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In the immediate aftermath of a crisis, authorities mobilize to mount a response. Units, personnel and equipment are deployed to provide immediate relief to affected communities. In the meantime, societal actors mobilize as well. Citizens mobilize to help themselves and their families. NGOs mobilize to provide assistance. However, not all societal actors that mobilize are cooperative. Some actors, such as protest and advocacy groups, sense an opportunity for political change and mobilize to allocate blame and to advance their interests. The mobilization of both cooperative and contrarian societal actors provides authorities with vexing and intractable challenges under otherwise already complicated, stressful, and chaotic conditions.

In this dissertation, Arjen Schmidt identifies which strategies public authorities can enact towards the mobilization of societal actors during crises that promote crisis response capacity and crisis response legitimacy. His research results illustrate that when confronted by cooperative or contrarian societal mobilization, authorities can enact adaptive, channeling, conservative, and reformist strategies that either promote or maintain response capacity and response legitimacy. When authorities fail to enact appropriate strategies, they are at risk of disruption of ongoing response processes or outright opposition from societal actors. As a result, there is a continued need for public responsiveness towards societal mobilization in times of crisis.

TURBULENT SOCIETIES Arjen Schmidt

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How Governments Can Respond to the Mobilization of Societal Actors during Crises

Arjen Schmidt

