or whether it is truly effective or not. Similarly, it may be interesting to observe the shift in tracks and how it is a response to a crisis, but exactly why the crisis would trigger one behaviour over the other is left unanswered. For another, the exact nature and reasons behind the consistency-seeking experimentation, and especially of a change from one to the other, are left vague and uncertain. There is also the problem that learning is most commonly conceptualised as something that happens between events: you learn from one to behave differently during the next, but there is very little to account for changes that may occur, say, *during* a crisis. The feedback process stretches over years, and the distinctions made in the cybernetic approach are assumed to be deeply ingrained mindsets that also only slowly change over time. But what happens in the dynamic environment of a crisis? These perspectives offer very little in the way of explanation for how behaviours might change moment to moment in response to, not just the evolution of the event itself, but the setbacks and serendipities of the organisation tasked with dealing with the crisis. Why does an organisation that experiments to find customised solutions on a daily basis – which both *UD* and the FBI do by virtue of having to deal with so many unique individual cases – suddenly become inflexible when the pressure mounts? Both perspectives deal with forms of organisational cognition, but do so with fairly limited means of dealing with how that cognition may be affected by the moment to moment change of an evolving situation.

Adding knowledge to the mix allows for a “medium” that this cognition may act on or through. The different cybernetic tracks use, produce, and trans-

form knowledge, and learning explains how not just the knowledge itself, but the processes behind it are encoded within the organisation for future use. Knowledge management in and of itself offers some additional suggestions on how these creative and transformative processes may work on a daily basis, but it, too, presupposes a fairly generous timespan to let the process take place. Instead, its real value is in how it conceptualises knowledge and how it exposes an important social aspect to the act of knowing that lets us unravel and put a name on the actual activities that go on behind the scenes of those learning and experimentation activities.

8.3.5 Preparedness and prevention – amending the model?

Before going into detail about how the knowledge and behavioural perspectives offered by this thesis help us describe those activities, it is worth mentioning one thing that learning does that is not accounted for in the model. Learning, especially as it is used in crisis research, is commonly seen as the process that happens in the space between one crisis and the next. These lessons create a preparedness for future events and which might even prevent future crises outright. The Montana case is a text-book example: learning from Waco, the FBI prepared for future cases where there might be a need to coordinate and compromise between the slow-burning long-term strategy of negotiation and the violent shock of a tactical intervention, and for events when the bureau's in-house analytical competence might not be sufficient to fully grasp the complexity of the situation. In doing so, the FBI did not outright *prevent* the Montana stand-off, but it was able to keep it from escalating into a full-blown crisis.

The model of the pressure on organisations does not particularly take such preparations into account, even though they could conceivably be explained through the proper use of MESO-knowledge. Gaps, knowledge needs, and knowledge holders are identified before the fact, and connections are made in case the need should ever arise. However, a prepared organisation has in many ways short-circuited the problem context the model is meant to help us understand. With sufficient preparedness, the processes are fully anticipated, and the ambiguities of a potential crisis are resolved before they even arise. Thus, there is no pressure that might effect the more closed behaviour and the restricted knowledge use the model predicts. The exact answers might not already exist within the organisation, but there is certainty about where they can be found, and the ambiguity of outcome is at least temporarily displaced to whomever is supposed to provide those answers. That is not to say that the answers will always be perfect. The mention of a temporary displacement is very deliberate, as misjudgement or miscommunication may still throw the whole thing off and trigger a crisis of its own. In some sense, this dynamic is encapsulated in the feedback mechanisms between MESO usage and the crisis and anticipation of process, but as the model illustrates, that feedback still presupposes that there

is some initial pressure that can either be deflated or reinforced by the proper application of knowledge, and that the feedback thus further reinforces whatever positive or negative effects there might be from the pre-existing pressure and the organisation's response to that pressure.

Reintroducing learning could help us capture that long-term dynamic without removing clarity from the current model of organisational pressure. The learning process would not be an in-event feedback loop, but rather the formalisation and encoding of new-found MESO-knowledge into the organisation as a whole, creating a new backdrop of assumptions, problem spaces, solution spaces, and anticipations that form the perception of the next event. Knowledge gaps identified during one crisis become part of the meta-knowledge that contextualises the next crisis. Likewise, empathic knowledge acquired when solving a given problem might set up anticipations for the next time the same problem arises, and the exchanges triggered by second-order knowledge may bloom into full-blown communities of practice by the time the next unforeseen event occurs. Rather than modulating the pressure here and now, this stored knowledge dictates future characteristics and capabilities of crisis preparedness and response, maybe even to the extent that the crisis can be avoided altogether because the next time, the exact nature can immediately be identified and the right knowledge brought to bear to solve it.

At the same time, we should perhaps be careful not to try to encode *all* forms of learning as an extension of this kind of feedback. MESO-knowledge is about increasingly self-referential layers of knowledge, and not about the skills required to tackle the technical or operational aspects of, say, planning an evacuation or negotiating a hostage release. These skills can of course also be learned from one case to the next, but that is not the learning that we are trying to capture here. At most, that type of learning would manifest itself as yet another point in the knowledge audit that forms the basis for meta-knowledge: since the last time, we now also know how to solve *this* particular problem. The ability to solve it needs to be kept separate from the knowledge that this ability now exists. That kind of instrumental learning is already sufficiently captured in the basic concept of organisational learning that we do not need to complicate matters further by mixing in MESO-knowledge. Indeed, the whole point of introducing the new knowledge categories is that they try to capture something completely different, so mixing them up would just defeat the purpose of having those categories to begin with.

Likewise, while there have been plenty of allusions so far that MESO-knowledge may help in anticipating the processes of interaction with others, that kind of anticipation assumes that the interaction will be about information and knowledge sharing – processes that fall under the umbrella of either empathic knowledge or second-order knowledge. However, the anticipation of process could just as well be entirely a matter of explicit knowledge: some very specific but easily explained format has to be used, information has to be requested using a certain form, certain honourifics should always be used when addressing certain

individuals, and so on. Or it could be something as simple as remembering to always record incoming calls or meeting protocols correctly, because otherwise, time will be lost – and stress generated – when someone asks for an audit of how things have been handled so far. Especially in a political and bureaucratic context, this procedural tracking of activities can easily become a focus point of the accountability phase that comes after a crisis. The lingering crisis after the tsunami illustrates this perfectly, as do the accusations of evidence tampering levelled against the FBI after Waco. Learning not to make those types of mistakes has nothing to do with the kind of mutual understanding and trust-building that goes into creating empathic knowledge, but is rather a case of accumulating regular procedural or tacit knowledge.

No matter what type of knowledge we are talking about, though, there is a clear distinction to be made between the kind of learning that happens between events, which sets up the general context of anticipation and of problem definition of those events, and the kind of in-event feedback that happens as the current situation is continuously reinterpreted (or further misinterpreted) and as new knowledge is brought to bear.

8.4 What have we gained?

So what have we learned from this lengthy examination? I would highlight in particular three gains as valuable outcomes of this study: an expanded conceptualisation of knowledge to include the social context in which knowledge is created and used; a model of how external pressures affect the behaviour of organisations, and thereby indirectly affect how well they make use of these new categories of knowledge; and knowledge as an indicator of organisational learning.

8.4.1 *Knowledge – more than just tacit and explicit*

In examining the knowledge management literature, and in particular the SECI process of transforming and transferring tacit and explicit knowledge, I have found that there is an underlying assumption inherent in those processes about who holds knowledge, and how that knowledge finds its way to a new recipient in need of that knowledge. In order to successfully realise the sourcing and grafting of new knowledge, two principal pieces of the puzzle are required. First, one must sort out the tangled weave of what already is and is not known. Through the use of knowledge audits and capability gap analyses, an organisation can build up a repository of what I have chosen to call *meta knowledge* – that is, knowledge about knowledge. This includes not just what is known within the organisation already, but also what knowledge is missing and yet required on a regular basis to tackle the problems the organisation is tasked with solving. It should not be confused with the actual skills, capabilities, or areas of expertise themselves – meta knowledge is the *awareness of* those skills and abilities, or of the lack thereof.

Second, the same type of analysis needs to be done on external knowledge holders to find out who among them have the capability of filling in the gaps uncovered by the audit. As the use of this capability generally does not come for free, it also helps to gain an understanding of the other party's gaps and whether or not the one's own organisation can help with that problem. I have chosen to call this *empathic knowledge* the knowledge of the abilities and needs of the other in relation to one's own abilities and needs. Meta-knowledge and empathic knowledge are themselves explicit types of knowledge, at least on paper. They could conceivably be stored and presented as long lists of skills and areas of expertise that are already identified and/or located. Together, these two knowledge types will allow an organisation to identify and solve most known problem by pre-emptively sourcing internal or external expertise to handle those problems.

However, there is one critical hitch in this setup: the assumption that the problems are already known. For the cases when they are not, a third type of knowledge is needed. This, I have chosen to call *second-order knowledge*, or the knowledge of how to know more. This concept covers two main skills. The first is the ability to combine meta-knowledge and empathic knowledge to figure out that there are additional gaps not covered by the own organisation or by other know knowledge holders. An especially tangled instance would entail knowing that a contact has a contact dealing with some kind of problem you hardly even know exist, much less understand. The other skill is one of knowing how to ask the right questions and ensuring the quality of the answer, in spite of not having any in-depth knowledge of the topic. This, too, is an aspect of combining meta-knowledge and empathic knowledge: being aware of your own limitations, but also of the limitations of others, and in knowing that, you have a greater chance of intelligently communicating exactly what the gaps in your knowledge are and what problem you believe you are trying to solve. Unlike meta-knowledge and empathic knowledge, second-order knowledge is more tacit: it is a process rather than an easily expressed statement of fact, in particular the knowledge of how to ask and receive answers, since these can only be acquired in the interaction with others. As such, while it may be the most useful in a critical and confusing situation, it is also the most difficult to transfer or mass-produce within the organisation. Instead, chances are that it will exist in specific knowledge nodes, perhaps attached to looser interest groups or communities of practice that the organisation is involved with.

Second-order knowledge is a remedy to what I have come to call the *identification paradox*: the inability to properly identify a problem because you do not even know whom or what to ask to get a clear understanding of the problem. This issue is further reinforced when the problem at hand seems very similar to a different problem that you *do* understand – confirmation bias and similar cognitive errors pretty much guarantee that it will be misidentified as something it is not, leading to attempts to employ wholly unsuited solutions that may even make the problem worse.

While these concepts offer an interesting new way of categorising knowledge – by layers of introspective awareness rather than by the ease of expression and transmission that characterises the normal tacit/explicit split – they are not of much use on their own. Rather, they get their value from how they allow us to study, and perhaps even measure, organisational openness and organisational learning.

8.4.2 The pressure on organisations

By identifying the core components of crises – in particular the tension between urgency and uncertainty – and mapping them against theories of coping mechanisms used to resolve those tensions, I have devised a model of organisational behaviour under stress, where an increase in pressure makes the organisation “close” itself and increasingly rely on tried, tested, and “safe” methods of solving problems. In addition, I have identified an additional source of a similar kind of pressure in the form of unanticipated demands to adhere to a specific process when solving problems. Where crises are inherently uncertain, which provokes a fall-back to known procedures to relieve at least *some* of that uncertainty, unanticipated processes create uncertainty, in part because the process itself is an unwelcome surprise, and in part because it keeps the organisation from using those familiar processes that would relieve the uncertainty.

I posit that this pressure alters the organisation’s “mindset” – that is, whether it is open or closed; whether it prefers rigidity and consistency over flexibility and dynamic outcomes. I further posit that the degree of openness and closedness will affect how well the organisation makes use of its MESO-knowledge. However, this is not a one-way relationship. Instead, there are feedback loops that allow MESO-usage to affect the perception of a crisis and the response to unanticipated processes, either negatively or positively, which may then further inhibit or allow a new cycle of MESO usage. Coupled with an inherent degree of openness or closedness of any organisational design, this means that some organisations are predisposed towards a self-reinforcing negative spiral where they close up and make themselves increasingly resistant to the use of external expertise. Conversely, other organisations are predisposed towards a self-reinforcing positive spiral where challenge opens up new avenues of flexibility and dynamic problem-solving.

Testing these hypotheses against two case pairs has shown that even a slight tendency towards increased openness seems to drastically improve the MESO usage. In one case, this fact then allows for a slow but systematic diffusion of the pressure of the situation, to the point where it can no longer really be called a crisis. None of the three hypotheses presented at the head of this chapter can be falsified, although the relationship between openness and MESO usage envisioned in Hypothesis III is at the same time more vague, but the effects more pronounced, than was initially predicted.

Nevertheless, the model and the categorisation of organisational behaviour is helpful in understanding what motivates those behaviours and what the consequences of them are. While presented as such here for methodological reasons, these categories are not, strictly speaking, categorical, but exist on a continuum depending largely on the purpose of the organisation, as well as on its situatedness in a larger context. In particular, it offers a framework for explaining how different political and public-administrative demands translate into different knowledge needs, and how this in turn comes around to offer differing capabilities to approach problem-solving in an exploratory or rigid manner. None of the individual observations are all that revelatory or shocking, but the dynamics – especially the self-reinforcing nature of knowledge use, and indeed the influence of such a basic concept as knowledge – are important for further understanding both the general case of organisations caught in an unfamiliar situation, and in the specific empirical cases used to test and illustrate these dynamics.

Empirically, the model has allowed me to dissect the cases from a fresh perspective to highlight a number of factors for both success and failure, and of particular note is the observation that success is far from an objective measure. The Lebanon case is of singular interest in this regard, in that it has won a historical reputation as a success story in spite of some really questionable crisis management, all because there was only one measure of success that really mattered: the political symbol of an active government. What this meant on the ground was of lesser importance. Similarly, I have been able to capture and analyse that very rare species of crisis: the one that did not happen. The Montana case is a complete mirror-case of the débâcle at Waco, to the point where it should perhaps not even be called a crisis at all. Critical components required for that label were defined away at an early stage, and a lot of effort went into keeping matters that way throughout the stand-off. Here, perhaps more than in any of the other cases, the cycle of using of knowledge to defuse a crisis; and using the lack of a crisis to allow the sourcing and grafting of more knowledge is laid bare. The end result is a case that almost challenges the very definition of good crisis management but being so well-managed that the crisis went away. It is only really in comparison to its case twin, and knowing the disastrous consequences of all the similar decision points but different roads taken, that we can identify and imagine the potential disaster that was avoided.

Both Montana and Lebanon are thus “successful” cases, but for very different reasons. Again, from a purely empirical standpoint, this is a rare bird to catch in its own right, and having such similar, yet very different earlier cases to compare against, allows for an unusually clear-cut comparison of the nature of those differences and the effects they had on the final outcome. While the empirical matter is not intended as a primary contribution, it is still worth pointing out, especially in the all but forgotten Montana case.

8.4.3 *A measure of learning*

The last major contribution I offer is the use of MESO-knowledge as an indicator for learning. The organisational learning literature can at times be scattered in its focus, but if there is a single common theme, it is that learning is difficult to study, not just because the concepts themselves can be complex, but because they are notoriously difficult to measure. Learning in the form of policy reform has generally proven a bit easier to trace and analyse since the output in the form of new policies is at least easy to find, if still difficult to classify (cf. Argyris & Schön 1978, 1996; Dekker & Hansén 2004; Birkland 2006; Nohrstedt 2007; Boin 2008; Hansén 2007; Deverell 2010:36). What I have presented in the cases in this study is not policy reform, however, but tangible change in the organisations involved. Rather than relying on ambiguous structural changes, or near impossible-to-observe cultural changes, or almost wholly internalised problem frames, I have found an artefact that, while it offers some alternate explanations for how it changes, can also be studied in a long-term perspective to try to identify meaningful change, both as generated by single-loop learning and by double-loop learning. Second-order learning remains tricky, but should not actually be impossible to pick out, even at a distance, based on how the organisation sets itself up to deal with its knowledge needs.

The main limitation is that detecting second-order learning through MESO-knowledge is a one-shot deal. It is one way to effect that particular type of learning, and once the principles of knowledge acquisitions have been accepted and work has been done to start acquiring new knowledge, the lesson is learned. Short of the organisation abandoning the practice altogether and then restarting from scratch, it is not really a lesson that can be learned twice in a row.

For single- and double-loop learning, on the other hand, the acquisition and encoding of new knowledge can be treated as instances of learning, as illustrated in the previous section. I posit that we can treat MESO-knowledge as a set of organisational skills that can be trained and altered over time, and that each such instance can be treated as a case of learning. It still behoves us to evaluate exactly what type of learning each such acquisition represents. In the Montana case, I argue that the evolution of a full set of MESO-knowledge structures and practices would suggest that second-order learning is taking place. I would also argue that the way these structures and practices are used in the case suggests that this is not any kind of false learning, but an honest and largely successful attempt on the FBI's part to redefine itself as well as the problem in order to properly deal with a newly discovered set of issues. Conversely, the Swedish cases do not have that full set of skill development, but rather a limited set of connections through which meta-knowledge and empathic knowledge could be employed. And irrespective of the end goal – whether it was just to send a political message, or if it was truly an attempt to do better that did not fully succeed – the fact remains that changes were made to improve the knowledge flow and problem solving. As such, it readily seems to qualify for genuine single-loop learning.

In some sense, and as previously discussed, the entire model could conceivably be used in a similar way. A deliberate change from one mindset to the other should also be a strong indicator of learning, but of exactly what is a matter to be decided for each individual case. The indicators for openness or closed-ness can fairly trivially be turned into indicators for learning, but it remains to be argued what the lesson is for each shift and whether or not this is actually an appropriate lesson in relation to whatever triggered the change. In one case, a change of principles towards stronger regulation may be positive learning in response to a failure caused by arbitrary and unfair decisions; in another, a change of instrumental work-flow from rigidity to flexibility may be a case of positive learning in response to trying (and failing) to apply the same rules to everyone, no matter how absurd the consequences. The question is what problem the organisation is trying to solve and what measures it is taking to effect that solution. The changes may manifest themselves in just the acquisition of specific MESO-knowledge skills or they may show up as entire mindset changes. Either way, the model and the methodology for applying it offer a reasonably clean and simple way of capturing such changes without the same difficulties and ambiguities of interpretation of already vague indicators that are often used to capture organisational learning.

As potentially valuable as this ability to measure learning is, it still leaves one critical issue in the learning literature unresolved – indeed, it could be argued that it almost makes it worse. Part of the point in studying organisational learning is a desire to improve that learning process. By adding in the MESO-knowledge concept, we have also added a complication to that part of the problem and we need to figure out what the conditions are for learning these apparently valuable skills. Simply treating them as indicators of learning tells us nothing of how and why they happen, and might actually just act as yet another layer of abstraction that keeps us away from understanding the mechanisms behind that learning process. With the predictability of the sun rising in the morning, in spite of this improvement in our tool set, we have to fall back on that old scientific chestnut: more research is needed.

8.4.4 Generalisability

Before employing these new strategies willy-nilly, it is first imperative that we consider how well they apply to anything at all. There have been a couple of evasions in the analysis that need to be reeled back in and re-examined. The first of these is the discussion of how task and domain complexity affects the organisation. In the discussion on foreign and domestic arenas and institutional design, I briefly strayed into arguing that a higher complexity automatically leads to a higher degree of closed-ness as a direct effect of one of the core assumptions behind the model: the more uncertainty, the more the organisation will tend towards a closed behaviour, and of course, the broader and the more complex

a given issue area is, the more the inherent uncertainty will be. The question is, then, whether this is a general pattern between complexity and closed-ness, or whether it is a combination effect of, in this particular case, the fact that the foreign-policy arena is complex, and that it is also not split up to nearly the same extent as the domestic arena. Conceptually, the latter seems more sensible, but this study is too limited to offer any kind of definitive answer. At the same time, it may very well be that while there is a lot of breadth to the foreign arena, there is not quite as much depth to it; furthermore, it becomes someone else's domestic arena, and they would prefer if everyone else did not stick their noses too far into it. In that case, the worry over comparing foreign against domestic may be overblown, but again, the study is too limited to say so the worry will have to remain for now.

At any rate, there is a caveat attached to the study – and in particular the comparison – of different organisations in different fields. We should probably suspect some inherent differences in openness just based on the differing scopes and complexities of the fields alone. If we add in such variables as demanding different levels of security or having different origins, or even just attracting different professions, then suddenly the preferences may swing wildly, and with them the baseline for where we can expect to find the organisation on the open–closed spectrum before any kind of external pressure has been applied. For much the same reasons, we should probably expect different elasticity in their response to that pressure – some start out *very* open, but will shut down hard if they encounter any kind of stressful situation. Others may be far more closed inherently, but will not budge towards increased closed-ness even as the pressure mounts. Put in more practical (if perhaps extreme) terms, we should probably not expect a municipal library to exhibit the same baseline-and-response curve as an emergency service station.

Still, we *should* expect the same pattern of falling back on the familiar and know – that is a move towards a more closed behaviour – when things start to fall apart. But even then, there is a false positive to watch out for. It is easy to imagine that a completely unprepared and unthinking response may end up looking dynamic when what it really should be called is “chaotic.” What we need to remember in attaching these labels is that these are pretty deeply rooted principles of how work should be done, why it should be done that way, and what outcome everyone expects out of those choices. An apparent flexibility from an organisations that never do anything different, except this one time, should not distract us from that general pattern. It is more likely that they have tried to do the same as always this time too, but it has had no positive effect, so now they are desperately trying anything they can think of. Once the panic is over, though, they will go back to that comforting rigidity and *even if* a new response is learned, it just means this response will be as rigidly applied as the rest.

Another issue in regards to applicability and generalisability is the core assumption in this whole study that knowledge matters. That is not to say that the whole thing has been a waste of effort, but that it is not hard to imagine an

organisation where external expertise will only very rarely be an issue. It may be less of an issue with public organisations since they generally provide some kind of service to society at large, and society tends to be fairly interconnected. It would require a very high degree of specialisation and yet a very low general usefulness of that specialist competence, but at the same time, a wide array of internal competence so as to not be dependent on any outside organisations. Some of the more self-contained high-reliability organisations might qualify, because all prerequisite competence must already be in place to maintain that reliability for one reason or another, either because the organisation is geographically isolated or because the work is so sensitive that no-one can be allowed to interfere without previous clearance. But even in these cases, the general principles of the study are still applicable – we just have to be careful if we want to make comparisons across such wildly different organisation types, and control or compensate for those differences. It is a limitation on the clustering of study objects more than a limitation on the methodology and theoretical assumptions.

8.4.5 Methodological improvements

It is in these gaps that we find one of the main sources of methodological improvements. The case selection for this study has been one of finding very similar pairs, so as to show what a difference even small variations will generate. There was also a strong preference to contrast (perceived) success against failure. As such, the variations in my dependent variables were not as large as it could have been, in particular as far as truly separating the effects of crises from those of unanticipated processes. The only truly divergent case here is Lebanon, which only varies in respect to degree of anticipation compared to its case twin. Ideally, a complementary case pair could have been found where only the degree of crisis changes, but the degree of anticipation remains constant between the success and the failure.

Part of this is also related to a different methodological issue that had to be addressed and semi-corrected on the fly to really bring the point home: the variables are described as degrees, but are only really measured as binaries. As demonstrated throughout Section 8.2, this causes problems when trying to separate how very closed the high-scoring tsunami case is compared to the only-slightly-lower scoring Lebanon case. In the end, it can clumsily be solved by talking in terms of “trend towards” or by counting indicators, even though there has been no regard for the weighting of how valuable each indicator is compared to the rest, and no attempt has been made to turn this into a proper quantitative method. The numbers are there to show the trend, not to be of any kind of absolute value. Returning briefly to the question of generalisability, this is also a methodological weakness that needs to be addressed if we ever want to mix and match more divergent actors and cases. For the purposes of this study, the method is sufficient, but still in dire need of improvement to allow more data points from more objects of study.

A related issue is that of different quality (and quantity) of source material. One of the reasons why this course method was chosen was because the cases are so different: Waco and the tsunami, being highly publicised disastrous failures, will have far more voluminous and far more detailed material available compared to the self-congratulatory success of the Lebanon evacuation and the terminally boring Montana case when nothing happened and everyone stopped reporting. Consequently, it was far easier to find the prerequisite detailed descriptions of the knowledge gaps and communications failures in the two unsuccessful cases than in the successful ones, which as discussed in Chapter 3 may unduly bias the failures towards appearing more negative, and the successes towards appearing more positive because those are the respective narratives history leaves behind. On top of that, the biases themselves may be uneven, making the negatives seem more negative than the positives are positive, again due to the different interest and level of detail in the surviving accounts. The coarse categorisation helps take the edge off of those biases, but the ideally, of course, that should not be needed.

For future studies, then, what is needed is a way to gradually appraise the principles, instruments, and preferred outcomes of the organisation studied, so as to offer a wider variance for the open–closed spectrum. Similarly, the deviations for determining the anticipation of process could be refined, offering further indicators for different levels of requirements, ambiguities, uncertainties and mistrust. The MESO usage already has some variance built into the fact that there are three different knowledge types, and that they are somewhat hierarchical; empathic knowledge is of little use without meta-knowledge to guide it. No matter how much of the latter is used, it still does not do much good without a solid foundation based on what the organisation actually needs to know. Here, too, adding degrees to each indicator would help, but the problem is that the degrees have to be contextual to the situation. A long-lasting, dynamic, and very complex situation might generate an inordinate amount of consultation across all three knowledge types, or it may generate very few instances of meta-knowledge usage because it just so happens to fall within the existing competence of the organisations, or vice versa.

As tricky as the knowledge side is, though, the supposed “degree of crisis” is probably the worst. In part because it intuitively sounds like a very odd concept: surely, it either *is* a crisis or it is *not* – how do we find degrees in that? In part because the crisis definition used here is subjective, so the degree of crisis may vary from nil to complete chaos and disaster depending on whom you ask within a single organisation, or even a single decision-making group. For the purpose of this thesis, the distinction has really been between “high” and “low”, perhaps with an unspoken allowance for “none” in the case of Montana. A different crisis definition could conceivably be employed, but care would have to be taken to ensure that it still adheres to the same tradition and view on knowledge and learning, and of the importance of both time and uncertainty, or the main thrust in studying knowledge use under crisis would be lost.

8.4.6 *Research agenda*

Aside from these methodological quandaries, which for the most part lack a workable solution at the moment, there a couple of very specific studies that need to be made to further test the model and challenge some of the assumptions it has generated. One has already been mentioned: the inclusion of a case pair where the variance between success and failure is a different degree of crisis, but with a constant degree of anticipation. This would fill out an annoying void in the kinds of variance tested for, and might perhaps even begin giving some hints on what matters more – crisis or anticipation. Even so, without a more quantitatively designed large-N study, that matter will have to rest. It is also debatable if it really matters that much if crises stress organisations more than surprise – a better addition would probably be to test for other stress factors, such as trying to differentiate political pressure from operative performance or to have more explicit time pressures or limited resources. Of course, the pre-existing pressure from crisis makes these specific examples a bit more difficult since they are all already encompassed within the larger conflict between time pressure and values at stake conflict that is inherent in the crisis definition. George's trade-off dilemmas (Figure 5 on page 52) offer some potential additions in the form of acceptability, support, and decision quality, but some inventiveness is obviously needed in figuring out more source of pressure.

Another avenue of refinement and research is to try to disentangle the questions of issue domain and complexity, of bureaucratic situatedness, and of strategic versus operative problem solving. At the moment, these three offer no real useful variation between the subjects studied since they all covary: the foreign-policy domain organisation is also situated just below the political level and is also (supposed to be) solving strategic problems. The other organisation offers the exact opposite in every respect. What is needed is a foreign-arena organisation that explicitly does operative problem-solving and a domestic-arena strategic actor, but preferably still with some distance to the political layer so that it can be contrasted against a domestic-arena organisation under strong political control. Ideally, a purely operative organisation that is under direct political control would fill out the roster, but even with a system that allows for direct ministerial control, that mix between high and low will most likely not see many useful candidates. Instead, what is needed is a better-balanced controlled comparison between the domains, ensuring that the issue areas are of equal complexity and, that the stresses they are under are of somewhat equal magnitude.

Likewise, the potential for bureaucratic competition covaries with the other influences that are said to affect openness or closed-ness. Here, we would need to find otherwise very similar organisations, but with and without that competitive element, respectively, which then need to be tested against various calm and stressful situations to see what effect that competition has on how the organisations tend towards or away from a closed behaviour.

Filling out with additional case pairs helps build on the comparisons that have begun in this thesis, but the need for more depends entirely on which part of the hypothesis we are interested in testing further. It is not really until we involve Hypothesis III – the relationship between open and closed and the use of MESO-knowledge – that the factor of success and failure and of the feedback loops that further support or undermine those outcomes come into play. At the same time, it is also this relationship that is the least well supported by the existing findings, and which needs the most testing. An additional benefit is that such a set-up would also forcibly include more successful – by some measure – events, which are empirically scarce and, if nothing else, in need of discovery and cataloguing.

Last but not least, the fundamental MESO-knowledge concept upon which everything else rests needs refinement. In this thesis, the reintegration of MESO-knowledge into learning, or vice versa, has mostly been a matter of acknowledging that there is a sizeable literature devoted to very similar concepts, but looking at distinctly different indicators, and of suggesting that knowledge may be used as a back-door into the study of a notoriously elusive phenomenon. Further refinement of this idea is needed, as well as empirical tests of the soundness of the methodology. Looking beyond that, it also touches on a larger aspect of the foundational ideas of Cyert & March (1963), Cangelosi & Dill (1965) and Polanyi (1966). In the six decades that have passed since, the concept of organisational knowledge has splintered into four fairly distinct topics: basic organisational learning, the idea of The Learning Organisation, the notion of organisational knowledge, and finally knowledge management. Other, related fields such as policy studies or crisis management studies have borrowed heavily from these ideas, but in splintering from that common root, fewer and fewer of them seem to borrow from each other. This study has tried to integrate some of the ideas of knowledge management into crisis management – a field that so far has mostly been concerned with learning as an aspect of the crisis management process. Perhaps it is time to widen that ambition and try to *reintegrate* parts of knowledge management directly into organisational learning and vice versa. In the end, it is a matter of creating and distributing actionable knowledge, and keeping them less strictly separated might do both fields some good.

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Executive summary

Who knows what, where, when, and how?

Hindsight is 20/20, as the saying goes. Anyone who studies decision-making during high-profile crises – or even just during tense and high-stress situations – will quickly come to learn how large a factor this post-fact insight can be in the final judgement of how the crisis was managed. It is a rule more than an exception that a general sense of “they should have known better” will arise in the aftermath of any traumatic event. If such opinions are not voiced, it is likely because no one really noticed that anything went wrong in the first place. This, in turn, only seems to reinforce the basic notion: when things go right, apparently the decision-makers *did not* know better.

However, as prevailing as this opinion may be, “should” is a very loaded and ambiguous modus and it raises a number of questions as to how fitting this conclusion really is and on what basis it is made. What should they have known? What difference would it have made if they had known? Are we even sure they did *not know*; perhaps it was just a calculated risk that turned out wrong this one time, or perhaps it appears as if it would simply not make any practical difference? Moreover, who are “they” that should have been engaged in this whole knowing business: the entire organisation, the decision-making group, the individual decision-makers, or the subject-matter experts who were supposed to advise all of the above? Above all, why *should* “they” have known? It may have been convenient and desirable if they had access to some key insight, but was such wish-fulfilment at all possible given the circumstances? Indeed, every single word in the common notion of “they should have known better” is open for debate, or even outright questionable.

While technocratic rule in policy- and decision-making has waxed and waned in popularity and influence over the years, it still remains an ever-present factor in modern bureaucracies. The Western tradition of public administration fun-

damentally rests on a model of subdividing the governing of society into specific areas of expertise. An extensive and intricate structure of ministries, agencies, and offices has been constructed to distribute authority and responsibility for the running of various state functions. Each of them is then further divided into units or departments with a specific area of expertise (cf. Weber 1922; Mintzberg 1979; Fischer 2009:17ff). Thus, the expert has long been at the very heart of the government structure, but as complexity has increased and different issue areas have become more interlinked, the specific set of expertise needed for a given problem has also become increasingly difficult to find in this distributed web of roles and responsibilities.

Yet another twist to the issue of “they should have known” is presented when considering who knows what, how to access them, and how to find out if the necessary expertise even exists. Maybe, by very intent, design, and definition, the decision-makers *should not a priori* be concerned with that critical issue that suddenly evolves into a crisis. Rather, they should have a functioning support structure that identifies and delegates questions and answers throughout this web of expertise, which recasts that rather accusatory assumption of knowledge into a question of what caused the knowledge support structure to fail.

How do external stress factors affect an organisation’s ability to acquire and make use of knowledge?

This study tests the hypotheses that *organisations fall back on well-know, prescribed, and preferably consistent problem-solving procedures when subjected to the stress of a crisis; that organisations can be forced to limit their problem-solving creativity by external regulations unless interactions with external actors have been anticipated and processes are already in place to deal with such situations; and that the degree of openness an organisation has to such factors will affect how willingly they make use of external expertise.* The study builds on the classic conceptualisation of organisations as analogous to individuals, with their own unique set of behaviours and cognitive patterns (March & Simon 1958; Cyert & March 1963). Under this model, we speak of organisations as capable of knowing, of learning, of observing, and also of being stressed and shocked by the unfamiliar and unknown.

This study posits that it is this stress that causes organisations to close up and to fall back on the familiar and seemingly safe, which almost by definition precludes anything that is not already known. Crises, unfortunately, are characterised by high degrees of uncertainty and ambiguity, so this means that at a time when more insight and understanding would be highly desirable for resolving those uncertainties, the organisation that has to deal with the problem at hand is in its least receptive mood towards that much-needed insight. Everything is already confusing, so adding *even more* unknown and strange facts to the mix hardly seems enticing. In addition, crises often require cooperation and coordi-

nation with other actors, and this in turn becomes a second stress factor in that the forms and procedures for those interactions represent yet another unknown variable is thrown into the mix.

The study sets up an ideal-type axis of organisational behaviour that describes the degree of *openness* or *closed-ness* an organisation exhibits towards adopting or adapting to external influences. This is the core of a causal chain where, at one end, various factors may push the organisation towards more open or a more closed behaviour, and where at the other end, the change in closed-ness affects how well the organisation manages to source and graft new knowledge from its environment. There is an underlying assumption at play here, where more knowledge inherently leads to better-informed decision-making, and implicitly qualitatively better *decisions*, which lies outside the scope of inquiry for this study and which therefore is left untested.

The study also introduces the concept of MESO-knowledge – a name derived from triplet of knowledge types that are at play in the identification and acquisition of external expertise: *meta*-knowledge, *empathic* knowledge, and *second-order* knowledge. These knowledge types represent the other part of the equation, offering a means to evaluate, if not outright measure, the knowledge usage of the organisation as a function of the degree of openness or closed-ness.

The analytical framework for the study combines these parts into a model of organisational behaviour where increasing organisational stress from crises and unanticipated working processes generate more closed behaviour, and where more closed behaviour in turn deteriorates the organisation's use of MESO-knowledge. Conversely, an organisation that can anticipate processes and mitigate the stress of a crisis will be able to retain an open mode of behaviour and thereby also retain the full use of its MESO-knowledge. In a final twist, there are also feedback loops where the level of MESO-knowledge an organisation can express affects its ability to anticipate processes and, at least partially, mitigate crises. The organisation can therefore find itself in a positive or a negative spiral. For example, stress can reduce the knowledge available and in turn the reduction in knowledge can increase the level of stress; whereas, a solid knowledge foundation can reduce stress and thus enables an even better application of knowledge that, in turn, reduces stress even further.

The open–closed model of organisational behaviour

Organisational theory has long established that different organisations have different preferences in how they structure their work processes. However, the main focus of these theories tends to be means and methods of coordination, control, and centralisation, and at times augmented by models of bureau-political considerations (cf. Burns & Stalker 1961; Allison 1971; Mintzberg 1979; Rosenthal et al. 1991; Hart et al. 1993; Groenendaal et al. 2013). While these perspectives are helpful in understanding the dynamics of the decision-making

groups and processes, they only tangentially touch on the underlying preferences that give rise to the behaviours that are of interest for this study. Instead, we turn to theories that approach the problem of dealing with complexity, such as Normal Accident Theory (Perrow 1984) and Cybernetic Theory (Steinbruner 1974; 2002).

Combined, these models present a picture of organisations striving for either end of the spectrum of consistency, on the one hand, and flexibility on the other. This may entail a desired level of consistency in outcomes, in procedures, or in predictability of the types of problems that the organisation is meant to solve. The preference tends to coincide with other principles existing on similar spectra, such as rigidity, informality, strict regulation, or dynamic problem-solving. These related spectra let us construct a triplet of characteristics that offer a means for measuring how open or closed an organisation is to using new solutions to address unforeseen problems.

Thus, we can conceptualise the *closed* organisation as one that operates on a principle of *regulation*, whose work flows are designed to be *rigid*, and where the end goal is to produce a set of *consistent* and outcomes in response to a predictable set of issues. Conversely, we can conceptualise the *open* organisation as one that operates on a principle of *informality*, whose work flows are designed to be *flexible*, and where the end goal is to *dynamically* adjust to and solve an array of unpredictable problems. In practice, no organisation will wholly be at either extreme, and elements of either end will always be present to some degree. For example, even the most flexible organisation will sometimes end up employing the same consistent solutions to the same known problems. Likewise, when subjected to the stress studied here, an organisation will not violently flip-flop from one extreme to another, but rather will exhibit a trend towards more open or closed behaviour. Perhaps a normally rather informal group will start to stick more closely to regulations when faced with an unknown problem because at least they can offer *some* basic guidelines on what to do. Likewise, even the most consistency-focused group will understand the need for some dynamic adjustment if no known solution – or even no known problem definition – exists that can be applied to the problem at hand.

MESO-knowledge – re-conceptualising knowledge as an interactive organisational skill

Just like the open–closed model can be found hidden in existing literature on organisational structure and cognition, the three knowledge types used in this study are a result of a rigorous reading of the organisational knowledge and knowledge management literature. In particular, the MESO-knowledge concept rests on Nonaka & Takeuchi's (1995) work on the processes of knowledge transfer. Much like how Cyert & March (1963) and Polanyi (1966) describe “knowledge” as a process – as the “act of knowing” – Nonaka & Takeuchi describe how tacit

knowledge can be transferred through the SECI (socialisation, externalisation, combination, internalisation) process. It is a structured social interaction that allows procedural knowledge to be passed from one person or group to another.

The focus in their studies, and indeed in most of the field of knowledge management (KM) that their research spawned, is on the various intricacies in tacit knowledge and how to overcome the inherent problem of it not being (easily) transferrable. In particular, it becomes a problem when such knowledge is needed quickly, unexpectedly, and at an unforeseen locus in the organisation. An entire sub-genre exists on the sourcing and grafting of tacit knowledge (cf. Huber 1991), and a reoccurring theme is that social aspect. Thus, while on the surface, the literature preoccupies itself with the distinctions between explicit knowledge (“knowing that”) and tacit knowledge (“knowing how”), the research consistently returns to a rather different and much more interesting pronoun: *who*. Who has the knowledge that is being sought after? Who is familiar with these knowledge sources? Who is in a position to actually internalise that knowledge and act as a vessel of transference of sorts?

This is where the MESO-knowledge concept finds its footing and its use. Instead of re-treading the same old ground of tacit versus explicit that KM has already thoroughly investigated, it focuses on the questions that the literature has already identified as necessary to ask before any transference can begin, but ironically has failed to make explicit. The first question is one of knowing *why* some particular piece of knowledge is necessary: what does the organisation already know, what does it not know, and what gaps between the two need to be filled? This is *meta*-knowledge – that is, knowledge about (pre-existing) knowledge. With gaps and needs identified, the next question is the one already asked: *who* can fill the gap, or more commonly, who knows of someone who could fill it since the very existence of the gap suggests that it must be found elsewhere. This is *empathic* knowledge, or knowledge of the social connections and networks that exist within a community of practice or general field of expertise.

Last, in parallel to the concept of deutero-learning or second-order learning which is already familiar to students of organisational knowledge, there is the question of knowing how to know more, or *second-order* knowledge. This is the ability to ask the right questions to the right people when those people and the need for questions have been identified. More complex than meta-knowledge and empathic knowledge, this particular skill is reciprocal; it also requires that the other party understands what you need to know and why, which means those gaps have to be verbalised and communicated effectively. Almost by definition, the questions being asked will be asked from a position of profound ignorance, and the expert needs to be able to adjust or reorient such questions to what the person asking the question really needs to know. A core part of the entire concept of knowledge (going back as far as Polanyi’s 1966 foundational definition) is that it needs to be “actionable” so an answer that does not provide the questioner with any useful options cannot truly be considered knowledge to begin with.

Describing it as a skill is not just a turn of phrase but an instrumental choice. MESO-knowledge is not just another thing for an organisation to know but is in very practical terms a skill that can be learned, exercised, and improved upon, and thus has an immediate applicability to the study at hand.

Investigating crises and unfamiliar problem-solving processes

In investigating the interrelation between crises, unanticipated processes, organisational closed-ness and the use of MESO-knowledge, this study analyses and compares four cases which have been categorised into two pairs.

The first pair is the FBI's handling of the Waco siege in 1993 and the Montana Freeman standoff in 1996. In both cases, the bureau was faced with what appeared to be hostage-barricade situations where heavily armed group members had ensconced themselves in remote, well-prepared, and self-sufficient compounds in response to attempted law-enforcement actions against the leaders of the respective groups. In both cases, there were various external pressures to force a quick resolution to the situation – from political leaders and relatives as well as from within the various law enforcement agencies involved for fear that evidence in the on-going investigations would be lost in the process, but also from numerous groups of experts that thought that their knowledge could help settle the matter peacefully. In particular, there was a strong religious element to both conflicts, which caused numerous miscommunications and thorough confusion among the FBI negotiators and the people in the compounds.

In spite of the similarities, the outcome of the two events could hardly be any more different. The Waco siege resulted in one of the largest law enforcement debacles of the modern era when an attempt to forcefully bring the episode to a close ended in a conflagration that consumed the entire compound, killing more than 70 people still left inside. The legal and social aftermath lasted for over a decade, and still remains a sore spot and a source of conspiracy theories to this day. The Freeman standoff, on the other hand, has largely been forgotten and almost unknown outside of law enforcement and militia circles. It can almost be dismissed entirely as not being a crisis at all due to how undramatically it was resolved.

The study shows that the key difference between the two cases is that the FBI had taken the lessons of Waco to heart. By the time of the Freeman standoff, the bureau had come to understand and accept that the apparent hostage-barricade situations involved neither hostages nor barricades as well as the fact that not all opposition should be thought of or approached as criminals. Consequently, the bureau accepted that its own expertise in criminology and negotiation skills were not sufficient or even applicable to some of the cases it would inevitably have to solve. Instead, by clearly delineating what the FBI should and should not know, and finding processes and procedures for grafting and sourcing specific

expert knowledge for specific cases, it could implement a variety of negotiation strategies and keep talks going until the standoff came to an end.

Almost everything that was done wrong at Waco was (eventually) done right in Montana, including the FBI avoiding any kind of false learning or over-learning on exactly what was required to handle such situations. It would have been easy to look at Waco and assume that since the religious aspect was so significant in the miscommunication between the two parties, the similarly religiously charged Montana case would be solved using theological expertise. Instead, while theologians were certainly consulted during the standoff, it was ended because of the involvement of legal experts who were familiar with the biblically-based “Common Law” the Freeman adhered to and who were able to act as legal interpreters between Common Law and Montana state law. Through this layer of interpretation, the Freeman were convinced to take the matter to court rather than to obstinately continue the standoff against an equally obstinate FBI. Where the bureau had previously been very closed and had consequently failed to find or make use of any relevant knowledge available, it eventually demonstrated a far more open behaviour and ended up with half a dozen potential inroads to a peaceful solution, one of which eventually resolved the problem entirely.

The second case pair is the Swedish Foreign Ministry’s handling of the 2004 Southeast Asian tsunami and the 2006 evacuation from the war in Lebanon. Again, we have two cases where the core issues were very similar: a large number of Swedes were stuck in a disaster area abroad and needed to be evacuated as quickly as possible. Many would probably require some kind of care, either on-site or during the trip home. The situation on the ground was such that it was difficult to get a clear picture of what was going on, and yet that was exactly what was needed in order to coordinate the evacuation efforts. In addition, the whole situation was a chaotic mix of issue areas and agency responsibilities that, by tradition if not strictly by law, had to be coordinated by the smallest office at the ministry. Some of the issues included foreign aid and technical assistance to the disaster area, health and psychological care to individuals caught in the disaster, border control to ensure that only citizens were actually being brought back to Sweden, and identification and registration of missing (and found) individuals that might be in the area. All of this had to be managed while at the same time maintaining communication and ordinary diplomatic relations between Sweden and the other nations involved.

Here too, we have a classic tale of modern political disaster. The tsunami crippled the incumbent government and most likely was a large factor in explaining why it lost in the following election. It ended the careers of numerous politicians and politically appointed administrators in high offices, up to and including the foreign minister. It set in motion sweeping policy change to clarify the responsibilities of citizens and the state alike, and acted as an impetus for a significant rearrangement of the Swedish national crisis management system. The Lebanon evacuation, on the other hand, was perhaps not the kind of non-crisis that the

Freeman standoff was, but has nevertheless gone down in history as a success and as a vindication of sorts for the agencies involved in the tsunami fiasco.

As the study shows, the reality was a bit more complex since, in practical terms, a lot of the actual handling of the case was *even worse* than how things had been managed and done during the tsunami crisis. Politically and rhetorically, the narrative was one of having solved all the issues that had plagued the tsunami crisis. Governmental agencies had cooperated and coordinated their efforts, and quick and decisive decision-making had resolved numerous problems, both in the short and the long term, as opposed to the lingering indecisiveness that had made the tsunami crisis much worse than it needed to be.

At the same time, the study shows that there were some definite improvements made at the Foreign Ministry (UD) and with the agencies involved in terms of improving MESO-knowledge usage. There was an increased self-awareness of capabilities and knowledge gaps and also an awareness of what other parties had to offer to fill those gaps. The processes involved could, by and large, be anticipated and consequently friction and stress between the involved organisations was greatly reduced. Whether or not the response was truly any faster, it was nevertheless called – and was very effectively communicated as – a step forward in agency coordination, communication, and problem-solving. In an interesting twist, it was a political success far more than an operative one, but nonetheless, a political success was exactly what the government needed at the time to try to wash away the failure of the Swedish crisis management of the tsunami. Thus, the end goal was achieved (according to the principal agent), and one of the underlying reasons was the small but significant improvement in utilizing the key aspects of MESO-knowledge.

Lastly, the study makes a cross-comparison between the two case pairs to see what other aspects may have had an impact on the results. First among these is the difference between the domestic arena in the FBI cases and the foreign arena of the two UD cases. It shows a sharp difference in complexity in what the two agencies had to be prepared to deal with, and thus a very different array of knowledge that needed to be sourced and grafted. This may help explain, in part, why the FBI had managed to improve so much more than UD; basically, there was simply less adaptation needed in order to make a significant difference.

A second observation that in part builds on and extends from the first is that the two case pairs dealt with rather different institutional set-ups. In the hierarchy of different government functions and distributions of issue areas, the FBI sits lower down and thus has a much more focused role than the Foreign Ministry. Furthermore, the ministry is also much closer to the political leadership level and thus more sensitive to issue politicisation. Both the difference in arena and the difference in institutional situatedness, and certainly the combination of the two, can be expressed in terms of having differently large “problem spaces” – that is, the total array of issues that may arise and that the respective agencies may have to resolve. Similarly, the scope of the “solution space” for the two agencies is

just as, if not even more, different. Fortunately, with the larger array of potential problems for the Foreign Ministry also comes a larger array of potential solutions, but on the other hand the Swedish administrative tradition demands that the ministry remains at arms-length from most of those solutions, which drastically diminishes what the ministry itself can actually do to solve its problems. From a theoretical standpoint, this problem demonstrates a significant difference in how much anticipation of process is required between the two case pairs, and thus offers further explanation why we see more improvement between the two FBI cases. In short, the bureau had more opportunity and ability to control the stress from unanticipated processes.

Behaviours, knowledge usage, and feedback loops

The empirical investigation demonstrates both strengths and weaknesses in the model of organisational behaviour this study sets up. On the one hand, the cases show clear signs of confirming the hypotheses of the study and even suggest a stronger correlation between causes and effects than was initially assumed. On the other hand, the case study clearly shows the limitations of the analytical tool used and in particular of its rather coarse categorisation of the measured effects, which may in part explain the appearance of this stronger significance.

Irrespective of the actual results, the study shows the analytical usefulness of both the open–closed concept and of the notion of MESO-knowledge. Some methodological refinement is still needed in terms of putting an exact value to either concept, but they still offer a means to analyse, categorise, and differentiate a key set of behavioural patterns in organisations. On one end, open vs. closed encapsulates a number of preferences, rationales, and to some extent even perceptions that drive organisational behaviour in one direction or another. While it is conceptualised as an ideal type, the underlying indicators still offer a way to indicate trends and movement towards either of the two extremes. As the study shows, this is enough to offer some insight into why we can see a given outcome.

At the other end, MESO-knowledge captures, not so much the common question of what an organisation, a group, or a decision-maker knows in more immediate terms, but rather the larger question of the actual usefulness of that knowledge. It is a set of skills that an organisation can acquire and use to better leverage what the organisation already knows, a large part of which is having a good grasp of what it *does not* or even *should not* know.

While the open–closed concept in some sense can capture and demonstrate the phenomenon on its own, the addition of MESO-knowledge helps us put a finger on the curious feedback mechanisms between knowledge and external sources of stress. The identification paradox (where a strange new problem cannot properly be identified or even probed or queried unless you already have enough insight justifying why any such identification or probing is unnecessary) is a recurring issue that second-order knowledge (in particular) is specifically meant to explain

as well as to solve. These feedback loops are problematic from a methodological standpoint since they can considerably muddle our understanding of exactly what issue is the root cause of which problem. Analytically, however, they are of key importance since identifying them helps us explain why some situations spin out of control and others can instead quickly turn into complete non-crises. The concept in itself is not particularly new – it is close to Weick's (1988) notion of “enacted sense-making”, for instance – but this new analytical toolset offers additional methods of illustrating and explaining the underlying mechanisms.

Improvements in knowledge acquisition during stress

In addition to its analytical usefulness for the topic of this study, MESO-knowledge is promising in offering a larger and perhaps even more interesting use in the realm of organisational learning. The process of learning is critical to understanding how organisations evolve over time, but it is also notoriously difficult to actually measure and analyse (cf. Argyris & Schön 1978, 1996; Senge 1990; Nohrstedt 2007; Deverell 2010). With the notion of MESO-knowledge, however, we are given a set of indicators for organisational skills and activities that could help us solve that very problem.

A potential problem for this study has been that many of the improvements that can be observed between the two cases in each case pair can be labelled as plain old organisational learning, suggesting that the different outcomes are a consequence of some set of improvements in the sense-making, decision-making, or some other crisis management process. However, the question remains of what, exactly, has been learned. Close scrutiny of the cases reveals that the common trait in these cases is the way critical knowledge was identified, collected, disseminated, and acted upon, and that the key points of learning all existed within the nexus of improving knowledge pathways. In general, better knowledge use gives rise to a clearer picture of the crisis and of what the organisations need to do to meet this challenge. A broader understanding of the issue complexity, both within and between all the organisations involved, gives rise to more comprehensive decision-making and also allows for clearer and more insightful meaning-making. It also helps with the termination of a crisis, partly because the scope of the problem is better understood and defined so it becomes clear when things are winding down, and partly because this scope can be communicated to the other parties involved and offer convincing arguments why no further crisis management is needed.

So these lessons learned are exactly the kind of introspective and extroverted analysis, stocktaking of assets and gaps, and exchange of knowledge resources that are the heart of the notion MESO-knowledge. Not only is MESO-knowledge a set of skills that in very practical terms and with the full support of existing knowledge management literature are supposed to help practitioners improve their processes, but it is also something that we as researchers can point to, and

even measure, far more clearly than many other indicators of organisational learning. That is not to say that *all* learning can be measured this way, but as an analytical tool, the concept offers a reasonably easy and clear set of guidelines for what to look for in a case.

A program for further research

One thing that the model currently does not account for and which requires further research is the use of MESO-knowledge outside of or in-between crises. It is simply implicitly assumed that, while there may be some knowledge pathways or communities of practice in place already that will aid the application of these knowledge types, the crisis will still be a crisis and the unanticipated processes will still not be anticipated. However, with proper preparedness and with *even better* applied MESO-knowledge, these pressures may disappear entirely, and if that is the case, what happens to a model that presumes that pressure will affect how knowledge is used? Should we treat it as an extreme version of the positive feedback loop where pre-existing knowledge helps keep the flow of ideas clear, or should we just label it as normalcy and declare it to be beyond the scope of what we are studying? This was almost the case in the Freeman standoff, but luckily, from a research standpoint, it still offered enough pressure to make the effects observable – there was still some room for knowledge to be used (or potentially misused) to deflate or inflate that pressure. Organisational learning still exists as a model for capturing the actual process of making such improvements, but there is a gap and an edge-case between the two concepts that both need further exploration to help us understand the limits and overlaps of applicability.

In addition, the model itself needs further testing and scrutiny. The four cases used in this study only barely cover the minimum of variability that is required to start drawing conclusions from the model. Additional case comparison – in particular cases that involve the same actors in yet another set of similar circumstances – would help bring additional clarity to the exact relationship between the causes and effects that have been studied. On the other hand, the addition of a wholly different set of actors is necessary if we want to start disentangling factors such as issue domain, issue complexity, bureaucratic situatedness, strategic versus operative problem solving, and foreign versus domestic arenas. Similarly, only two stress factors have been included so far, and we can already expect those two to vary to a fairly high degree: crises mean surprises, and surprises mean lack of anticipation. Finding additional stress factors and cases that exemplify them, or better yet, finding those factors within the existing cases, would further test the soundness of the model.

Finally, the MESO-knowledge concept itself needs to be further refined. It works for the purposes of this study, but tweaking the indicators might allow us to either make the analytical tool more precise in how we extract information about the knowledge an organisation possesses or lacks. Tweaked another way, and the

concept might offer some room for generalisation that lets us use it as a broader tool for studying learning. MESO-knowledge is itself an attempt to bridge a gap between the organisational learning and the knowledge management literature, but there are a number of other fields of study that take an interest in closely related phenomena. Can some (re)conceptualisation of MESO-knowledge be applicable to policy learning and policy change, for instance, or to the debate on technocratic or bureaucratic governance? These related fields are already adding bits and pieces to the overall puzzle, so it should be worth-while to try to fully integrate those theories with the model presented here.

Keywords: advisory, crisis, expertise, knowledge, knowledge management, learning, organisational behaviour, organisational cognition, sense-making.

Samenvatting in het Nederlands

Wie weet wat, waar, wanneer en hoe?

Achteraf is het altijd makkelijk praten, en eenieder die besluitvorming bestudeert tijdens crises, of gespannen en stressvolle situaties, zal snel uitvinden hoe sterk de invloed van inzicht achteraf kan zijn op het uiteindelijke oordeel in hoeverre een crisis adequaat gemanaged is. In de nasleep van een willekeurige traumatische gebeurtenis hoort men vaak dat besluitvormers “beter hadden moeten weten”, en als dit niet geopperd wordt is dat waarschijnlijk omdat niemand door had dat er überhaupt iets fout is gegaan. Deze tendens bevestigt een basale notie; als alles goed gaat, dan wisten besluitvormers het blijkbaar *echt* beter.

De crux zit hem in het “hadden moeten”, een uiting die de nodige vragen met zich mee brengt. Wat hadden zij moeten weten? In hoeverre had het uitgemaakt als ze het hadden geweten? Zijn we er wel zeker van dat ze niet beter wisten, of betrof het een ingecalculeerd risico met een onverwachte uitkomst? En wie zijn “zij” eigenlijk? De gehele organisatie, de besluitvormersgroep, de individuele besluitvormer of de experts op het desbetreffende gebied, in taak gesteld om de besluitvormers te informeren en adviseren? Bovendien, waarom hadden juist “zij” het beter moeten weten? Het was gemakkelijker geweest als zij meer inzicht hadden gehad in de situatie, maar de vraag blijft of dat door de omstandigheden überhaupt mogelijk was? Elk woord in “zij hadden beter moeten weten” staat dus, ondanks de frequentie waarmee de zin gebruikt wordt, ter discussie, en is zelfs uiterst betwistbaar.

Technocratisch leiderschap in beleidsbepaling en besluitvorming is nog steeds significant aanwezig in moderne bureaucratieën, ondanks dat de populariteit en invloed ervan hevige variatie heeft gekend over de afgelopen jaren. In de westerse traditie van overheidsdiensten leunt de staat fundamenteel op de onderverdeling van de maatschappij in verschillende expertisen. Deze onderverdeling in ministeries, instanties en bureaus stelt de overheid in staat om autoriteit en verant-

woordelijkheid voor het functioneren van verschillende staatsfuncties eenvoudig te verdelen. Elk van deze bestuursorganen is verder verdeeld in departementen of eenheden met een eigen expertise (cf. Weber 1922; Mintzberg 1979; Fischer 2009:ff). Dit uitgebreide en complexe web van rollen en verantwoordelijkheden heeft ervoor gezorgd dat de rol van de expert in een ander daglicht is komen te staan.

De vraag wie exact welke expertise heeft, of de expertise al dan niet bestaat en hoe hen vervolgens te vinden, geeft een extra draai aan het vraagstuk omtrent “zij hadden beter moeten weten”. Misschien is het helemaal niet de bedoeling dat de besluitvormer zich bezighoudt met een kritieke kwestie die zich plotseling ontwikkelt in een crisis, maar juist dat het achterliggende web van expertise en kennis zich laat gebruiken als een functionele ondersteuningsstructuur voor besluitvormers om vragen en antwoorden te identificeren en te delegeren. De aanname dat ‘men beter had moeten weten’ kan hierdoor omgevormd worden in een vraag; hoe kan het dat de ondersteuningsstructuur faalde?

Hoe beïnvloeden externe stress factoren het vermogen van een organisatie om kennis tot zich te nemen en vervolgens te gebruiken?

Dit onderzoek test de hypothesen dat *organisaties geneigd zijn om terug te vallen op bekende, vastgestelde en consistente procedures voor het oplossen van problemen tijdens een crisis*; dat *organisaties gedwongen kunnen worden de creativiteit van hun oplossend vermogen te beperken door middel van externe regulaties, tenzij zulke inmenging al verwacht werd en er processen aanwezig zijn om hier adequaat mee om te gaan*; en dat *de openheid van een organisatie ten opzichte van dergelijke factoren in grote mate bepaald hoeveel gebruik ze willen maken van externe expertise*. Dit onderzoek leunt op de klassieke analogie waarbij organisaties handelen als individuen, elk met haar eigen cognitieve- en gedragspatronen (March & Simon 1958; Cyert & March 1963). Met deze opmerking wordt bedoeld dat organisaties in staat zijn kennis te vergaren, te leren en te observeren, maar ook gestrest en geschrokken kunnen zijn door het onbekende.

Dit onderzoek stelt dat het juist deze stress is waardoor organisaties de gelederen sluiten en terugvallen op het bekende en ogenschijnlijk veilige. Crises worden helaas gekarakteriseerd door onzekerheid en onduidelijkheid, waardoor de volgende tendens ontstaat; op het moment dat er juist meer kennis en inzicht nodig is om dergelijke onzekerheden op te lossen, bevindt een organisatie zich juist in haar minst ontvankelijke toestand. Alles aan een crisis is al verwarrend, en het toevoegen van onbekende en nieuwe inzichten en feiten is allesbehalve aantrekkelijk. Daarnaast vraagt een crisis vaak om vaardige samenwerking en coördinatie met andere actoren, iets wat voor nog meer stress kan zorgen omdat de procedures voor dergelijke interacties onbekend zijn.

Dit onderzoek genereert een schaal waarop de *openheid* of *geslotenheid* van een organisatie ten opzichte van externe invloeden is beschreven. Dit is de kern

van een causaal verband waarbij aan de ene kant verschillende factoren in een organisatie meer open of gesloten gedrag kunnen opwekken, en aan de andere kant de verandering in de geslotenheid van een organisatie beïnvloedt hoe goed de organisatie kennis kan vergaren uit haar omgeving. De onderliggende assumptie is dat meer kennis inherent leidt tot beter geïnformeerde besluitvorming en dus betere beslissingen. Deze assumptie ligt buiten het focusgebied van dit onderzoek en zal daarom niet getest worden.

Dit onderzoek introduceert daarnaast het MESO-kennis concept; een naam die voortvloeit uit drie kennistypes aanwezig in de identificatie en vergaring van externe expertise: meta-kennis, empathische kennis en ‘tweede-orde leren’. Deze kennistypes bieden de mogelijkheid om het kennisgebruik van een organisatie in relatie tot de open- of geslotenheid te evalueren, of zelfs te meten.

Het analytisch kader van dit onderzoek combineert deze kennistypes in een model van bestuurlijk gedrag, waar een toenemende mate van bestuurlijke spanning door crises en onverwachtse werkprocessen een meer gesloten houding genereert, en waar een dergelijke houding op zijn beurt het gebruik van MESO-kennis vermindert en verslechtert. Daar staat tegenover dat een organisatie die kan anticiperen op deze processen en de stress van een crisis kan verlichten, eerder in staat is een bepaalde openheid te waarborgen en daardoor volledig gebruik kan blijven maken van aanwezige MESO-kennis. Doordat organisaties gebruik kunnen maken van leerprocessen waarbij de hoeveelheid MESO-kennis van een organisatie het vermogen beïnvloedt om te anticiperen op onbekende werkprocessen en het verminderen van stress, kunnen zij zich bevinden in een neerwaartse of juist opwaartse spiraal; stress limiteert de beschikbare kennis, terwijl deze afname in kennis zorgt voor een toename in stress, en vis-a-vis, een solide kennisfundament verlicht stress, waardoor organisaties beter in staat zijn kennis toe te passen en hiermee weer stress te verlichten.

Het open-gesloten model van bestuurlijk gedrag

Organisatietheorie heeft vastgesteld dat verschillende organisaties verschillende voorkeuren hebben in het structureren van hun werkprocessen. De nadruk ligt hierbij echter vaak op de middelen en methoden van coördinatie, controle en centralisatie, soms versterkt door modellen van bureaucratie overwegingen (cf. Burns & Stalker 1961; Allison 1971; Mintzberg 1979; Rosenthal et al. 1991; 't Hart et al. 1993; Groenendaal et al. 2013). Ondanks dat deze perspectieven nuttig zijn voor het begrijpen van de dynamiek van besluitvormersgroepen en -processen, hebben ze weinig betrekking op de onderliggende factoren die bijdragen aan de gedragstypen die relevant zijn voor dit onderzoek. In plaats daarvan richt het onderzoek zich op theorieën die het probleem van omgaan met complexiteit behandelen; *Normal Accident Theory* (Perrow 1984) en *Cybernetic Theory* (Steinbruner 1974; 2002).

Deze theorieën tezamen schetsen het beeld dat organisaties mikken op consistentie of flexibiliteit. Een dergelijk model heeft ook betrekking op een gewenst niveau van consistentie in uitkomsten, procedures en verwachtingen van de verschillende type problemen die een organisatie dient op te lossen. De voorkeur hierin komt vaak overeen met andere principes op vergelijkbare spectra, zoals starheid, informaliteit, strikte regulatie of dynamische probleemoplossing. Deze spectra zorgen ervoor dat we drie karaktertrekken kunnen construeren die mogelijk kunnen meten hoe open of gesloten een organisatie is met betrekking tot nieuwe oplossingen voor onvoorziene problemen.

De *gesloten* organisatie kan dus gezien worden als een organisatie die handelt vanuit het principe van *regulatie*; waarvan werkstromen ontworpen zijn om *onbuigzaam* te zijn; en waar het einddoel het produceren van een set *consistente* antwoorden op een voorspelbare set problemen is. Aan de andere kant, een *open* organisatie is een organisatie die handelt vanuit het principe van *informaliteit*; waarvan werkstromen *flexibel* zijn; en waar het einddoel inhoudt dat onverwachte problemen *dynamisch* worden opgelost. Geen enkele organisatie zal zich in praktijk volledig aan één kant van het spectrum bevinden, en elementen van beide typen zullen terug te vinden zijn in de organisatie. Zelfs de meest flexibele organisaties zullen het wiel niet altijd opnieuw willen uitvinden, maar gebruik willen maken van reeds bestaande oplossingen voor bekende problemen. Een organisatie zal zich daarnaast ook niet radicaal van het ene extreme naar het andere begeven, maar eerder een bepaalde trend inzetten van open naar gesloten. Mogelijkerwijs omarmt een normaliter nogal informele groep steeds meer regulaties wanneer zij geconfronteerd worden met onbekende problemen, omdat deze regulaties hen basale richtlijnen verschaffen over wat te doen. Andersom zou dat betekenen dat zelfs de meest gesloten groep zal begrijpen dat het soms tijd is voor dynamische aanpassing, zeker als er geen bekende oplossing aanwezig is voor het probleem.

MESO-kennis – her-conceptualisering van kennis als een interactieve bestuurlijke kwaliteit

Net als het open-gesloten model, kunnen ook de drie kennistypen ontdekt worden door een uitgebreide literatuurstudie naar organisatie- en kennismanagementliteratuur. Het MESO-kennis concept rust op Nonaka & Takeuchi's (1995) studie naar de processen van kennisoverdracht. Cyert & March (1963) en Polanyi (1966) beschrijven "kennis" als een proces, als de "kunst van het weten". Nonaka & Takeuchi beschrijven op vergelijkbare toon dat impliciete kennis overgedragen kan worden door middel van het SECI (*socialisation, externalisation, combination, internalisation*) proces. Kennis is hier een gestructureerde sociale interactie waardoor procedurekennis van een persoon of groep naar de andere kan worden overgedragen.

Nonaka & Takeuchi concentreerden zich in hun studie, net als de meesten in het veld van kennismangement (KM), op de variërende complexe componenten van impliciete kennis, en hoe we kunnen realiseren dat het makkelijker overdraagbaar is. Dit is vooral een probleem wanneer zulke kennis snel en onverwachts nodig is op een onvoorziene plek in de organisatie. Er is een heel sub-genre gewijd aan vergaren en implementeren van 'impliciete' kennis (cf. Huber 1991), en een terugkomend thema is het sociale aspect van overdracht. Ondanks dat de literatuur zich bezig lijkt te houden met het onderscheid tussen uitgesproken kennis en impliciete kennis lijken wetenschappers steeds terug te keren bij een andere vraag; een die nog veel interessanter is: *Wie?* Wie heeft de kennis waarnaar gezocht wordt? Wie is er bekend met deze kennisbronnen? Wie bevindt zich in een positie van waaruit er hij of zij deze kennis kan adopteren en over kan brengen?

Hier vindt het MESO-kennisconcept haar basis en relevantie. In plaats van te concentreren op het veld waar KM al doorheen is gespit, richt het zich op de vraag die door KM is geïdentificeerd als noodzakelijk voordat overdracht kan plaatsvinden, maar nog niet duidelijk is benoemd en onderzocht. De eerste vraag richt zich op *waarom* sommige kennis noodzakelijk is: wat weet de organisatie al, wat weten ze nog niet, en wat is het gat hiertussen dat gevuld dient te worden? Dit is *meta*-kennis; kennis over reeds bestaande kennis. Als dit gat en benodigheden geïdentificeerd zijn, luidt de volgende vraag: *wie* kan dit gat vullen, of wie weet er iemand die dit gat zou kunnen vullen, aangezien het bestaan van het gat suggereert dat er iemand van buitenaf gezocht moet worden. Dit is *empathische* kennis; kennis van de sociale connecties en netwerken binnen een praktiserende gemeenschap of expertise gebied.

De laatste vraag houdt zich bezig met uitvinden hoe men *meer* kan weten. Zulke *tweede-orde* kennis krijgt men van het juiste vragenstellen aan de juiste mensen wanneer deze reeds geïdentificeerd zijn. Deze specifieke kwaliteit is complexer dan meta- en empathische kennis omdat het van een gedeelde aard is: het vereist dat de ander ook begrijpt wat jij moet weten, en waarom je dat moet weten. Dit betekent dat het geïdentificeerde kennistekort gecommuniceerd dient te worden. De vragen zullen waarschijnlijk gesteld worden vanuit onwetendheid, en de expert dient daarom in staat te zijn de vragen aan te passen of te herleiden in de richting van wat de persoon *écht* moet weten. Een centraal aspect in het hele kennisconcept is dat het *actiegericht* dient te zijn: een antwoord waarmee de steller van de vraag achterblijft zonder nuttige en bruikbare opties kan niet gezien worden als kennis.

Het is een instrumentele keuze om het bovengenoemde te beschrijven als een kwaliteit. MESO-kennis is niet zomaar iets om te weten, maar iets om te kunnen, leren, uitvoeren en verbeteren, wat een onmiddellijke toepasbaarheid heeft voor dit onderzoek.

Crises en onbekende probleemoplossing

Dit onderzoek zal vier casussen analyseren en vergelijken, in groepen van twee, om de correlatie tussen crises, onverwachte processen, bestuurlijke geslotenheid en het gebruik van MESO-kennis te bestuderen.

Het eerste duo betreft de FBI-werkwijze tijdens de Waco belegering in 1993 en de Montana Freeman impasse in 1996. Tijdens beide casussen werd de FBI geconfronteerd met een gijzelingssituatie en barricades waarbij een zwaar-bewapende en grote groep mensen zich had ingegraven in een afgelegen, goed voorbereide en zelfvoorzienende locatie als reactie op de mogelijke arrestatie van de leiders van de respectievelijke groepen. In beide gevallen was er sprake van externe druk om de zaak snel op te lossen; politieke leiders, familie van de gijzelaars, verschillende rechterlijke instanties die zich zorgen maakten om het verlies van bewijs in lopende onderzoeken, maar ook van experts die meenden de kennis in huis te hebben om de zaak vreedzaam op te lossen. In beide conflicten was daarnaast een sterk religieus element aanwezig, verantwoordelijk voor veel miscommunicatie en verwarring bij zowel de FBI-onderhandelaars als de mensen achter de barricades.

De uitkomsten waren ondanks de overeenkomsten totaal niet vergelijkbaar. De Waco belegering resulteerde in een van de grootste debacles van de twintigste eeuw toen een poging om de bezetters uit te roken eindigde in een vuurzee waarbij 70 mensen de dood vonden. De rechterlijke en sociale nasleep duurde meer dan een decennium en de uitkomst is tot op de dag van vandaag voer voor complottheorieën. De Freeman impasse is aan de andere kant bijna vergeten en vergeven buiten de rechterlijke sfeer; het ondramatische einde zorgt er bijna voor dat het niet eens als crisis geassocieerd kan worden.

Het onderzoek toont aan dat het grootste verschil tussen de twee casussen is dat de FBI de lessen van Waco mee had genomen naar Freeman. De FBI had tegen de tijd van de Freeman begrepen en geaccepteerd dat sommige gijzelsituaties niet alleen uit gijzelaars en barricades bestonden, dat niet alle tegenstand voortkwam uit een criminele overweging en dat de FBI's expertise in criminologie en het gebruik van geweld niet voldoende, of zelfs enigszins toepasbaar, was op sommige casussen. In plaats van te leunen op haar eigen kennis heeft de FBI duidelijk uiteengezet wat ze wel en niet wisten en hebben ze processen en procedures voor het vergaren en overdragen van specifieke kennis opgesteld naar gelang de casus dat vereiste. De FBI kon hierdoor verschillende onderhandelingsstrategieën implementeren en de gesprekken laten voortduren totdat de crisis opgelost was.

Alles wat fout ging tijdens Waco werd uiteindelijk goed gedaan in Montana. Zo voorkwam de FBI bijvoorbeeld dat ze de verkeerde lessen leerde met betrekking tot de behoeften om dergelijke situaties adequaat op te lossen. Men kan geneigd zijn te geloven dat, omdat zowel tijdens Waco en Freeman het religieuze aspect een centrale rol speelde, het noodzakelijk was om in de Montana casus een oplossing te zoeken in de theologie. Dit bleek echter, ondanks dat er natuurlijk

theologen benaderd werden, niet de oplossing te bieden. Uiteindelijk waren rechtenexperts doorslaggevend in het oplossen van de Montana crisis omdat zij bekend waren met het op de bijbel gebaseerde *gewoonterecht* en daardoor als vertaler konden optreden tussen deze wet en de wet van de staat van Montana. Door deze aanpak werden de Freeman ervan overtuigd dat hun zaak het beste kon worden opgelost in de rechtbank in plaats van door te gaan met hun protest. De FBI nam tijdens Waco nog een zeer gesloten houding aan en maakte geen gebruik van de beschikbare kennis. Tijdens de Montana crisis nam de FBI echter een open houding aan en werden er meerdere oplossingen gepresenteerd vanuit verschillende expertises om de crisis vreedzaam op te lossen.

Het tweede duo van casussen betreft de handelingen van het Zweedse Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken (*UD*) omtrent de Tsunami in Zuidoost-Azië in 2004 en de evacuatie tijdens de oorlog in Libanon in 2006. Ook hier zijn de kern componenten vergelijkbaar: in beide gevallen moest een groot aantal Zweden zo spoedig mogelijk uit het rampgebied geëvacueerd worden. Daarnaast hadden sommige van hen waarschijnlijk een vorm van hulp nodig op locatie of onderweg naar huis. De situatie op de plek zelf maakte het lastig voor hulpdiensten om in te schatten welke hulp precies waar noodzakelijk was, terwijl dit juist de informatie is die nodig was om de evacuatie voldoende te coördineren. De hele situatie was een chaotische mix van verschillende onderwerpen en verantwoordelijkheden die vaak gecoördineerd worden door het kleinste kantoor van het ministerie: buitenlandse hulp en technische assistentie aan rampgebieden; psychologische en lichamelijke hulp aan personen in het rampgebied; grenscontrole om te verzekeren dat alleen Zweedse staatsburgers mee terug worden genomen en identificatie en registratie van vermiste individuen die zich nog steeds in het gebied kunnen bevinden. Dit alles dient geregeld te worden terwijl de Zweedse staat haar buitenlandse betrekkingen met andere naties moet blijven onderhouden.

De tsunami werd een klassiek verhaal van een moderne politieke ramp. Het verlamde de regering en was waarschijnlijk een grote factor in het daaropvolgende verlies in de eerstvolgende verkiezingen. Het leidde tot het einde van de carrières van verschillende politici en hoge ambtenaren, inclusief de Minister van Buitenlandse Zaken. Het gevolg was een schreeuw om verandering in beleid, zodat de verantwoordelijkheid van burgers en de staat vergroot konden worden en het Zweedse nationale crisismanagementsysteem omgevormd kon worden. Aan de andere kant was de Libanese evacuatie, ondanks dat het een grotere crisis was dan de Freeman patsstelling, een groot succes en daarmee ook een vindicatie voor het fiasco van de tsunami. Dit onderzoek toont aan dat de realiteit een stuk complexer is en dat de Libanese casus een stuk slechter gemanaged werd dan de tsunami crisis. Politiek en retorisch gezien was de Libanese evacuatie echter een succes. Volgens het verhaal dat verspreid werd, waren alle problemen die tijdens de tsunami crisis naar de oppervlakte dreven opgelost en werkten regeringsinstanties samen bij het coördineren van hun werkzaamheden en het nemen van snelle en overtuigende besluiten. Tijdens de tsunami was dit volledig tegenovergesteld

en werd vooral de trage besluitvorming keer op keer aangehaald waardoor de gevolgen van de tsunami crisis erger uitpakten dan noodzakelijk was.

Dit onderzoek toont verder aan dat het gebruik van MESO-kennis door het Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken en andere betrokken instanties flink verbeterd werd. Er was een sterk zelfbewustzijn omtrent capaciteiten- en kennishiaten. De betrokken processen werden grotendeels geanticipeerd, en frictie en stress tussen de organisaties kon hierdoor flink worden verminderd. Of de besluitvorming nu sneller was of niet, er werd in ieder geval duidelijk gecommuniceerd dat de coördinatie tussen verschillende instanties zeer effectief verlopen was en dat het probleemoplossende vermogen sterk was vergroot. Het is interessant om te zien dat het hier niet per se een operationeel succes betrof, maar meer een politiek succes. Dit politieke succes was wel precies wat de regering nodig had om de kater van de tsunami mee weg te nemen. Dankzij een aantal kleine maar significante verbeteringen in aspecten van het MESO-kennisconcept werd het einddoel bereikt.

Als laatste stelt dit onderzoek een kruisvergelijking op tussen de twee casusduo's om te zien welke aspecten invloed gehad hebben op de resultaten. Het eerste aspect is het verschil tussen de operationele locatie; de FBI-casussen speelden zich binnen de eigen landsgrenzen af, terwijl in de UD-casussen het voorval zich juist in het buitenland en over landsgrenzen heen manifesteerde. Dit brengt een sterk verschil in complexiteit met zich mee. Dit kan helpen verklaren waarom de FBI een zoveel grotere verbetering toonde dan het UD.

Een tweede observatie is dat de twee casussen met verschillende institutionele toestanden te maken hadden. De FBI heeft een veel duidelijkere en gefocuste rol dan een ministerie omdat ze zich veel lager op de ladder bevindt. Daarnaast heeft een ministerie veel vaker te maken met politisering van dit soort onderwerpen. Dit aspect, in combinatie met het voorgaande, zorgt ervoor dat er een groot verschil is tussen de grootte van problemen waarmee de instanties geconfronteerd kunnen worden. Gelukkig betekent dit ook dat het oplossend vermogen van het UD veel groter is dan die van de FBI. Daar moet wel bij genoemd worden dat de Zweedse bestuurlijke traditie vereist dat het ministerie dichtbij deze vastgestelde oplossingen blijft, waardoor ze dus minder flexibel is in het oplossen van nieuwe problemen. Vanuit een theoretisch oogpunt laat dit zien hoezeer anticipatie van processen nodig is voor een succesvolle afloop en demonstreert het waarom de FBI veel meer vooruitgang heeft geboekt; de FBI had meer middelen en vermogen om de stress van een onverwachte situatie onder controle te houden.

Gedrag, kennisgebruik en feedback

Het empirisch onderzoek laat zowel sterke als zwakke punten zien in het model van bestuurlijk gedrag dat is opgezet binnen dit onderzoek. Aan de ene kant bevestigen de casussen de hypothesen duidelijk, en tonen ze zelfs een grotere correlatie tussen oorzaak en gevolg aan dan dat oorspronkelijk verwacht werd.

Aan de andere kant laat het onderzoek duidelijk zien dat het analytische kader zo zijn tekortkomingen heeft, voornamelijk de starre categorisatie van effecten.

Desalniettemin laat het onderzoek duidelijk zien dat zowel het open-gesloten concept en het MESO-kennisconcept analytisch nuttige tools zijn. Het kan noodzakelijk zijn om enkele methodologische verfijningen toe te passen, maar deze concepten demonstreren nog altijd een manier om een set gedragspatronen binnen organisaties te analyseren, categoriseren en differentiëren. Aan de ene kant omvat het open-gesloten concept een aantal voorkeuren, beweegredenen en verwachtingen waarmee bestuurlijk gedrag in de ene of de andere richting wordt geduwd. Ondanks dat dit gezien wordt als een ideaaltype, bieden de onderliggende indicatoren nog zeker een mogelijkheid om trends en beweging aan te geven naar één van beiden extremen; genoeg om inzicht te verschaffen in het concept.

Aan de andere kant omvangt het MESO-kennisconcept niet per se wat een organisatie, groep of besluitvormer weet, maar juist de grotere vragen omtrent het nut van deze kennis. Hiermee kan een organisatie beter kijken naar wat ze wel en vooral ook niet weten.

Het open-gesloten concept is in staat om dit fenomeen te vangen en beschrijven, maar de toevoeging van het MESO-kennisconcept zorgt ervoor dat we de interessante feedbackprocessen tussen kennis en externe stressbronnen kunnen analyseren. Tweede-orde leren is bedoeld om de identificatie paradox, waarmee een complex nieuw probleem niet adequaat geïdentificeerd kan worden, te verhelderen en op te lossen. Het is echter een vaag proces waarbij deze feedbackloops ons idee over wat exact de kern van het probleem is, kunnen verstoren. Analytisch gezien zijn deze feedbackloops van groot belang omdat ze ons kunnen laten zien waarom sommige situaties uit de hand lopen terwijl andere met een sissers aflopen. Dit concept is niet geheel nieuw, omdat Weick (1988) de notie van *'enacted sensemaking'* bijvoorbeeld al eerder introduceerde. Hoe dan ook, deze nieuwe analytische tool biedt ons aanvullende methodes voor het illustreren en uitleggen van onderliggende mechanismen.

Verbeteringen in het vergaren van kennis tijdens stress

MESO-kennis biedt, naast het analytisch nut voor het onderwerp van dit onderzoek, nog meer binnen het veld van de organisatieleer. Het leerproces is essentieel om te begrijpen hoe organisaties zich over tijd ontwikkelen, maar het is ook berucht vanwege de moeilijkheidsgraad van het analyseren en meten van zulke processen (cf. Argyris & Schön 1978, 1996; Senge 1990; Nohrstedt 2007; Deverell 2010). MESO-kennis geeft ons echter een set indicatoren voor bestuurlijke kwaliteiten en activiteiten waarmee we dit probleem op zouden kunnen lossen.

Een potentieel probleem voor dit onderzoek is dat veel verbeteringen in beiden casussen gezien zouden kunnen worden als ouderwets bestuurlijk leren waardoor gesuggereerd wordt dat verbeteringen slechts een gevolg zijn van verbeterde zinge-

ving, besluitvorming of een willekeurig ander crisismanagementproces. Hierdoor blijft de vraag staan wat er nou precies geleerd is. Nauwkeurig onderzoek onthult overeenkomsten in beide casussen: de manier waarop kritieke kennis geïdentificeerd, verzameld, ontleed en geïmplementeerd wordt, en dat kernpunten van het leerproces allen voortkomen uit het verbeteren van kennistrjecten. Betere kennis, geeft een beter beeld van de crisis en wat er gedaan moet worden door de organisatie om het probleem op te lossen. Meer begrip van de complexiteit van de desbetreffende kwestie, zowel binnen als tussen betrokken organisaties, zorgt voor betere besluitvorming en betekenisgeving. Het helpt daarnaast bij het beëindigen van de crisis omdat het probleem beter in kaart is gebracht waardoor het duidelijk is wanneer het de verkeerde kant op ging, en dit vervolgens weer gecommuniceerd kon worden naar andere betrokken actoren.

Wat er daardoor geleerd is staat aan de kern van het MESO-kennisconcept: het doen van een introspectieve en extroverte analyse, een inventarisatie van middelen en hiaten en het uitwisselen van kennisbronnen. Het is niet alleen een set vaardigheden bedoeld om beoefenaars te helpen bij het behalen van succes, maar ook een indicator die gebruikt kan worden door onderzoekers en wetenschappers bij het analyseren en meten van leerprocessen binnen organisaties. Hiermee wordt niet bedoeld dat al het leren op deze manier gemeten kan worden, maar dat het concept kan dienen als een analytische tool waardoor men met een relatief eenvoudige en duidelijke set richtlijnen kan kijken naar een casus.

Verder onderzoek

Dit onderzoek heeft zich niet beziggehouden met het gebruik van MESO-kennis buiten crises om of tussen crises in. Aangenomen wordt dat, ondanks dat er waarschijnlijk al kennistrjecten en gemeenschappen zijn die assisteren bij het implementeren van deze kennistypen, een crisis een crisis zal zijn als er geen aandacht wordt besteed aan onverwachte processen. Door nog betere voorbereidingen te treffen en door de voordelen van het MESO-kennisconcept toe te passen is het mogelijk om deze druk in zijn geheel weg te nemen. In dat geval ontstaat er een nieuwe kwestie: wat gebeurt er met een model dat aanneemt dat druk en stress de manier waarop kennis gebruikt wordt beïnvloed? Moeten we het behandelen als een extreme vorm van feedbackloops of juist als een normaliteit buiten het bereik van het onderzoek? In de Freeman casus was dit al bijna het geval, maar gelukkig bleek er vanuit analytisch oogpunt genoeg druk te zijn om de effecten te kunnen observeren. Organisatorisch leren bestaat nog steeds als een model waarbij de processen voor het maken van verbeteringen gevangen en geanalyseerd kunnen worden, maar er zijn hiaten en randzaken tussen de twee concepten die geanalyseerd moeten worden om ons te helpen te begrijpen in hoeverre het toepasbaar is.

Het model zelf dient ook verder getest en onderzocht te worden. Conclusies trekken over het model op basis van vier casussen is minimaal. Extra vergelijkingen

tussen casussen, het liefst met dezelfde actoren in beide gevallen, is noodzakelijk om meer duidelijkheid te verschaffen in de relatie tussen oorzaak en gevolg. Aan de andere kant is het noodzakelijk om een hele nieuwe set actoren toe te voegen. Hiermee ontrafelen we de mysteries rondom zaken als kwestiedomeinen, kwestiecomplexiteit, bureaucratische plaatsing, strategische versus operationele probleemoplossing en binnen- en buitenlandse speelvelden. Er zijn daarnaast ook maar twee stressfactoren genoemd, waarvan we nu al geleerd hebben dat crises voor verrassingen zorgen en dat verrassingen een gebrek aan voorbereiding en anticipatie verraden. Het analyseren van meer stressfactoren in dezelfde casussen zou het model verder testen.

Ten slotte dient het MESO-kennisconcept verder verfijnd te worden. Voor het onderzoek werkt het goed, maar het afstellen van indicatoren kan ervoor zorgen dat deze analytische tool preciezer werkt. Daarnaast kan het afstellen van indicatoren juist zorgen voor meer generalisatie. MESO-kennis is een poging om het gat tussen bestuurlijk leren en kennismanagement literatuur te overbruggen. Een aantal andere onderzoeksvelden houden zich hier ook mee bezig, en het kan interessant zijn om te zien hoe MESO-kennis hier aan bijdraagt. Kan een (re)conceptualisering van MESO-kennis bruikbaar zijn bij beleidsleren en beleidsverandering? Of misschien voor het debat omtrent technocratisch of bureaucratisch bestuur? Deze onderzoeksvelden zijn nu al stukken toe aan het voegen aan de algehele puzzel, dus het is de moeite waard om dergelijke theorieën te integreren met het hiergenoemde model.

Kernwoorden: adviserend, crisis, expertise, kennis, kennismanagement, leren, bestuurlijk gedrag, bestuurlijke cognitie, zingeving.

Stressing Knowledge

Organisational closed-ness and knowledge acquisition under pressure

Organisations have been analytically conceptualised as being somewhat analogous to individuals for a long time. They have culture; they can learn; and they can behave in various odd ways. But how far can the simile be stretched? What other types of organisational cognition can we imagine? And what benefits can we gain by introducing new perspectives of this kind?

This study shows that organisations can exhibit familiar symptoms of stress, such as closing themselves to the outside world and becoming unreceptive to external stimuli and input. They retreat to what is familiar and safe and put on blinders to hide anything that does not already fit with how they feel things should be, often in situations where they would be best served by being as open to and perceptive of these external stimuli as possible. Using a model of organisational behaviour that connects external pressure to an internal mode of operation and to specific knowledge-seeking behaviours, the study examines two case pairs—two success stories and two catastrophic failures—to examine patterns of organisational cognition. By comparing and contrasting the failure of the FBI during the 1993 Waco siege with its subsequent success during the 1996 Montana Freeman standoff, and doing the same with the Swedish Foreign Ministry's handling of the 2004 Southeast Asian tsunami and the 2006 evacuation from the war in Lebanon, a pattern emerges where certain types of knowledge proved to be the key to staying as open-minded, responsive, and dynamic as these crises demanded. This knowledge can be used both during a crisis to resolve some of the confusion and time pressure that is endemic to such situations, as well as before a crisis to mitigate or even stave off the approaching chaos.

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