

The Private in the Ostroms' Polycentrism: A Case Study of Post-Sandy Recovery in one Orthodox Jewish Community

October 2014

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Abstract

Both Vincent and Elinor Ostrom have contributed to conversations around the provision of public goods, public administration, and self-governance. In these discussions, the Ostroms point to the strengths associated with polycentric orders. Although the Ostroms note that private firms are often contracted by government to provide public goods, they do not discuss at length other examples of private efforts within a polycentric order. We investigate how private efforts operate within a polycentric order and how they are better suited to meet the needs of particular communities. We consider a case study of an Orthodox Jewish community in Far Rockaway, New York. The community engages in the private provision of goods and services through private donations and volunteerism. We explore why this system is in place, and the role that it played in disaster recovery following Hurricane Sandy in 2012.

Keywords: Vincent Ostrom, Elinor Ostrom, polycentricity, self-governance, disaster recovery

JEL codes: D71, H4, Z1

1. Introduction

Elinor Ostrom was critical of the public-private dichotomy. In fact, she referred to it as a “dangerous academic approach,”

Continuing to presume that complex policy problems are simple problems that can be solved through the adoption of simple designs that are given general names, such as private property, government ownership, or community organization, is *a dangerous academic approach* (emphasis ours). Dichotomizing the institutional world into ‘the market’ as contrasted to ‘the state’ is so grossly inadequate and barren that it is surprising how the dichotomy survives as a basic way of organizing academic studies and policy advice (2005: 256).

Instead, Elinor and Vincent Ostrom adopted another language to talk about how people engage in collective action. They preferred to discuss self-governance and polycentric orders. For example, consider E. Ostrom’s work around police and public safety. E. Ostrom believed that local police forces had access to local knowledge and trust in their communities (through repeated game interactions), which made them more effective as law-enforcement agents. The trust allowed for co-production: community members and police officers “produced” public safety together, with police officers relying on tips from community members and community members relying on the police officers for action (E. Ostrom et al. 1973).

The Ostroms do discuss how private firms can contribute to the *delivery* of what are considered to be public goods (see table 1 in appendix). For example, the Ostroms point out that municipal governments often contract with private firms for services such as snow removal, street repair, or traffic light maintenance (2002: 88). The Ostroms do not, however, discuss at

length other examples of private efforts within a polycentric order. In this paper, we discuss the private provision of goods and services in two ways. The first is when a good or service is provided primarily through private funding, rather than tax revenue. The second includes individuals who volunteer their time and efforts to produce a good or service (for example, civilian patrols volunteer to help produce public safety).

We investigate how private efforts operate within a polycentric order and how they are better suited to meet the needs of particular communities. We consider a case study of an Orthodox Jewish community in Far Rockaway, New York. The community engages in the private provision of goods and services, which are often publically-provided, through private donations and volunteerism. We observe private provision of social services (money, food, assistance and other services), community centers, private schools, an ambulance service, and a civilian patrol. We explain why this polycentric system is in place, and the role that it played in disaster recovery following Hurricane Sandy in 2012.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. In the next section (section 2), we present existing literature. In section 3, we describe methods used for the study. We provide our case study and evidence in section 4. Finally, in section 5 we conclude.

2. Literature on self-governance, polycentrism, and post-disaster recovery

Our study engages two strands of literature. The first is how communities engage in collective action. We rely on the Ostroms' work around self-governance and specifically, polycentric orders. The second strand of literature is the existing research on post-disaster recovery.

The Ostroms challenged traditional views on collective action and the provision of certain goods and services (in the “public economy”). Prevailing views were pessimistic about the ability of local actors to overcome challenges. In the case of common pool resources, Hardin’s “tragedy of the commons” predicted that local actors would over-use and deplete the scarce resource. When considering the provision of public safety, public administration literature suggested that police forces should be consolidated to provide “better coordinated, more effective and more efficient services” (Ostrom and Whitaker 1973: 7). In addition, it was suggested that consolidated police forces would enhance professionalization (ibid).

E. Ostrom countered these claims with hundreds of case studies examining how local actors overcome the tragedy of the commons and how local police forces were able to coordinate with residents to enhance safety. In order to provide a theory of how such coordination takes place, E. Ostrom relied on game theory, constructed the Institutional Analysis and Development Framework (IAD), and expanded on V. Ostrom’s idea of polycentricity (with Tiebout and Warren 1961). Rather than have a single system of rules carried out by a single entity, polycentric orders have a general system of rules and numerous entities that operate within it. Each entity also has their own rules and a level of autonomy in decision-making. Within polycentric orders, there can be competing and overlapping jurisdictions.

Polycentrism, then, offers a level of self-governance. We define self-governance to be decision-making within a state, community, or other body by its members. Within a community, self-governance implies that community members have individual freedom and voluntarily cooperate, or engage in collective action. V. Ostrom has articulated that self-governance is the central idea of democracy and a necessary condition for the survival of

democracy. Self-governance, V. Ostrom (1991) points out, cannot take place within a system where there is a supreme authority (i.e. self-governance is not the same as governance within a firm or by a state).

For example, we can imagine “governance” in the context of the United States to be under a general system of rules, the US Constitution. Beneath this we divide into states, counties, and local governments, all of which have their own system of rules. At the level of local government, we can imagine overlapping jurisdictions and duplications of services. Throughout the order, there are interactions between entities which are considered “government” and other entities which are non-governmental.

Within a polycentric order, there are a diversity of public goods and services and a diversity of ways in which individuals and communities receive those public goods and services (see table 1 in appendix). There are trade-offs associated with each method. Local governments that contract with a private firm for snow removal, for example, may ensure higher levels of efficiency. The arrangement, however, may make ad hoc requests for snow removal services more difficult. By using education vouchers rather than providing funds directly to local schools, parents and students may have a wider range of choices for schooling. At the same time, the taxpayer may have less input into the particular education that that she is funding.

And, there are examples in which government programs and private efforts complement one another in the provision of goods and services. For example, consider programs aimed at alleviating hunger. Social service programs such as Medicaid provide food stamps (SNAP benefits) for individuals and families who are low income. Community

members, however, may decide to offer a soup kitchen in addition to these existing hunger alleviation programs.

We focus on two reasons why individuals and communities use private efforts for the provision of goods and services that are typically publically-provided.

1. Quantity of goods and services- Community members may perceive that existing goods and services do not meet demand and elect to supplement these goods and services with private efforts.
2. Product differentiation- Community members may have certain tastes or preferences that are not considered in the provision of goods and services.

In the case of the community soup kitchen, community members may decide that existing programs (e.g. SNAP) are not enough. Or, community members may notice a relative absence of home-cooked meals for low-income individuals and families and anticipate a demand for meals. There may be some duplication of services if another organization also provides hot meals. The services, however, are likely to not be identical, as they may be offered at different locations, different times of the week and day, and offer different types of food. The soup kitchen, then, becomes an important provider of goods and services and entity in the larger polycentric order.

The perception that existing goods and services do not meet demand and the observation that existing goods and services do not align with the particular tastes and preferences are both intimately tied to the particular context and reflect local knowledge of that context. The context of an Orthodox Jewish community will present certain unique requirements around goods and services. Product differentiation, for example, will include food

that is kosher and meals that are prepared according to kosher rules.¹ Medical care and end of life procedures must be conducted according to religious rules. Each religious sect (e.g. Orthodox Jewish, Ultra-Orthodox Jewish) operates according to unique rules and in turn, requires various forms of product differentiation. Further, expectations of mutual assistance and an emphasis on “helping a brother,” may contribute to an increased supply of privately provided goods and services. In fact, Berman (2000) explains how mutual assistance acts as a subsidy on strict religious observance.²

Privately provided goods and services assist individuals and communities during mundane times and also in the post-disaster context. Coyne and Lemke (2012) have outlined how polycentric orders are particularly effective in dealing with disaster assistance. The authors point to two key advantages of polycentric orders: first, is the ability of a polycentric order to make use of local knowledge, and second, is the flexibility of a polycentric order to adapt up to larger scale provision (ibid: 223). Coyne and Lemke point out that if communities are affected in different ways by the same disaster, then perhaps disaster assistance is a heterogeneous good (ibid: 221). Differences in tastes and preferences, stemming from religious beliefs or other sources, also support the argument that disaster assistance is a heterogeneous good. In both cases, local actors with local knowledge are better equipped to understand the particular needs on the ground. And, the authors note that *private* actors may be more effective at understanding these local conditions (ibid: 224).

¹ Kashrut is the body of Jewish law which outlines what foods can be eaten and how they must be prepared.

² For the purposes of our research, we do not go into great detail on the particular traditions that require what we refer to as product differentiation. Rather, we seek to illustrate the number and diversity of goods and services that are provided through private efforts.

Similarly, Chamlee-Wright and Storr (2009) illustrate how private actors address the collective action problem following disaster and at the same time offer essential goods and services. If the scale of the disaster is large, for example entire neighborhood blocks destroyed, community members may confront a collective action problem. A resident does not wish to be confronted with the prospect of returning and rebuilding if her neighbors and family and friends do not also return and rebuild. In such a scenario, the rational move for a displaced individual may be to “wait and see” what others do. Private actors, including religious leaders, can provide a credible signal that recovery will take place and offer the goods and services which aid in recovery and add to the general benefits of living in the community. In the Mary Queen of Vietnam community in New Orleans, Father Vien and other church leaders provided an array of club goods, such as (a) Vietnamese language religious services, (b) Vietnamese language training, (c) weekend markets for selling Vietnamese produce and arts and crafts, (d) space where members of the community could socialize, meeting spaces for religious and non-religious Vietnamese groups, (e) an organizational structure that facilitated social coordination, (f) community leadership that served as a focal point for community action, and (g) ethnically appropriate charitable aid (ibid: 440). The authors illustrate the array of goods and services that are offered through private efforts and how they were utilized for return and recovery after Hurricane Katrina.

Within the post-disaster literature around self-governance, scholars have also discussed the role of social capital. In fact, a growing literature connects levels of social capital to the ability to access both formal (e.g. FEMA) and informal (e.g. local church) disaster assistance (Bolin and Stafford 1998; Beggs et al. 1996; Nakagawa and Shaw 2004; Aldrich 2011).

Importantly, Storr and Haeffele-Balch (2012) have shown that heterogeneous, loosely-knit communities find ways to make use of linking social capital in order to access resources necessary for recovery. Further, Chamlee-Wright and Storr (2009, 2010) have illustrated how social capital in the form of collective narratives and community based organizations were important to community recovery in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina.

And, within the literature on the private provision of disaster assistance, surprisingly little has been written on commercial businesses (as private actors) and the disaster assistance that they provide. Horwitz (2009a, 2009b) and Smith and Sutter (2013) are two noteworthy exceptions. Horwitz provides a detailed analysis of how Walmart and Home Depot were able to meet the needs of disaster-stricken communities in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina.³ Following a tornado in Joplin, Missouri, Smith and Sutter (2013) found that Walmart was again a valuable resource in disaster recovery. The authors note that the manager of Walmart (one Joplin Walmart was destroyed by the tornado), was given the discretion to stock non-traditional items needed in the community, such as mattresses, appliances, and even wood. Finally, Grube and Storr (under review) show that commercial entrepreneurs not only (a) provide needed goods and services, but also serve as (b) focal points for recovery, (c) offer social spaces for community members to reconstitute social networks, and in some cases, (d) become social entrepreneurs.

³ Interestingly, Horwitz also points out that the Coast Guard was remarkably effective following Hurricane Katrina (2009a). Horwitz provides a few explanations of why this is the case, including that the Coast Guard has a more precise mission- search and rescue (compared to FEMA, for example), the Coast Guard is decentralized and therefore can rely on local knowledge, and the Coast Guard is somewhat immune from political pressures.

Our research pulls together these two literatures to investigate private efforts within a polycentric order in the post-disaster context. We examine one Orthodox Jewish community on the Rockaway Peninsula in New York. Some of the goods and services provided include social services (money, food assistance and other services), community centers, private schools, an ambulance service, and a civilian patrol. Strictly speaking, many of these are not “public goods,” still they are goods which have typically been provided by municipal governments and paid for through tax revenues. These goods and services operate during mundane times, and were leveraged as part of the Hurricane Sandy disaster response and recovery.

3. Research methodology

Much of the empirical evidence for our research comes from in-depth qualitative interviews conducted in July and August 2013 and July 2014 in New York (focusing on the Far Rockaway community). The interviews are part of a larger research program, originally the Gulf Coast Recovery Project, which aims to understand how individuals and communities recover following natural disaster. The research is funded by the Mercatus Center at George Mason University and is conducted by Mercatus Center scholars and researchers. In the interviews, subjects were asked what their community was like prior to Hurricane Sandy, their personal storm story, what resources they relied on following the storm, and what helped and what hindered recovery efforts.

Far Rockaway was selected because the community sustained considerable damage, and statistics on the area indicate that the community reflects general averages for New York City.⁴ Interviews were conducted one year following the storm and two years following the storm. Many of the July 2014 interviews were follow-up interviews conducted with the same community members. The second look allowed interviewers to gauge community recovery over time. In total, sixteen interviews were conducted, averaging over an hour in length.

Secondary sources are referenced throughout and include historical accounts of the Rockaway Peninsula, newspapers and magazine articles about Hurricane Sandy recovery, and other sources.

4. The private in Ostroms' polycentricity: Empirical evidence from one Orthodox Jewish community

4.1 Before the storm

The Rockaway Peninsula in New York has a unique history. Before WWII, the area was a major recreation site for those who lived in New York City. During the summer months, millions would flock to the Peninsula to swim in the ocean, enjoy the beaches, walk on the boardwalks, and even visit amusement parks. As Kaplan and Kaplan note (2003), Robert Moses declared that Rockaway Beach was "the city's favorite shore resort." During this time, there was a small population that lived on the peninsula year round. The residents were middle to lower middle class and white, including many Irish and Jewish residents. After WWII, the Peninsula began to

⁴ Census data indicates that New York City (according to 2008-2012 averages) has a high school graduation rate of 79%, median household income of \$51,865, and a poverty rate of 20%. Data available online at <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/36/3651000.html>

take on a different identity. With the return of war veterans and a booming economy, housing in the city grew increasingly scarce. City officials looked to places to relocate poor minorities and selected the Rockaway Peninsula as a suitable location. Public housing developments were constructed in the Rockaway Peninsula. The peninsula contained .05 percent of the total population of Queens but contained over 50 percent of the housing projects (ibid: 3). Public services were poor and in shortage. Crime statistics soared, as did unemployment, infant mortality, and high school drop outs.

According to the 2010 Census, the high school graduation rate for the Peninsula is approximately 78 percent. Average household income is \$49,498 and the poverty rate is 20.8 percent.⁵ The Rockaway Peninsula (including Far Rockaway) resides in the Borough of Queens (estimated population 2.3 million). The City government is responsible for many of the goods and services including the public schools, water and sanitation, police, social services, libraries, and recreational facilities. In addition to the City government, the Borough has a President, who represents Queens on various committees, including the committee which approves the City budget. Queens also has 14 community boards. The community boards consist of fifty volunteers who act as advisors to the City and aid in delivery of municipal services and other tasks.

Despite the various challenges confronting communities on the peninsula, residents have engaged in collective action to improve their respective communities. In Far Rockaway, Kaplan and Kaplan write, "Orthodox Jews, who set up separate schools and religious

⁵ From 2010 Census data for zip codes 11691, 11697, and 11694. Available online at http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml

institutions, established a rapidly growing, tightly knit enclave... Some members of minority groups became politically active and demanded decent public schools and other services for themselves and their families" (ibid: 4).⁶ Indeed, prior to Hurricane Sandy, the Orthodox Jewish community was thriving in the Rockaway Peninsula. Private actors within the community provide a diversity of goods and services, including social services (money, food assistance and other services), community centers, private schools, an ambulance service, and a civilian patrol. As we show, these private goods and services are provided because community members (a) perceive an excess demand for certain goods and services and/or (b) require some sort of product differentiation. Together, the diversity of goods and services contribute to the larger polycentric order.

We focus on two of the privately provided goods and services: social services (generally) and the civilian patrol (Rockaway Citizen Safety Patrol). This does not mean that the other privately provided goods and services are not important. In fact, the community centers in the Orthodox Jewish community are in many cases also synagogues – the most important building within an Orthodox community. For example, Young Israel of Wavecrest and Bayswater offers religious services, day camps for children, meals for elderly community members (through a grant from the New York City Department of the Aging) and a driving class (run through the AARP). In terms of schools, there are various k-12 private schools, including Yeshiva Darchei Torah, which educates over 1,400 students. And, the ambulance service, Hatzalah, is also an

⁶ It is unclear how many people identify as Jewish in Far Rockaway. Some estimates are one-fifth of the population, or approximately 10,000 (see article, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/27/realestate/27livi.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0)

important volunteer-run service that operates in Far Rockaway, with other volunteer ambulance services using the same name in other parts of the country and world.

Social services

The Orthodox Jewish community of Far Rockaway offers additional social services to the community (both Jewish and non-Jewish) and helps individuals apply for government assistance. Two of the larger organizations that contribute to social services are the Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty (“Met Council”), which serves individuals throughout New York City, and the Jewish Community Council of the Rockaway Peninsula (JCCRP). The Met Council serves tens of thousands of families annually, including approximately fifteen thousand families monthly who receive kosher food from Met Council’s food pantries. Met Council’s annual revenue is over \$120 million, with government grants contributing a substantial portion.⁷ The JCCRP is a smaller organization and operates only in the Rockaway Peninsula, although there are other Jewish Community Centers (JCCs) throughout New York and the country.⁸ In addition to the Met Council and JCCRP, there are dozens of other organizations that offer similar social services. Local synagogues have funds available to help families that are in need. Further, *Achiezer* (in Hebrew means “helping a brother”) is an organization founded to assist individuals and families during crisis.

⁷ See the annual financial report, available online at http://www.metcouncil.org/site/DocServer/Consol_Met_Council_Financials_6-30-09_corrected.pdf?docID=1821

⁸ See the financial report (990) available online at <http://www.jccrp.org/about-us/financials/>

Executive Director of the JCCRP, Nathan Krasnovsky, explains that the Met Council is like the parent organization and the various JCCs are the children organizations.⁹ The JCCRP helps residents to navigate government social services, including SNAP benefits and Medicaid. They also offer their own assistance for career counseling, financial counseling, and offer a kosher food pantry. The kosher food pantry is one example of how various communities require a differentiated product- because of their religious beliefs, the Jewish community requires kosher food products only.

At the JCCRP, Krasnovsky and colleagues have taken a special interest in providing services around employment opportunities. Krasnovsky has created a database with client information and information about potential employers. Based on his repeated interactions with clients and knowledge about their skills, past work experience, and interests, he can connect the client with the most appropriate potential employer. Krasnovsky explains, “I don’t like to just put on a little band-aid onto people. [My vision] was bringing them back to the path of self-sufficiency, so without a job, without proper career counseling, [it’s] very hard to do that.”

Rabbi Mordechai Kruger provides career counseling at the JCCRP. In addition, Rabbi Kruger is a member of the Agudas Yisroel synagogue and operates a small community fund for residents who fall on difficult times. Rabbi Kruger lives in Bayswater, a northern community of Far Rockaway, and estimates that there are 400 Jewish families in Bayswater. He also explains that 70 families – approximately 18 percent – receive food assistance through private Jewish organizations. Many of these families do not qualify for government programs (e.g. SNAP benefits), but need extra help because kosher foods tend to be more expensive. Further, it is not

⁹ Krasnovsky also worked for the Met Council before joining the JCCRP.

unusual for families to have six, eight, or even ten children. Rabbi Kruger's personal connections and knowledge of the community allow him to be effective in providing assistance to others.

Although many of the employees at the JCCRP are Jewish and it is a Jewish organization, Krasnovsky says that between 60-70 percent of clients are not Jewish. Further, there are other organizations that operate out of the JCCRP. For example, Catholic Charities has a caseworker at their office in the Rockaway Peninsula.

Achiezer is another organization that contributes social services for the community, including helping to navigate medical crises, assistance with health insurance, mental health services, legal assistance, and financial counseling. Achiezer was founded by Rabbi Boruch Bender in 2009 after his family experienced a medical crisis. Rabbi Bender recognized that his own struggle was something that individuals in the community experienced every day. Between navigating medical decisions, understanding the insurance bills, and ensuring that Orthodox Jewish laws were respected, Rabbi Bender explains, it is overwhelming. He imagined an organization that would serve as a "one stop shop" for all kinds of challenges that individuals confront on a day to day basis. There is one phone number and many available services. Today, Achiezer receives approximately five hundred phone calls per week. The organization has thirteen staff members and one hundred and fifty volunteers.

One reason that Achiezer is so effective is that it has the endorsement of sixty-two rabbis in the area. Each synagogue has at least one rabbi that is the religious leader to the members of the synagogue. The rabbi is consulted for spiritual counsel, but also is a servant for the various needs of members. Rabbi Bender explains that Achiezer is "a rabbi's best friend," meaning that

the organization is able to handle some of the challenges that rabbis often are confronted with. And, because the organization specializes in social services, they have knowledge of a wide range of resources.

Rockaway Civilian Safety Patrol

Organized in November 2011 by Laizer Shtundel, the Rockaway Citizen Safety Patrol (RCSP) is a volunteer group dedicated to ensuring the safety of community members in Far Rockaway, including the neighborhood of Bayswater. Primarily a Jewish organization, the RCSP has approximately 95 member volunteers. Shtundel estimates that eighty percent of volunteers are Jewish and twenty percent are not Jewish.

Although the 101st Precinct serves Far Rockaway, community members wanted additional protection against crime. A review of RCSP reports of incidents shows that much of the activity is petty crime: home burglaries, car break-ins, and graffiti. Founder, Shtundel, explains that his car was broken into at the beginning of November 2011. He took the car into the shop to be repaired. A few weeks later his car was broken into again. At that point Shtundel started to talk to friends and neighbors about starting a patrol.

In fact, community volunteer patrols exist throughout New York City. Within the extended Jewish community specifically, there are shomrin (Hebrew for “guard”) groups which are Jewish civilian patrols that are organized to address burglary, vandalism, muggings, assault, and other crime in their local community. Unlike shomrim groups, the RCSP is a multi-ethnic organization and has been since 2011.

The RCSP and shomrim groups keep eyes and ears on the street. If a patrol member suspects foul play, they call the police. Patrol members can also monitor the changing location of a suspect and then communicate updated information to police. As Shtundel explains, “One of the benefits of having a citizen’s patrol is that we know our neighbors and we know what is out of the ordinary. If I see a stranger in a car that I know belongs to my neighbor, I do not have to think twice about calling the police.”¹⁰

The RCSP has two components. The first is the night patrol. The patrol is staffed by volunteers who commit to three-hour blocks. The patrol volunteers receive a radio and flashlight, and either patrol on foot or in a car. The second component is the twenty-four hour hotline that community members can call to report any suspicious behavior.

In order to get participation from the non-Jewish community, early RCSP volunteers attended a variety of civic associations and community council meetings. The RCSP also has strong ties to the local 101st Precinct.

4.2 Following Hurricane Sandy

Hurricane Sandy made landfall on October 29, 2012. In Far Rockaway, the storm brought high winds of eighty miles per hour and rain that in turn caused five to six feet of flooding. The community was without power for two weeks following the storm during a time when temperatures began to dip below freezing. Many families experienced flooding, had damage to their home, and lost appliances and other personal items. The Rockaway Peninsula

¹⁰ See http://www.rockawave.com/news/2013-11-29/Community/Rockaway_Citizens_Safety_Patrol_Reports.html

is geographically isolated. Although Far Rockaway is closer to the City, public transport was disrupted and gasoline shortages made transportation via car difficult. Because of the way that the Orthodox Jewish community is organized, however, a decentralized system of sub-communities and synagogues were already in place.

Rabbi Kruger of Agudas Yisroel, for example, helped to create a spreadsheet with names and contact information for those in Bayswater who were affected by the storm. According to Rabbi Kruger, one hundred and fifteen families had significant damage. He then started to gather information about what each individual and family needed. Rabbi Kruger explains,

“...we surveyed the families and created a very, very granular database. We knew how many twin beds, double beds, bunk beds, baby strollers [were needed], real basic stuff that a family’s got to have...”

There were many individuals who came forward and said that they wanted to help, and it was useful to be able to identify specific items that were needed. This also minimized waste, or the number of goods that were purchased but were not needed.

Nathan Krasnovsky of the JCCRP was also busy. Following Hurricane Sandy, a variety of government agencies used the JCCRP to deliver assistance to disaster victims. Krasnovsky lists the various groups that had a presence at the JCCRP: The United Jewish Appeal Federation (UJA), the American Red Cross, Neighborhood Housing Services, Catholic Charities, Met Council disaster case management, and the New York Legal Assistance Group. In addition to providing an immediate response for community members, the JCCRP was able to provide the resources to help Sandy victims navigate private insurance claims, FEMA applications, and other assistance programs. The storm also left more community members eligible for other non-disaster assistance programs, and the JCCRP was there to help them navigate the process.

Achiezer was another natural leader in post-disaster coordination and assistance. Even before the storm hit, Rabbi Bender called together leadership from various community organizations to discuss the plan for ensuring that everyone was safe during and after the hurricane. Some of these organizations were the JCCRP, the RCSP, synagogues in the area, OHEL (mental health counseling), Hatzalah ambulance service, and area offices of emergency management. The organizations promised to help each other depending on what sort of challenges arose.

Hurricane Sandy left the Achiezer offices without power. Rabbi Bender opened up his dining room as the headquarters for the organization. They had seventeen phone lines operating and took calls twenty-four hours a day in the days following the storm. In addition to receiving phone calls, Achiezer had an email list that they used to contact individuals in the community. The email list had nine thousand addresses, and Rabbi Bender sent messages with information about where assistance was available and other updates.

The RCSP also expanded their role in the community in the days before and after Sandy. Prior to Sandy, the volunteers helped to evacuate sick and elderly individuals in the community. Following the storm, the RCSP set up station at the Young Israel of Wavecrest and Bayswater to assist with community needs. RCSP volunteers helped to distribute hot food prepared in the kitchen. Many volunteers helped community members pump water out of basements and first story living quarters.

For two weeks after the storm, RCSP had volunteers out on the streets 24/7 – extending patrol hours to daytime hours in addition to nighttime hours. Many parts of the Rockaway

Peninsula were without electricity during this time. Unfortunately, some took advantage of the added cover and engaged in looting. In Far Rockaway, however, there were no such issues.

In the days following the storm, it became clear that everyone had underestimated Hurricane Sandy. Achiezer and the Davis Memorial Fund joined together to raise funds for the Community Assistance Fund (CAF). Donations flowed in from all over the City, the country, and the world. With the help of the CAF, community members were able to get money for immediate use and funds for home repairs. The assistance program was organized into three phases. The first phase provided emergency cash assistance from \$2,000-3,000 per household for items such as food, blankets, and generators. The second phase, called the coming home project, distributed \$10,000 per household and was intended to help clean up and repair homes so that families could return. The third phase was reserved for families with significant losses.

Rabbis at local synagogues were asked to help identify community members who needed assistance. Individuals and families filled out an application for the assistance. Trustees were appointed to approve the distribution of funds and ensure that the money was used as it was intended. In total \$11.3 million were raised and distributed to over 1,000 families.

Other organizations that play an important role in the community during mundane times also contributed. Young Israel of Wavecrest and Bayswater opened its doors and provided food, shelter, and clothing to those in the area. The kitchen was run and food prepared by local women in the community. Rabbi Kruger describes how residents of Williamsburg organized truckloads of kosher food to be distributed to Bayswater, and that the trust of leaders at Young Israel was the reason that community members came to the building for assistance. Another major hub for goods and services was the Sh'or Yeshuv Institute in

Lawrence. Similarly, the Institute had food, clothing, and other household items for those who had been affected by Sandy, and even had a doctor on site.

The Orthodox Jewish community in Far Rockaway recovered quickly from Hurricane Sandy and relied heavily on private assistance. FEMA received criticism for a slow response, especially to places like the Rockaway Peninsula.

5. Discussion and conclusion

There are a few implications of our research on the private provision of goods and services. First, our research sheds further light on how private organizations are able to cater to local populations. Two advantages of these private organizations are that they (a) have access to local knowledge and (b) flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances.

A second, closely related implication, is the need to acknowledge these advantages *and* ensure that disaster relief – including FEMA efforts – recognizes what is already happening on the ground and seeks to work with local organizations. FEMA policies should make every effort to work with local organizations to provide and deliver disaster assistance.

Third, we present evidence that private efforts can provide goods and services that are typically considered the responsibility of government. Some of these examples include social services, schools, and disaster aid. For the purposes of our research, we do not discuss at length which of these goods fall under a strict definition of a public good, and we do not explore rationale for why government provision is the status quo. Our research does potentially point to future projects that explore these types of questions.

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Appendix A.

Tables are from Ostrom and Ostrom (2002).

Table 1. Options for Obtaining Public Services

1. Operating its own production unit	A city with its own fire or police department
2. Contracting with a private firm	A city that contracts with a private firm for snow removal, street repair, or traffic light maintenance
3. Establishing standards of service and leaving it up to each consumer to select a private vendor and purchase service	A city that licenses taxis to provide service, refuse collection firms to remove trash
4. Issuing vouchers to families and permitting them to purchase service from any authorized supplier	A jurisdiction that issues food stamps, rent vouchers, or education vouchers, or operates a Medicaid program
5. Contracting with another government unit	A city which purchases tax assessment and collection services from a county government unit, sewage treatment from a special sanitary district, and special vocational education services from a school board in an adjacent city
6. Producing some services with its own unit, and purchasing other services from other jurisdictions and from private firms	A city with its own police patrol force that purchases laboratory services from the county sheriff, joins with several adjacent communities to pay for a joint dispatching service, and pays a private ambulance firm to provide emergency medical transportation

Table 2. Private Goods versus Public Goods

Private Goods	Public Goods
Relatively easy to measure quantity and quality	Relatively difficult to measure quantity and quality
Can be consumed by only a single person	Consumed jointly and simultaneously by many people
Easy to exclude someone who doesn't pay	Difficult to exclude someone who doesn't pay
Individual generally has a choice of consuming or not	Individual generally has no choice as to consuming or not
Individual generally has a choice as to kind and quality of goods	Individual generally has little or no choice as to kind and quality of goods

Payment for goods is closely related to demand and consumption	Payment for goods is not closely related to demand or consumption
Allocation decisions are made primarily by market mechanism	Allocation decisions are made primarily by political process