GOVERNING COMPLEX EMERGENCIES AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

Emergency Governance for Cities and Regions

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UCLG United Cities and Local Governments | metropolis | LSE Cities | LSE The London School of Economics and Political Science

THE INITIATIVE

This Summary Paper covers the work of the Emergency Governance Initiative (EGI) between 2020 and 2024. EGI is led by United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), the World Association of the Major Metropolises (Metropolis) and LSE Cities at the London School of Economics and Political Science. The Initiative investigates the institutional dimensions of rapid and radical action in response to complex global emergencies. The EGI aims to provide city and regional governments with actionable information and appropriate frameworks, knowledge and resources to navigate the new demands of leading responses to complex emergencies.

SUMMARY PAPER 2020-2024

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1 INTRODUCTION

This summary paper covers the work of the Emergency Governance Initiative (EGI) from 2020 to 2024, including six policy briefs and analytic notes each, and numerous workshops, seminars, and engagements. It provides a succinct presentation of the key findings and learnings from the last four years, offering a centralised entry point to the various outputs produced to date. The insights presented span speculative principles and frameworks rather than fully consensual ones, highlighting the need for further development in partnership with local governments and their associations.

This paper not only reflects on past work but also sets the scene for future efforts on emergency governance, identifying important open questions that lay the groundwork for an ambitious next phase of the EGI. It speaks directly to local governments, illustrating how they have activated the complex emergency narrative. Written with three key audiences in mind—individual local and regional governments, their associations, and national governments or international city networks—it aims to address their unique perspectives.

The paper is organised into three main sections. The following section revisits the broader framing of complex emergencies and their governance at the local level. Section 3 presents four bundles of critical emergency governance reforms: multilevel governance and emergency coordination, service delivery and stakeholder coordination, finance and resources, and democracy and representation. Each bundle includes a summary of key learnings, proposed actions, and open points. Finally, Section 4 addresses outstanding questions and debates, establishing a critical starting point for future work on emergency governance.

2 COMPLEX EMERGENCIES AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE

2.1 WHAT ARE COMPLEX EMERGENCIES?

In defining complex emergencies, it is helpful first to present several related terminologies and concepts. The list in Table 1 below is based on common definitions used by the UN, its agencies and member states. All of the terms below include a territorial dimension and ultimately relate to an affected area which can range from local to global in scale. Yet, as the definition of crisis indicates, there is often an implied minimum geographic level with effects "usually over a wider area".

The concept of complex emergencies has evolved over time. It was first formalised in the 1980s by the United Nations referring to multi-causal humanitarian crises involving conflict as being characterised by wider instability, including natural disasters, health emergencies, poverty, migration, and social political upheaval.[1] These are crises which "erode or destroy the cultural, civil, political and economic integrity of established societies… systems and networks".[2]

Recent work under the Emergency Governance Initiative reframes complex emergencies with a focus on extraordinary types of crises. These range from global environmental, health and resource emergencies to more localised complex social emergencies which transcend established categories of routine and non-routine emergencies. These emergencies are often not linked to a trigger event, but require coordinated, urgent and transformative action from city, regional and national leaders.[3] Table 2 captures the evolving understanding of complex emergencies by contrasting the changing definitions over the last decades, with a shift of focus from conflict to the extraordinary.

Table 1: Key terms associated with emergencies and their definitions

Hazard	A process, phenomenon or human activity that may cause loss of life, injury or other health impacts, property damage, social and economic disruption or environmental degradation.	UNDDR 2023
Risk	The combination of the probability of an event and its negative consequences.	UNISDR 2009
Crisis	An event or series of events that represents a critical threat to the health, safety, security, or well-being of a community or other large group of people, usually over a wider area.	UK Cabinet Office 2022
Disaster	A serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society at any scale due to hazardous events interacting with conditions of exposure, vulnerability and capacity, leading to one or more of the following: human, material, economic and environmental losses and impacts.	UNDDR 2023
Disaster risk	The potential loss of life, injury, or destroyed or damaged assets which could occur to a system, society or a community in a specific period of time, determined probabilistically as a function of hazard, exposure, vulnerability and capacity.	UNDDR 2023
Emergency	An emergency is defined as: an event or situation which threatens serious damage to human welfare, or to the environment; or, war or terrorism, which threatens serious damage to security	UK Cabinet Office 2022
Complex Global Shocks	An event with severely disruptive consequences for a significant proportion of the global population that leads to secondary impacts across multiple sectors.	UN 2023

[1] Lautze, S., Leaning, J., Raven-Roberts, A., Kent, R., & Mazurana, D. (2004). Assistance, protection, and governance networks in complex emergencies. Lancet, 364, 2134–2141. Retrieved from www.thelancet.com
[2] Duffield, M. (1994). Complex Emergencies and the Crisis of Developmentalism. In IDS Bulletin (Vol. 25).
[3] EGI Policy Brief 02, 2020

Table 2: Defining complex emergencies over time

The shifting characteristics of complex emergencies	
Focus on conflict[4] (2000)	**Focus on the extraordinary[5] (2020)**
– Administrative, economic, political and social decay and collapse – High levels of violence – Vulnerable populations at greatest risk – Cultural, ethnic, or religious groups at risk – Catastrophic public health emergencies – Primarily internal wars with major violations of human rights – Increased competition for resources between groups in conflict – Increased migration of refugees or internally displaced populations – Long-lasting and widespread	– Long emergencies which are political in nature and mostly beyond social memory – High degree of uncertainty – Unknown feedback loops – Difficult to define – Perceived trade-offs between 'lives and livelihoods' – Considerable political challenges – Delayed disasters and effects of actions – Opposition due to strong vested interests – No, or low-level 'trigger moment' – Existence of emergency response paradox – Limited experience-ability of emergency

Above all, a complex emergency, as understood by the EGI, is a situation where high levels of risk and impact are combined with the extraordinary characteristics above. Many global 'grand challenges', above all climate change and the ecological crisis, have recently been reframed as complex emergencies. Based on the EGI characterisation of complex emergencies, the following major shocks, risks and emergencies[6] (identified by multiple sources) and social emergencies (identified by EGI) are grouped according to their level of alignment with the EGI definition (Table 3).

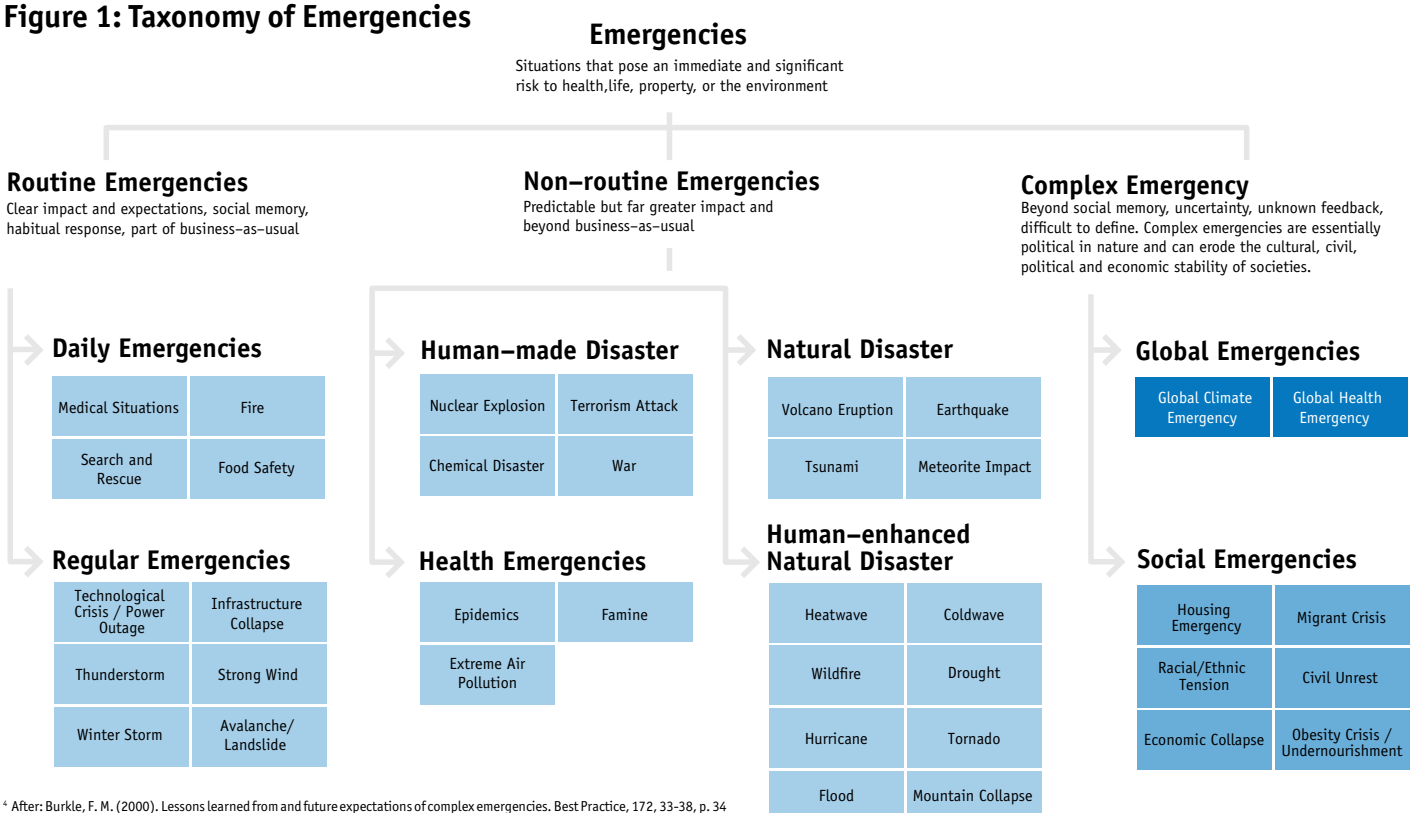
Table 3: Short list of shocks, risks and emergencies according to level of alignment with complex emergencies (EGI definition). See Appendix A for longer list.

High-level CE alignment	Medium-level CE alignment	Lower-level CE alignment
– Adverse outcomes of frontier technologies – Failure of climate change adaption – Misinformation and disinformation – Erosion of social cohesion and societal polarisation	– Chronic diseases and health conditions – Migration crisis with large-scale involuntary migration – Pandemics and infectious diseases – Civil unrest, state collapse or severe instability	– Housing emergency – Racial/ethnic tension – Interstate conflict/war – Cost-of-living crisis

To further characterise and position complex emergencies alongside routine and non-routine emergencies, EGI Policy Brief 02 introduced a **taxonomy of emergencies** (Figure 01). On the one hand, complex emergencies include global emergencies - such as the climate or health emergencies - which are both multi-scale and extend from the global to the local with extreme local variations. On the other, there are a range of social emergencies which have been declared in particular contexts. These may be more regional or local in scale, but nevertheless share the key characteristics discussed in the previous section.

Climate and social emergencies differ from most other emergencies since, in addressing them, they provide considerable opportunities for societal innovation, improving livelihoods and quality of life. These emergencies have significant employment potential and can unlock more successful and inclusive economic development.

Figure 1: Taxonomy of Emergencies



[4] After: Burkle, F. M. (2000). Lessons learned from and future expectations of complex emergencies. Best Practice, 172, 33-38, p. 34
[5] After: EGI Policy Brief 02
[6] Identified by multiple sources including UN, 2023 (major shocks), WEF 2023 (global risks) and EGI, 2020

Additional types and stages of complex emergencies are differentiated in Table 4. The relationship between complex emergencies and the local scale is defined using two of the descriptors. First, the geographic scale or area affected by such an emergency which may connect a specific crisis to a more defined local territory. Second, the response scale and the degree to which an emergency response can be motivated as well as effectively handled, at a local scale.

Table 4: Types and stages of complex emergencies

Descriptor	Details
Geographic scale	Global (climate), regional (energy), local (housing)
Temporal scale	Months (energy), years (pandemic), decades (climate)
Economic equilibrium	New normal (via emergency transition as required by climate emergency) vs maintained normal (via temporary emergency fix e.g. required by pandemic)
Response scale	Global (cc mitigation), regional (pandemic, energy), local (cc adaptation)
Impact delay	Extreme delay (climate), moderate delay (energy), little delay (pandemic)
Overlaps	Monocrisis (pandemic) vs polycrisis (nexus of climate, energy and resource crisis)

A useful and more recent terminological addition is that of the **polycrisis**. Made up of "cascading and connected crises", or complex emergencies, a polycrisis arises when the compounding effects of intersecting crises are greater than the sum of their parts.[5] There is, however, limited understanding of how multiple complex emergencies emerge and intersect.[6] The polycrisis can be attributed to the structurally blocked intersecting dynamics of transitions (use of resources, technological change, and its use and impact on society, and long-term global development).[7]

At the heart of complex emergencies there are underlying, interlinked factors that exacerbate one core emergency.[8] High levels of inequality, rapid rates of urbanisation, a strained and ageing infrastructure, and weak systems of governance, amongst others, both exacerbate the impact of a complex emergency, and undermine the ability to mobilise a rapid, radical, agile and - and critically for complex emergencies - sustained response. This has been evident in the cascading impacts of disasters in cities such as eThekwini (Durban), South Africa, amongst others. Already struggling to maintain and extend service delivery due to rapid urbanisation and weak governance, eThekwini was hit by devastating floods in 2017, 2019 and 2022, social unrest in 2021, and the covid pandemic. Each disaster, together with weak and unstable governance, constrained the city's ability to respond, recover and rebuild, further weakening its ability to cope with the next disaster.[9]

2.2 GOVERNING COMPLEX EMERGENCIES

In order for governments and other relevant actors to engage proactively with complex emergencies, **two key stages** should be differentiated. First, the recognition of an emergency, often associated with an emergency declaration. Second, that the emergency response cuts across all aspects of actions taken and directly addresses the complex emergency. EGI Analytics Note 04 identifies four ways in which the recognition of emergencies occurs and is communicated, ultimately triggering an emergency response.

1. **Formal emergency declarations** of extraordinary emergency situations in line with legal/constitutional frameworks.
2. **Political emergency declarations** by political leaders, governments and/or parliaments as a political statement and call to action.
3. **Rhetorical emergency declarations** as part of public statements that are not activating emergency legislation nor include a formal political emergency declaration.
4. **Actioned emergencies** conveyed through rapid and radical government action without any declaration.

The notion of emergency governance builds on the established approaches of incident command and disaster response usually associated with managing a disaster. Above all, the shift from emergency command to governance is a product of the longer timeframes involved in responding to complex emergencies, as well as their political nature. Still, many aspects of established emergency responses also remain in place for governing complex emergencies. The response to large scale crises needs to transcend organisational mandates, boundaries and policy sectors, yet this is one of the most common challenges facing emergency response.[10] Effective response requires rapid, coordinated action across line functions, organisations, spheres of government, and sectors.[11]

Such emergency governance also links to requirements for addressing complex emergencies following earlier UN definitions. These require "political consensus and innovative ways of working with…protracted crisis" beyond immediate disaster relief,[12] as well as intensive and extensive system-wide coordination.[13] This expanded scope of intervention exposes ideological and institutional divergence in the mandates of institutions that intervene in emergencies as relief, peacekeeping, and development with different priorities, approaches and timeframes,[14] and this is why multilevel and multistakeholder approaches to complex emergencies are so critical.[15]

[7] Homer-Dixon, T., & Rockström, J. (2022, November 13). Guest Essay: What Happens When a Cascade of Crises Collide? New York Times. Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2022/11/13/opinion/coronavirus-ukraine-climate-inflation.html; Lawrence, M., Janzwood, S., & Homer-Dixon, T. (2022). What Is a Global Polycrisis? And how is it different from a systemic risk? Retrieved from https://cascadeinstitute.org/technical-paper/what-is-a-global-; Torkington, S. (2023, January 13). We're on the brink of a 'polycrisis'-how worried should we be? World Economic Forum. Retrieved from https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/01/polycrisis-global-risks-report-cost-of-living/

[6] Macias, 2013; Fraser 2022; EGI Policy Brief 02, 2020

[7] Swilling, M. (2019). Long Waves and the Sustainability Transition. In S. Acar & E. Yeldan (Eds.), Handbook of Green Economics (pp. 31–51). London: Elsevier Academic Press. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/C2018-0-00479-X

[8] Macias, L. (2013). Complex Emergencies - Research Brief 16, August 2013. Austin.

[9] Fakir, S. (2022, May 2). The KZN flood disaster was amplified by a toxic stew ofvulgar governance. Daily Maverick . Retrieved from https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/; Van Niekerk, D. (2022, April 15). Opinion: Blaming nature for the KZN floods is avoiding taking responsibility. News24. Retrieved from https://www.news24.com/news24/opinions/columnists/questcolumn/opinion-dewald-van-niekerk-blaming-nature-for-the-kzn-floods-is-avoiding-taking-responsibility-20220415; Parliament of South Africa. (2022). Report of the Ad Hoc Joint Committee on Flood Disaster Relief and Recovery. Cape Town; Naidoo, S., Nyamwanza, A., Naidoo, T., Bob, U., Munien, S., Martel, P., … Meyer, C. (2022). A Critical Analysis of Climate Resilience and Adaptation Capacity of the greater eThekwini Metro in KwaZulu-Natal - draft report for the Presidential Climate Commission.

[10] Mazzucato, M., & Kattel, R. (2020). COVID-19 and public-sector capacity. Oxford Review of Economic Policy, 36, S256–S269. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxrep/graa031; EGI Policy Brief 04, 2021

[11] Reid, P., & Van Niekerk, D. (2008). A model for a multi-agency response management system (MARMS) for South Africa. Disaster Prevention and Management: An International Journal, 17(2), 244–255. https://doi.org/10.1108/09653560810872541; EGI Policy Brief 04, 2021

[12] Duffield, 1994

[13] Munslow, B., & Brown, C. (1999). Complex Emergencies: The Institutional Impasse. In Source: Third World Quarterly (Vol. 20)., 1999; OCHA. (1994). Definition of Complex Emergencies. Retrieved from https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/content/definition-complex-emergency

[14] Burkle, 2000; Munslow & Brown, 1999

[15] Drezner, 2023; Kluth, 2023; Tooze, 2022

Responding to a polycrisis further strengthens the case for moving beyond normal-mode governance, as efforts to address one crisis or set of risks exacerbates another or requires systemic shifts to stabilise.[16] For example, justice, or a just transition, is an essential outcome for political stability to sustain the shift of a deep transition.[17] While terminology differs, what is clear is that coping with crises of this scale and complexity requires understanding the interconnections, feedback loops and lags of multiple systemic risks.

At the same time, shifting from incident command to emergency governance requires consideration of broader governance dynamics. In 2020, the EGI proposed ten emergency governance principles for consultation.[18] Of these, the following seven requirements generated little debate and were broadly accepted when engaging and consulting with local and regional governments:

1. **Human rights and social justice**
2. **New forms of democratic legitimacy**
3. **Systems rather than sectoral approaches**
4. **Multilevel coordination**
5. **Context-specific approaches**
6. **Joining-up hierarchical and network governance**
7. **Differentiated planning and implementation roles**

A second set of three principles led to more debate as well as critical feedback:

1. Emergency governance requires g**overnment to be in the driving seat** as convener in chief: But what if government is weak, fails or does not have the capacity to lead? How can such governments address governance requirements to deliver on reform outcomes?
2. A **'governance by empathy'** is required to ensure collaboration, co-creation and caring as part of emergency responses: But how is governance by empathy defined? How does its ambiguity, e.g. compared to solidarity, lead to shortcomings? To what extent is it another interpretation of a feminist approach to governance and leadership?
3. Utilising existing trust and trusted institutions, critical **truth-telling and acknowledging the scale of problem** plays a key role in governing complex emergencies: This requires a degree of sophistication which many governments may not have.

The above points also relate to several tensions and contradictions within emergency governance that are not easily resolved. The concept of complex emergencies, with origins in humanitarian emergencies, creates a tension in the disaster management policy context between a complex emergency "event", and a much wider, longer term complex emergency "transition". Other contradictions and tensions are listed in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Tensions and contradictions of emergency governance

Tensions linked to the role of the state	Other contradictions and tensions
– The requirement for a strong government whilst states have limited ability to lead at the required level – The need for a government to mobilise for an emergency transition without an alternative if it is unwilling to do so – The possibility of governments themselves being part of an emergency situation	– Complexity implies 'unknown unknowns' limiting the effectiveness of emergency action – The requirement for agility, flexibility, and non-state actor involvement as well as strong leadership and democratic legitimacy – The necessity of general emergency governance frameworks and related risks of ignoring context specific factors

The value of emergency governance as set out above presents a new opportunity for deep prioritisation of policy (emergency) action based on a set of criteria that define what constitutes a complex emergency.

2.3 LOCALISING EMERGENCY GOVERNANCE

Two perspectives underpin the rationale for a local response to complex emergencies. First, recognising local and regional governments as typical first responders to a conventional emergency following the principles of subsidiarity and local primacy. Second, centrally positioning local action as part of the global agendas, above all the 2030 Agenda, which provides local and regional governments with an overarching roadmap that can contradict or assume a higher priority than that of their national governments.

In many countries, **emergency planning and response occurs closest to impacted populations** and is thus at the local level. In some cases, this is the result of sheer necessity due to insufficient action by national governments. Local emergency action is also often embedded in 'whole of government' and 'whole of community' approaches.[19] The United States Disaster Recovery Framework refers to 'local primacy' and assigns the primary and initial responsibility for emergency action to local governments, who then request assistance from higher levels if they become overwhelmed.[20]

Local governments 'being closest to citizens'[21] are in a strong position to develop policy and service models in line with local communities. This not only justifies the **subsidiarity principle** but is a reality in crisis situations. Understanding local needs and contexts, fostering local understanding, and ensuring that needs are met following the LNOB principle represents a competitive advantage for municipalities.[22] Municipalities are often considered best placed to mobilise local stakeholders and communities, as well as national and international organisations.[23]

[16] Lawrence, M. (2022, December 11). Polycrisis may be a buzzword, but it could help us tackle the world's woes. The Conversation. Retrieved from https://theconversation.com/polycrisis-may-be-a-buzzword-but-it-could-help-us-tackle-the-worlds-woes-195280; Lawrence et al., 2022
[17] Swilling, 2019
[18] EGI Policy Brief 02, 2020
[19] Atkinson, C. L. (2022). "Local Government Emergency Management." Encyclopedia 3(1): 1-14.
[20] Department of Homeland Security, U. (2016). National Disaster Recovery Framework.
[21] Council of Europe (2021). Ensuring the respect of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in major crisis situations.
[22] Slack, L. (2014). "The post-2015 global agenda-a role for local government." Commonwealth Journal of Local Governance(15): 173-177.
[23] Reddy, P. (2016). "Localising the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): the role of local government in context."

A fundamental logic aligned with **local primacy for emergency responses** is the effectiveness of horizontal rather than hierarchical approaches in crisis situations.[24] In addition to the allocation of resources, this includes the ability to coordinate, network and overcome organisational obstacles.[25] The preparation and implementation of integrated cross-cutting and sectoral policies is something local governments do regularly and have an advanced capacity for.

Under the broader umbrella of hazard mitigation and risk reduction, preventive land use planning in particular is considered a critical task and a primary responsibility of local government.[26] Communication strategies to inform and coordinate populations and civil society's responses also form a critical part of local governments' emergency actions.[27]

Localising global agendas and emergencies considers strategic goals and plans at the national and international level that need to be translated and adapted to local context.[28] Localisation is defined as 'the process of defining, implementing and monitoring strategies at the local level for achieving global, national and sub-national goals and targets'. [29]

For implementing the SDGs, and as advocated for by UCLG and the Global Task Force of Local and Regional Governments, the UN calls for close working relationships with local authorities.[30] Estimates suggest that at least 105 of 169 SDG sub-targets cannot be achieved without subnational governments.[31] Local government policies, services and activities directly contribute to achieving the SDGs, including education, health, water and sanitation, waste management, public transport, housing, gender equality, participatory urban planning, disaster risk prevention, environmental impacts, pollution and climate change mitigation and adaptation.[32]

Emergency framing linked to global action that required localisation was most prominent during the COVID-19 pandemic and for the climate emergency. While the first required local governments to step up to ensure the general welfare of local communities, the second involves the more strategic involvement of local governments. By October 2024, more than 2,360 jurisdictions with a combined population of over 1 billion citizens in 40 countries had declared a climate emergency.[33]

With regard to **local and regional governments governing complex emergencies**, the most critical roles are governing local development in the sense of socio-economic transitions (particularly relevant for the climate emergency); and local social public service provision (a central part of health emergencies such as COVID-19).

The development function, including land use planning, housing regulation, transport and utilities, industrial and commercial development take on a socio-economic transition function (in the case of the ecological/climate emergency or the AI/digitalisation challenge) or a maintenance/stabilisation function (in the case of health emergencies). For city governments, these roles imply a critical role linked to the transformative power of urbanisation.[34]

For local public service provision and resources redistribution, normal and emergency mode functions overlap to a considerable degree. A key component here is public safety, income support and provisions for basic needs (particularly for health emergencies) and ensuring equal opportunities for all. Typical welfare services include education, housing, transport and in some instances health which are often all devolved to the local state. This function is often at particular risk of resource and budgetary constraints that may come along particular complex emergencies (e.g. energy crisis and health emergency).

To summarise, over the last decades, the concept of complex emergencies has evolved from a focus on conflict and humanitarian crises to a broader application involving extraordinarily challenging and often global conditions of crisis. Governing such conditions often begins with a formal recognition through the declaration of an emergency, followed by the emergency response. For this response, EGI identified seven broadly accepted emergency governance principles, in addition to several tensions and contradictions which present challenges and should be acknowledged. Most critical in the context of EGI, governing complex emergencies relies centrally on local and regional governments, not just as operational partners but as strategic actors as part of multi-level governance.

While the importance of emergency governance and the critical role of local and regional governments is today much better understood than it was prior to the recent pandemic and the recognition of a climate emergency, concrete adjustments to the structures and processes of governance to reflect the global polycrisis - or to anticipate the next complex emergency - remain underdeveloped. The next section presents the key learnings and actions which have emerged through the first phase of the Emergency Governance Initiative from 2020 to 2024.

[24] Head, B. W. and J. Alford (2015). "Wicked problems: Implications for public policy and management." Administration & society 47(6): 711-739.
[25] Wang, C.-y. and M.-f. Kuo (2017). "Strategic styles and organizational capability in crisis response in local government." Administration & Society 49(6): 798-826.
[26] Atkinson, 2022
[27] Meyer-Emerick, N. (2015). Using social marketing for public emergency preparedness: Social change for community resilience, Routledge., Atkinson 2022
[28] CCA (2021). Localising NDCs with inspiration from the 2030 Agenda. Policy Brief., Collaborative Climate Action.
[29] UCLG (2019). Gold V: The Localization of the Global Agendas. How local action is transforming territories and communities.
[30] UN (2015). Sustainable Development Goals. New York, NY, United Nations.
[31] OECD (2020). A Territorial Approach to the Sustainable Development Goals.
[32] Bardot, L., P. Bizarro, A. Licha, T. Stichelmans and L. V. Marce (2018). SDGs: How Europe's towns and reations are taking the lead.
[33] CED. (2023). "Climate Emergency Declarations 2023 ", from https://climateemergencydeclaration.org/climate-emergency-declarations-cover-15-million-citizens/.
[34] UCLG. (2015). "The Sustainable Development Goals. What local governments need to know." from https://www.local2030.org/library/40/Sustainable-Development-Goals--What-local-Government-need-to-know.pdf.

3 CRITICAL EMERGENCY GOVERNANCE REFORMS

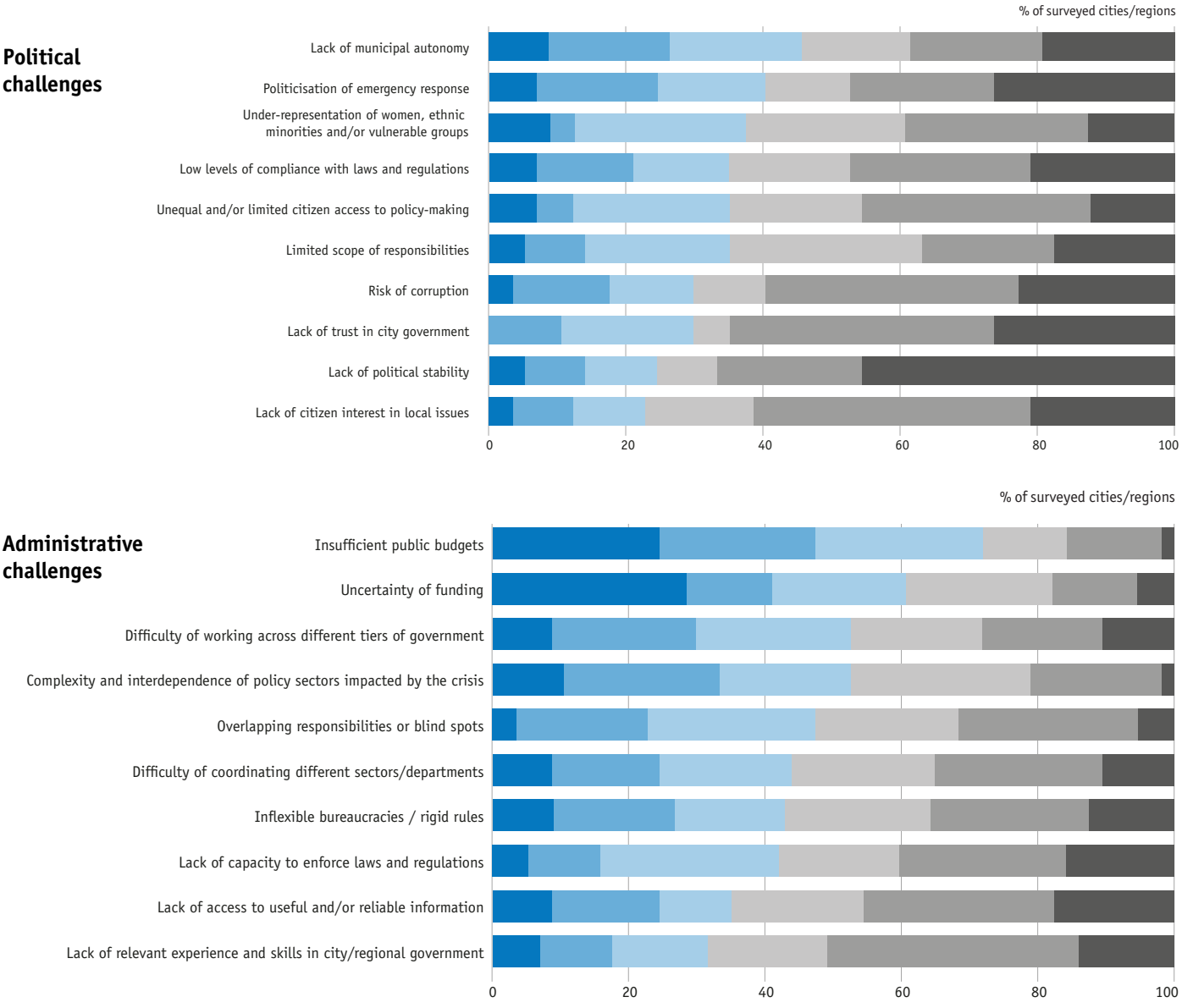
This section presents critical emergency governance reforms for four key areas: (1) multilevel governance and emergency coordination, (2) service delivery and stakeholder coordination, (3) finance and resources, and (4) democracy and representation. These areas were initially informed by a survey of 57 local and regional governments from 35 countries (Figure 1) identifying the political and administrative challenges of emergency governance. They were then refined in close consultation with local government representatives and adjusted to prioritise the needs identified by practitioners.

The findings from the Emergency Governance Initiative for each key area are introduced by summarising key actions for three different kinds of actors: individual local and regional governments, organisations such as local government associations, and national governments and/or international city networks. These actors were chosen due to their significant role in emergency governance for cities and regions combined with the relative lack of policy guidance targeting them. The section also highlights outstanding questions and concerns that could inform future work on emergency governance.

The section is structured as four 'factsheets', one for each governance theme. Each factsheet provides a summary of main findings, practical action points, and key questions for the future.

Figure 1. Survey results - governance challenges.

'Please rate each of these governance challenges based on how much of a problem they have been during your city's emergency response.' (From dark red (5) = extremely challenging to dark grey (0) = not challenging at all.)



Note: the survey was conducted between 13 and 22 July 2020; data covers 57 LRGs from 35 countries and all continents.

3.1 MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE AND EMERGENCY COORDINATION

This section builds on Policy Brief 04 | Multilevel Emergency Governance: Enabling Adaptive and Agile Responses.

What we have learnt

Individual LRGs

Insight 1:

Multilevel governance is a key challenge for local governments addressing complex emergencies.

- An EGI survey conducted by the European Committee of the Regions and the OECD in 2020 found that one of the main administrative governance challenges facing local governments during the pandemic was the difficulty of working across tiers of government.
- In a survey conducted by the European Committee of the Regions and the OECD in 2020, only 49% of 300 European cities and regions believed that vertical coordination mechanisms with national governments had been effective during the health emergency. Crucially, only 22% found coordination between subnational governments to be effective.

Networks of LRGs

Insight 2:

LGAs can play an important, hands-on role as part of emergency responses.

- In some instances, LGAs played formal roles in the response to COVID-19, such as through emergency funds management and coordination/mediation with national governments.
- Beyond these formal roles, local governments also emphasised the importance of LGAs in facilitating knowledge exchange.

Highlight: In Uganda, the Ministry of Local Governments released emergency funds to the Ugandan Local Government Association to be distributed to local governments. Similarly, representatives of the South African Local Government Association met regularly with national ministers and reported to the National Coronavirus Command Council.

Highlight: In Bulgaria, the National Association of Municipalities established a communication platform for mayors during the initial stages of the pandemic which was used to circulate details of companies providing medical equipment and PPE. At the international level, UCLG's Live Learning Experiences and Metropolis' Cities for Global Health also facilitated knowledge sharing.

National Governments

Insight 3:

Pre-established emergency coordination mechanisms are often insufficient to meet the complexity of global and social emergencies.

- National governments were able to mobilise pre-existing coordination mechanisms. However, the unprecedented intensity of the coordination required across government spheres and sectoral silos meant that, in some cases, these coordination mechanisms were flawed, and new bodies and processes had to be introduced.

Highlight: In Australia, a National Cabinet was established at the beginning of the pandemic to facilitate more frequent negotiation between states.

Action Points

Individual LRGs

Action 1:

Ensure strong and stable command and control functions at the centre of government.

- Establish nodes of authority to make informed and difficult decisions within government. Coordination, collaboration, dialogue, and pluralism do not imply fuzzy lines of accountability.

Action 2:

Enhance cross-sectoral cooperation.

- Build adequate coordination mechanisms to facilitate cooperation between departments within government.

Action Points

 Individual LRGs	Action 3:	**Design-inclusive emergency response systems.** – Promote governance models that incorporate diverse representation of views and concerns, with a strong emphasis on upholding the human rights of structurally marginalised groups who are most impacted by complex emergencies. – Implement open data and information management systems and sharing approaches that standardise the most critical data and maximise availability of information, enabling all stakeholders to input and access it in real time. – Enable experimentation, piloting, and temporal solutions to dealing with complex emergencies by moving away from a zero-failure culture.
 Networks of LRGs	Action 4: Action 5:	**Facilitate systematic cross-jurisdictional coordination.** – Build effective coordination mechanisms to facilitate across territories and authorities at the same level of governance (cross-jurisdictional cooperation). **Enable knowledge exchange.** – Facilitate knowledge sharing and promote peer-to-peer learning and cooperation, disseminating and contextualising lessons learned elsewhere. This should be done with the acknowledgement that there is no 'one size fits all' approach to suit all local contexts.
 National Governments	Action 6: Action 7:	**Ensure properly funded vertical emergency coordination mechanisms.** – Build adequate coordination mechanisms to facilitate vertical cooperation between all levels of government. – Develop capacity at all levels of government to effectively respond to complex emergencies. This requires appropriate funding. **Resist impulses to (re)centralise decision-making.** – One study comparing the governance response to the first wave of the pandemic in Italy and Spain found that decentralised coordination mechanisms were advantageous to the emergency response due to enhanced coordination, information sharing and tailoring policy responses to regional needs and priorities. Similar findings were found in the case of the Democratic Republic of Congo. – Another study found that the centralisation of crisis management in Italy, Germany and the United Kingdom did not automatically result in consistency in crisis communication. Crisis communication was more consistent where leaders actively coordinated their crisis management.

What We Must Learn Next

 Individual LRGs	– How are multilevel governance coordination mechanisms impacted by the duration of a complex emergency? – Are different coordination mechanisms necessary for shorter term emergencies such as COVID-19, than for longer term emergencies, such as climate change?
 LGAs	– If LGAs assume a more formal role in national emergency responses, what would be the impact on the coherence of the response across different governments? – Is this coherence a good thing? Or is there a danger that replication could lead LRGs to uncritically adopt similar practices, promoting standardisation rather than innovation?
 International City Networks	– How can international city networks enhance LRGs' influence in national and international decision making around emergency management?

3.2 SERVICE DELIVERY AND STAKEHOLDER COORDINATION

This section builds on Policy Brief 05 | Local Public Services in Crises Mode: Adapting Governance Models to Exceptional Times.

What we have learnt

Individual LRGs

Insight 1:

The impact of complex emergencies on local public service delivery has two main origins – the sector-specific shifts in demand (and, therefore, cost/revenue), and the peculiarities of local and national governance arrangements and political priorities.

- During the COVID-19 pandemic, LRGs faced dramatic increase in demand for some services (e.g., testing and sanitising) and decrease for others (e.g., public transport and licensing).
- In addition to loss of revenue (due to moratoriums or decline in consumption), local infrastructure services were also affected by disruption to global supply chains and unavailability of frontline workers.
- Parallel to these challenges, governments were faced with the urgent need to digitalise service provision and protect workers.
- The global health emergency resulted in LRGs assuming greater responsibility for health services.
- Choices about which services to (de)prioritise were constrained by existing budgetary rules and political decisions at different levels of government, including which services to (de)centralise.

Insight 2:

Agility, adaptability, responsiveness, and the ability to coordinate actions across departments and operators are essential to guarantee service access and continuity.

- This was more effective in cases where there were pre-existing partnerships and consortiums among public providers in the region and where channels for citizen participation were already embedded within service governance models.
- Strong dialogue, cooperation, and coordination, both internally and externally, with other service operators, government administrations, workers and trade unions were critical success factors.

Networks of LRGs

Insight 3:

Effective delivery of local public services is a pragmatic way of pursuing the SDGs, and LGAs can help disseminate this message.

- The links between these services and the various targets set for each of the goals are extensive. To localise the SDGs is to ensure that these essential services are being delivered effectively to all.

National Governments

International City Networks

Insight 4:

Care services, digital connectivity, and safe public spaces are now widely regarded as 'the new essentials'.

- In an era of remote working and virtualisation of everyday life, these new essentials are critical for the wellbeing and equal opportunities of populations.
- Awareness about these shifts and what they mean for our traditional understanding of 'public services' is reflected in processes such as the Voluntary Local Reviews, where LRGs undertake an assessment of their progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. But it should also be reflected in legal and other policy frameworks at all levels, including in national and international arenas.

Action Points

 Individual LRGs	Action 1:	**Maintain strategic oversight of local public services, irrespective of who actually delivers them.** – The responsibility for providing local public services lies with local, metropolitan, and regional governments. Even when delivered by private, community, or mixed/hybrid operators, during a crisis LRGs must step in to ensure users are protected. – LRGs must bridge the gap between political decision-making and the provision of adequate finance and staffing to ensure a rapid and effective service response during a rapidly evolving emergency context.
	Action 2:	**Embed channels for social participation as part of governance models established to deliver public services.** – Public service delivery mechanisms must be adapted and expanded to protect socio-economically disadvantaged populations and structurally marginalised social groups, since they are the most heavily impacted by emergencies. The best way to achieve this is by considering the lived experiences and aspirations of workers and service users.
	Action 3:	**Enable knowledge exchange.** – Though many tools and procedures can be deployed to consult the public in an ad hoc manner, when emergencies occur it is generally too late to design and activate institutional solutions for far-reaching social participation. Taking inspiration from, for example, the case of Terrassa, LRGs should craft these mechanisms as soon as possible. – Social participation can enable the emergency response to become an accelerator of change by putting populations at the heart of decisions. It has been shown that it can improve service fairness, trust and accountability, and strengthen social responsibility.
 Networks of LRGs	Action 4:	**Raise awareness about the different governance models for local public services.** – More empirical evidence is needed regarding the ability of different models of service delivery to ensure quality and continued provision during complex emergencies. LGAs can contribute to building this body of knowledge by facilitating comparative studies.
 National Governments	Action 5:	**Place equality and care at the centre of emergency governance.** – Equality and care can be guiding principles for governments. This requires a rethink of policy design practices and processes, as well as promoting a culture shift towards placing people and their diverse everyday lives, needs and aspirations (as well as the need to protect and regenerate our planet) at the heart of decision-making in 21st century society.
	Action 6:	**Invest in the digital capabilities of LRGs to improve data collection and analysis, ensure residents are safe, and adjust service delivery in times of crisis.** – More than just funding, this will require political will and capacity building.

What we must learn next

 Individual LRGs	– Are all governance models of local public services equally equipped to deal with complex emergencies? – By integrating different sectors under the same institutional framing, are multi-utilities more resilient in an emergency context?
 LGAs	– How can LGAs play a more important and formal role in ensuring dialogue, cooperation, and coordination across all actors tasked with the provision of public services?
 National Governments	– What criteria should be used to assess, in any given context, which services and policy sectors should be devolved to LRGs so that they are better able to tackle future complex emergencies?

3.3 FINANCE AND RESOURCES

This section builds on Policy Brief 03 | Financing Emergencies in Cities and Regions: Ongoing Lessons from the Pandemic.

What we have learnt

Individual LRGs

Insight 1:

Complex emergencies can create a 'scissor effect' – where expenditure is higher, and revenue lower.

– Cities and regions faced a 'scissor effect' of increasing expenditure (e.g., to purchase new equipment and provide new services) and decreasing revenues (e.g., lower property taxes and public transport user fees) as a result of the pandemic.

Insight 2:

Rigid spending rules restrict emergency responses.

– While intergovernmental transfers were more stable than own revenue during the global health crisis, those transfers were often non-discretionary, leaving cities with little flexibility to direct resources towards their own emergency response priorities.

– Still, in some cases, fiscal rules were lifted or loosened by national governments.

Insight 3:

Capital budget cuts are a common response to the scissor effect.

– A significant proportion of local governments paused or cancelled capital investments during the pandemic.

– Only a few LRGs increased borrowing to manage budget deficits.

Insight 4:

Emergencies exacerbate pre-existing financial challenges.

– Most of the acute financial issues constraining LRGs' actions during the COVID-19 pandemic were already present before the crisis. The problems around insufficient, rigid and volatile budgets were often amplified, not created by the global health emergency.

Networks of LRGs

Insight 5:

There is a general lack of information on emergency finance and alternative sources of funding.

– There is little information and policy guidance readily available to LRGs in relation to emergency finance.

– When available, financial support to local governments is usually not easy to access and highly fragmented.

National Governments

Insight 6:

Current frameworks for financing emergency responses across levels of government have shown signs of stress.

– Although many national governments allocated additional resources to subnational governments, emergency finance was mobilised in an incremental way, leading to disjointed and delayed responses. Uncertainty around emergency financing often hampered effective and timely local responses.

– The limited involvement of LRGs in the design and discussions around recovery packages suggest that not enough is being done to improve the resilience and effectiveness of these frameworks.

Highlight: In the UK, a review by the House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts found that the central government was not sufficiently prepared for the financial impacts of a severe emergency in the local government sector. Similarly, the National Audit Office found that the government's incremental approach to funding local governments during the pandemic did not support good financial planning. The government allocated four tranches of non-ringfenced funding during the period to March 2021, totalling £4.55bn. The review found that there was significant uncertainty around how long each transfer was supposed to last or if there would be another round of emergency funding. The pandemic has prompted debates about reforming multilevel governance finance systems so that they are better equipped to face future crises.

International City Networks

Insight 7:

International sources of revenue are becoming more important.

– Intergovernmental transfers during the pandemic risked being unreliable when national revenues are under extreme strain or where there is serious political tension between national and local governments. Particularly in the case of LRGs in the Global South, revenue from international sources is very important in tackling climate, health and other complex emergencies.

Action Points

 Individual LRGs	Action 1:	**Develop and maintain contingency plans for financing complex emergencies.** – This should include steps to take in the event of exogenous shocks that can trigger sharp decreases in revenue and increases in expenditure and should, in so far as possible, be developed in consultation with other levels of government.
 Networks of LRGs	Action 2:	**Create dedicated platforms for information sharing on emergency financing.** – This should be tailored as much as possible to national, regional and local contexts and provide information on different emergency grants and loans, and technical support to local governments in their applications.
	Action 3:	**Facilitate cooperative financing mechanisms between local and regional governments.** – This would allow local governments that would otherwise face difficulties accessing credit on their own or have insufficient financial reserves to cover non-forecasted expenditure to pool together and expand access to finance.
	Action 4:	**Advocate for the development of robust multilevel emergency government financing frameworks at the national level and ensure that local government finance is included in recovery packages and contingency plans for complex emergencies.** – These should be developed in line with existing emergency response frameworks such as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.
 National Governments	Action 5:	**Trust LRGs and provide them with the autonomy and flexibility to design and implement locally tailored response strategies.** – Greater fiscal autonomy – including the ability to introduce/change taxes – will be important but needs to be introduced in parallel with diversified sources of emergency finance. – Effective local responses will hinge on granting LRGs more discretion and flexibility (e.g., relaxing fiscal rules in times of crises) within solid accountability frameworks.
	Action 6:	**Allow LRGs to plan their interventions.** – The availability of resources is a necessary but insufficient condition: finance frameworks need to offer stability and predictability so that sub-national actors can plan and coordinate their actions.
	Action 7:	**Embrace solidarity as a guiding principle.** – The most vulnerable members of society must take centre stage. Finance is an essential lever that can further entrench existing imbalances or act as a catalyst for a transition to a more just society. We need to develop more solidarity-based financial mechanisms to address inequalities both within and between cities, regions and countries.

What we must learn next

 Individual LRGs	– How can LRGs increase their fiscal space when responding to a complex emergency?
 LGAs	– What are the opportunities for cooperative financing mechanisms between different LRGs? – How would these operate when emergency responses take off?
 National Governments	– What should an effective multilevel emergency financing framework look like? – To what extent are recovery packages being spent at the local level and by LRGs?

3.4 DEMOCRACY AND REPRESENTATION

This section builds on Policy Brief 06 | Democracy and Representation for Emergency Action.

What we have learnt

Individual LRGs

Insight 1:

The legitimacy of emergency responses ties in closely with democratic practices.

– Trust in government, which is critical for compliance and coordinated collective action, is directly linked to perceptions about the robustness of the democratic checks and balances that are in place to keep decision-makers accountable.

Insight 2:

Emergency governance has five main democratic pillars.

1. **Rights** – when emergency declarations are made, restrictions and derogations are imposed on some fundamental human rights and freedoms. These must respect the basic principles of legality, necessity, proportionality and non-discrimination.
2. Good governance – given the special powers invested in public authorities, trust becomes even more essential, and transparency, accountability, integrity, and the rule of law are vital in maintaining it.
3. **Representation** – responses to complex emergencies often require actions that go beyond political and electoral declarations or commitments. Often, elections schedules and processes are also disrupted. Therefore, innovations that improve representation as part of emergency responses and increase the legitimacy of adjustments to commitments become key.
4. **Deliberation** – deliberative processes bring together a small group of people who represent the wider population. Protecting those processes promotes consensus building and the acceptability of policy responses.
5. **Participation** – LRGs have explored new spaces for broader public participation by expanding the use of existing online resources (such as Decidim). Social media platforms can also enable productive engagement and draw on collective knowledge, but the risk of increased confrontation and polarisation needs to be mitigated.

Networks of LRGs

Insight 3:

Responses to complex emergencies pose challenges to democracy – but they can also spur innovation and public engagement.

– The pressures of complex emergencies often motivate more members of civil society to become proactive agents for change.

– The new challenges can re-energise societies and redirect attention to inequalities and structural marginalisation processes that make some groups even more vulnerable during emergencies.

– When decentralised and networked collective action is embraced by governments, responses can be regarded by all actors as fairer and more effective than top-down prescriptions.

National Governments

Insight 4:

Urgent action often leads to democratic shortcuts in the name of expediency.

– Many electoral processes at local and national levels were postponed during the global pandemic. Very few governments had pre-established processes to democratically engage with complex emergencies.

– Exploiting emergency powers undermines democratic institutions in the long run.

– In cases where democratic and participatory opportunities are perceived as insufficient as part of an emergency response, multiple forms of discontent emerge.

Insight 5:

Complex emergencies are re-shaping democracy.

– At an historical juncture, where we are observing global democratic backsliding and autocratic drift, emergencies threaten to further incite political polarisation and democratic disaffection.

– During the global pandemic, LRGs were often left with the task of mere implementation, rather than active decision-making and the promotion of pluralism. Many powers/responsibilities were effectively (re)centralised, thus clashing with the principle of subsidiarity.

– As bulwarks of more tolerant, liberal and progressive values, LRGs have a key role to play in re-shaping our democracies in a good way, making them more responsive and resilient to shocks.

Action Points

Individual LRGs	Action 1:	**Cities and regions must formally recognise rights and good governance, alongside issues of representation, deliberation and participation, as key components of the democratic legitimacy of their emergency responses.** – LRGs can take the lead on rights-based approaches as part of their emergency responses. – Local governments are in a privileged position to engage in a continuous process of trust building, which includes clear communication, open presentation of any temporary limitations of rights, discussion of trade-offs between choices, and building broad alliances. – While representative democracy and its institutions at the local level are often taken for granted, responses to complex emergencies require full consideration of legislative/deliberative chambers. This includes seeking endorsement from municipal assemblies to declare states of emergency. – Any adjustments to election cycles or changes to municipal mandates must be thoroughly evidenced as being unavoidable and follow the principles of transparency and accountability.
	Action 2:	**Emergency assemblies are an opportunity to boost democracy in times of crisis.** – From citizens' assemblies, juries, councils, reviews and observatories, the models for deliberative decision-making are vast. LRGs should consider which would best suit their particular circumstances. – Once a crisis is in motion, it is generally too late to establish effective deliberative structures. LRGs should consider setting up these bodies now.
Networks of LRGs	Action 3:	**Exploit the potential of digital era governance.** – Technological innovations facilitating the generation and dissemination of information and a closer relationship between government and society are critical enablers of the five democratic pillars of emergency governance. – Digitalisation can improve the resilience of emergency responses, but LRGs must be cognisant of and responsive to digital divides.
National Governments	Action 4:	**Advance the broad principle of subsidiarity.** – LRGs have a crucial role to play in strengthening democracy at the local level. – Decentralised responses also enhance the agility of collective action and responsiveness to specific local contexts.
International City Networks	Action 5:	**Draw inspiration from feminism.** – Alternative forms of leadership and coordination inspired by feminism and care have the potential to offer a truly inclusive form of emergency governance, countering structural forms of discrimination and inequality that often worsen in times of crisis. – Care services, policies, and related infrastructures must be a central concern of emergency responses. A caring local democracy recognises and strengthens the importance and interdependence of the experiences, knowledge and voices of all, actively seeking out solidarity through the proximity afforded by LRGs and the provision of local public services.

What we must learn next

Individual LRGs	– Do complex emergencies benefit the incumbents? (e.g., did we observe a bias towards them in elections following the COVID-19 crisis?) – What role can opposition parties play under such difficult conditions?
LGAs	– What frameworks may be helpful to find the right balance between networked governance/public participation and clear lines of democratic accountability? – What are the trade-offs between the two?
National Governments	– What kinds of 'temporary' emergency measures introduced during the COVID-19 crisis remain in place? How does this impact democracy?

4 THE FUTURE OF LOCAL EMERGENCY GOVERNANCE

This last section presents questions and opens debate on local emergency governance from the point of view of diverse actors, sectors, and territories. The perspectives below aim to set the stage for an ongoing and expanding engagement with the overarching objective of EGI: to strengthen the role of local and regional governments in deciding upon, and implementing, transformative local emergency responses. In turn, such responses should contribute to the co-creation of inclusive, fair, sustainable, and resilient cities and territories - and local communities - even in the midst of the worst complex emergencies.

4.1 THE VALUE, RISKS AND MISSING PERSPECTIVES OF LOCAL EMERGENCY GOVERNANCE

The **local emergency governance** framework proposed by EGI aims to renew perceptions of, and responses to, global and complex crises:

from sectorial responses	from a focus on the economic aspects of the crises	from a government-centred approach	from only national perspectives on emergency responses
▼	▼	▼	▼
to multidimensional responses	to the **political dimension** of the choices made in our responses	to a broader **collective dynamic of governance** (multilevel and multistakeholder)	to emergency decisions and responses **from and for the local level**

What is the added value of the complex emergency framework? What does thinking in terms of "local emergency governance" allow?

- **It helps prioritise certain crises, putting them high on the political agenda**, as exemplified by the growing number of local emergency declarations adopted by LRGs around the world. Certain long-term crises and processes, however serious and urgent they may be, are currently not always framed as emergencies. Climate change is a case in point: it should be framed as a complex emergency in order to energise political commitment and action beyond reactive responses to disasters.
- **It adds flexibility to governance and facilitates more agile and adaptive responses**, while safeguarding accountability and transparency.
- **It encourages a rethink on participation in governance**: whose voices need to be heard in defining emergency responses? What collaborations need to be strengthened?
- **It embraces a local and territorial perspective**: the local emergency governance framework aims to support the integration of local and regional governments in decision-making spaces, recovery plans and budgets, and implementation processes, as well as ensuring the participation of local communities.

What are the risks? What could thinking in terms of complex emergencies potentially compromise?

- **Inclusive and democratic decision making**: how to ensure that thinking in terms of emergencies does not lead to bypassing democratic processes and neglecting the engagement of populations in decision-making processes?
- **Diverse needs across territories and communities**: how can global analysis of, and debate around, complex emergencies include consideration of context-specific causes and effects? How can coherent global responses be co-created and take into account the specific needs of different territories and local communities?
- **Recognising the compounding effects of multiple crisis points**: how to reconcile the existence of multiple emergencies with one single, priority complex emergency made up of interconnected crises with compounding effects? Beyond immediate responses to certain emergencies, how to factor in, and act upon, the historical and systemic processes at play, i.e. their underlying structural causes?

"We are living a change of age, not just a time of changes. New vulnerabilities have emerged [caused by] three existential but linked crises that threaten our very survival: the rampant growth of inequalities, and the ecological crises, including the climate emergency and biodiversity loss."

UCLG Pact for the Future of Humanity, 2022

Amplifying the concept of global complex emergencies, both existing and new, is likely to trigger local emergency governance. What are the missing perspectives?

- **Implications of different complex emergencies**: besides climate change and global health crises, which EGI has focused on primarily, what are the emergency governance implications of other emergencies (e.g. escalating risks related to frontier technologies, rising inequalities, human mobility and displacement crises, homelessness, the housing crisis and the cost-of-living crisis, in addition to war and conflict)?
- **Addressing the global polycrisis locally:** how can the complex emergency framework be of further help to local and regional governments in governing their cities and territories, given the current state of interconnected and "permanent" emergencies?
- **Transformation**: how to ensure that local and global responses to emergencies don't just keep us safe during the emergency and then revert to business as usual, but rather aim to make real transformative changes towards equality, care, and sustainability?

4.2 REFINING THE FRAMEWORK

Expanding the scope and analysis of EGI through inclusive debates, co-creation in decision-making and solidarity, **the future of local emergency governance will have to be defined in relation to**:

Culture, memory, and imagination:

- **History:** what can we learn from history to guide present and future responses to emergencies? How do culture, heritage, and memories structure our understanding of past, current and future complex emergencies in our cities and regions?
- **Context:** what changes can be observed, in different local contexts and territories, in terms of the perception and definition of crises and emergencies? What are the consequences for local emergency responses?
- **Stories:** weaving the past, present and future together, how can local emergency governance reconnect memory, dreaming and imagination, as well as individual and collective aspirations? How do we create stories and local strategies of rupture and/or continuation?

"A fundamental capacity of culture is to enable alternative social imaginaries, revealing and guiding new and old-but-new again pathways. In this way, culture can help illuminate a new social contract supporting the reframing of urban and natural systems. Central to this approach is the imperative of addressing both those elements of culture that can help solve the climate crisis and those that have helped cause it."
UCLG Town Hall on Climate and Culture,
Policy Paper on "The Culture for Climate Agenda", 2022

Human rights, democracy and commoning:

- **Dignity:** given the linkages between some emergency responses and violations of human rights, how can we take advantage of local emergency governance to further ensure human rights and human security, protect democracy and peace, reinvigorate trust between citizens and governments, and catalyse hope and action?

"Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world."
Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Preamble, 1948

- **Universal access:** What are the new essential services that local and regional governments must protect in their responses to emergencies? What are the connections between ensuring universal access to these services and guaranteeing the Right to the City, based on a human rights-centered and feminist, caring approach what are the new essential services that local and regional governments must protect in their responses to emergencies? What are the links between ensuring universal access to these services and guaranteeing the Right to the City, based on a human rights-centred and feminist, caring approach?

"As caring cities and territories, we advance a feminist agenda that guarantees equal rights for all, empowers local communities, and puts the wellbeing of people and planet as the highest priority. [...] We call for a paradigm shift placing care at the centre of policy and action, from the local to the global level: care for the human rights of all people and care for the integrity of our planet."
UCLG, Decalogue "Towards cities, governments and a multilateral system that care for people, democracy and our planet. High-impact coalitions, commitments and calls to localize the 2030 Agenda", 2023

- **Local and global commons:** how can the acute social and political debates that take place during emergencies be harnessed as an opportunity to resist commodification, exclusion and enclosure, and (re)claim the local and global commons and commoning practices?

"Commoning and commons [are] diverse sets of practices that both respond and attempt to disrupt trajectories of growing urban inequalities. [...] Commoning is about finding new ways of cogoverning and sharing responsibility for managing urban resources and urban spaces."
UCLG, GOLD VI Report, "Pathways towards urban and territorial equality. Addressing inequalities through local transformation strategies", 2022

Feminist leadership, future generations and empowerment:

- **Inclusion:** how can feminism inspire renewed leadership, more collaborative governance, and caring local democracies, based on the importance and interdependence of the experiences, knowledge and voices of all?
- **Youth:** how can local emergency governance engage young people and consider future generations' perspectives? How can it enhance young people's knowledge and role as leaders and experts, and empower them to thrive and take action in governments and societies?

"While services, policies and the infrastructures of care are a central substantive concern of emergency responses, feminist reflections on care and caring work and relations on the ground provide a backdrop to more democratic emergency governance."
UCLG, LSE Cities, Metropolis, Emergency Governance Initiative, Policy Brief #06, 2023

- **Care:** in times of crises, how can we ensure that emergency responses go beyond top-down, one-off assistance and plan instead for local caring systems that reinforce the empowerment of citizens and local communities?

Multilevel governance and the renewal of the multilateral system:

- **Stakeholders:** which strategies can local and regional governments advance in their emergency responses to trigger multilevel governance reform and mobilise multistakeholder engagement?

"To ensure that conflicts are resolved peacefully and that people's daily lives improve, it is essential to implement successful multilevel governance models. We need instances of governance where the different levels of government, together with an active and organized civil society, can co-govern, co-create for the achievement of the new social contract."

Bheke Stofile, President of SALGA, Opening speech of the UCLG Policy Council of Multilevel Governance and Trust, 27 October 2023, Konya (Turkey).

Resources: how can national recovery packages and strategies on the one hand, and international agreements, emergency response mechanism[35] and the global financial architecture on the other, structurally involve local and regional governments and support local emergency governance?

Global Agendas: how can we ensure that emergency governance connects with concerted efforts to localise the 2030 Agenda and other global agendas for sustainable development?

"We are living in a period of great uncertainty, yet we know that the risks we face are growing and becoming more complex. [...] We must keep strengthening the multilateral system so that it is fit to face the challenges of tomorrow. My proposal to agree to protocols to convene and operate an Emergency Platform is a concrete step towards that goal."

UN Secretary-General, Our Common Agenda Policy Brief, "Strengthening the international response to complex global shocks – An Emergency Platform", 2023

5 CONCLUSION

Local and regional governments are the harbingers of change. They hold a privileged position and have a transformative commitment to bringing the voices of populations into global conversations and efforts to achieve sustainable development. They must be included as key partners in the structures of global development and decision-making at all levels, in particular the management of global complex emergencies.

This includes the global agreements and actions related to the localisation of the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs. The annual UN High-Level Political Forums, the 2024 Summit of Future and the 2025 World Social Summit are key international milestones where the local and regional government constituency call for actors at all levels to rise to the current challenges of our times, including reconsidering and enabling urban and territorial responses to complex emergencies. Looking ahead, the Emergency Governance Initiative will continue to support knowledge exchange and advocacy strategies for local emergency governance.

[35] Such as the Emergency Platform proposed by the United Nations Secretary-General in Our Common Agenda.

APPENDIX

Longer list of shocks, risks and emergencies according to degree of alignment with complex emergencies (CE).

High level CE alignment	High level CE alignment	Lower-level CE alignment
– Biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse – Failure to mitigate climate change – Adverse outcomes of frontier technologies – Failure of climate-change adaption – Unforeseen risks, black swan events – Misinformation and disinformation – Major outer space event disrupting critical earth systems – Natural resource crises – Digital inequality and lack of access to digital services – Large-scale climatic or environmental events – Digital power concentration – Erosion of social cohesion and societal polarisation – Severe mental health deterioration	– Chronic diseases and health conditions – Migration crisis with large-scale involuntary migration – Obesity crisis – Economic collapse, disintegration of a systemically important industry – Pandemics and infectious diseases – Civil unrest, state collapse or severe instability – Large-scale disruption to global digital connectivity – Widespread cybercrime and cyber insecurity – Collapse or lack of public infrastructure and services – Disruption of global flows of goods, people or finance – High-impact events involving a biological agent – Debt and fiscal crises – Employment crises	– Ineffective multilateral institutions and international cooperation – Racial/ethnic tension – Geoeconomic confrontation – Interstate conflict/war – Prolonged economic downturn – Unstable price trajectories – Proliferation of illicit economic activity – Cost-of-living crisis – Housing emergency – Use of weapons of mass destruction – Natural disasters and extreme weather events – Asset bubble bursts – Terrorist attacks

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