



UMEÅ UNIVERSITET

MOT EN BEREDSKAP FÖR KRISER OCH KRIG?

Svenska kommuners prioriteringar och handlingsutrymme under hot i förändring

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Title

Toward preparedness for crisis and war? Swedish municipalities' priorities and perceptions of governance under changing threats

Abstract

In recent years, the security structure in Europe has taken a turn for the worse and the threat of inter-state war has moved up on the political agenda. Sweden, for long a neutral and ostensibly peaceful nation, is no exception in this international political trajectory. As a response to changing threat images, both in the face of grey-zone activities and Russian hostility toward Ukraine, the government declared in 2015 that Sweden's total defence should be (re)built after decades of substantial downscaling. In this process of renewal of the total defence concept, Swedish municipalities find themselves not only as key actors in the crisis preparedness system, but now also as novel security actors. Sweden's 290 municipalities represent a plethora of differences in terms of geography, economy, infrastructure, social and political structures while being responsible for the same essential welfare functions. How do municipalities view the changing national preparedness demands? How are preparedness measures prioritized in relation to everyday welfare needs?

The aim of this thesis is to understand and explain Swedish municipalities' perceptions and priorities in the intersection between peacetime crisis preparedness and civil defence, through a socio-technical systems' perspective. To that end, an ideational analysis has been conducted on policy documents and interviews with municipal representatives, supplemented by a questionnaire. The study shows that the unclear national guidance and instructions given to municipalities create prioritization challenges at the local level. While no indications of preparedness measures being prioritized at the expense of core municipal welfare tasks have been found in this study, the ever-increasing governmental demands may change this order of priority. The dissertation further shows that local level representatives perceive of a general lack of understanding about municipal realities and conditions from the national government, administrative authorities, and county council boards. Despite internal and external obstacles however, Swedish municipalities do accept the system changes, and continuously work toward strengthening their civil preparedness based on local capacities and resources.

Keywords

civil defence, total defence, crisis preparedness, Swedish municipalities, threats, ideas, priorities, governance, socio-technical systems, transformation

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