

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Rethinking trust within emergency collaboration: The significance of negative affects

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Abstract

Strong emergency collaboration is commonly assumed to involve a joyful passage to trust and confidence. Organizations are said to collaborate when fear and suspicion are overcome. Thus, negative, or sad, affects—such as anger, fear, disdain, despair, frustration—appear opposed to emergency collaboration. In this hybrid theoretical-empirical paper we challenge these assumptions by elaborating the affect theories of the philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Baruch Spinoza with ethnographic research on emergency collaboration undertaken before and during the UK emergency response to COVID-19. Moving beyond considerations of sad affects as either undermining collaboration, or as moderators of excessive trust, we explore how a range of sad affects are both prevalent and potentially beneficial within trustful emergency collaboration. Rather than celebrate such affects, our analysis contributes by drawing attention to the overlooked role of vacillations of affect between joy and sadness within emergency collaboration. In so doing our findings decentre but do not disregard the role of trustful confidence within theories and practitioner prescriptions of emergency collaboration.

KEYWORDS

affect, COVID-19, emergency collaboration, philosophy, trust

1 | PRELUDE

In a conference room in an English fire station on October 18, 2016, a group of local emergency practitioners participated in the secretive pandemic preparedness Exercise Cygnus. As the exercise progressed a health executive angrily remarked ‘the problem is the system can’t cope at present... [we]... need to communicate that to COBRA [Cabinet Office Briefing Room A]’. A police commander then exclaimed ‘COBRA advice was disappointing – if [this was] real life, we need stronger guidance’. Four years later, during the COVID-19 pandemic, these comments would appear tragically prescient as local emergency practitioners described to us in interviews that their

interactions with central government were ‘dreadful’, ‘almost meaningless’ and ‘frustrating’. Such sentiments are hardly surprising when, as one police force chief explained, ‘one of the lockdown changes in our city was announced by the health secretary tweeting it. I mean, God, you know, how do you respond to that?’.

2 | INTRODUCTION

In this paper, we explore such sad affects across such emergency organizing to rethink their role within emergency collaboration. We reject the temptation to dismiss these feelings as symbols of

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dysfunctional government (Ang, 2021; Briggs et al., 2020; Jones & Hameiri, 2021). Instead, we explore not what these sad affects *mean* but what they *do* within processes of emergency collaboration. We are motivated to explore sad affects because within much scholarship on emergency collaboration only joyful positive affects, especially confidence, are associated with strong collaboration (Chen et al., 2008; Curnin et al., 2015; Gimenez et al., 2017; Kapucu, 2006, 2010). And yet, as the instances above suggest, sad affects often pervade emergency organizing, generating opportunities as well as challenges for how emergency practitioners can collaborate together and foster trust. That is, if trust is defined as shared belief in the competence and benevolence of others (Stevens et al., 2015; Sydow, 2002), then the anger and frustration in the instances above before and during the UK's COVID-19 response evidence both a lack of trust but also significant, albeit possibly missed, opportunities to cultivate trust. In other words, the path to emergency collaboration and trust seems to necessarily encompass both joyful and sad affects. Thus, our aim in this paper is to explore and challenge the academic and practical assumption that sad affects, such as anger or frustration, are the antithesis of emergency collaboration and trust.

Theoretically, we draw on the philosophical writings on affect of two European philosophers: Gilles Deleuze (1925–1995) and Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677). Here affect is not understood as a psychological change in mental states responding to stimuli (Scherer, 2000; Tomkins, 1962) but as changes in capacities of human and nonhuman bodies to 'affect and be affected' as they encounter each other (Deleuze, 1988, 1992, 2021; Spinoza, 1996). These theories have already been engaged to explore the politics of security around emergencies (e.g., Anderson, 2015; Kaufmann, 2016). However, their potential to inform understandings of emergency collaboration remains overlooked. Unlike psychological theories of affect where optimal mental health, and by extension social order, concerns maximizing positive affects and minimizing negative affects (Tomkins, 1962, p. 21), these theories open up novel possibilities to theorize the complex way sad affects can play both beneficial and detrimental roles within emergency collaboration and trust. We elaborate these theoretical possibilities by analysing the philosophy of Spinoza and Deleuze and then by empirically elaborating these theories with an ethnographic study of UK emergency organizing before and during COVID-19. To be clear, the aim of including this ethnographic data set is not to generalize the applicability of this novel theory of affects to other cases of emergency organizing. Rather, it serves here to allow us to elaborate an empirically credible theory of the diverse role of affects in emergency organizing that may be generalized to other contexts with future wider-scale (e.g., quantitative) studies. This alternative theory offers significant potential because it challenges the traditional view that prevails across emergency organizing research and practice wherein collaboration is exclusively to be grounded on a movement to confident trust.

This paper is organized around five sections. First, we explore how and why sad affects are mostly opposed to collaboration and trust within existing literatures on collaboration and emergency collaboration and the limitations of these approaches. This section

also defines how to conceptualize the relationship between trust and collaboration. Second, we briefly summarize the philosophical writings of Deleuze and Spinoza on affects to rethink the role of sad affects within emergency collaboration. Within this section, we also explain our theorization of affect within a conceptual framework alongside collaboration and trust. Third, we introduce our ethnographic research study of UK emergency organizing before and during COVID-19 and our methodology to draw on this study to theoretically elaborate the role of such affects within emergency organizing. Fourth, we discuss our empirical study to explore the role of sad affects within emergency collaboration. Finally, by way of conclusion, we explain the contribution of this theorization to research on emergency collaboration.

3 | EMERGENCY COLLABORATION, AFFECT AND TRUST

Collaboration can be defined as the sharing of resources and decision-making between individuals and organizations (Kapucu, 2010; Roud, 2021). Within emergency organizing, collaboration is often critical to successful outcomes. Reviews of large-scale emergency responses, including terrorist attacks (9/11 Commission, 2004) and floods (Pitt, 2008), have consistently drawn attention to deficits of collaboration between agencies to explain weaker than anticipated outcomes. Research on emergency organizing has thus sought to explain and encourage stronger forms of collaboration (Brown et al., 2021; Gimenez et al., 2017; Jung et al., 2018; Kapucu & Moynihan, 2021). While some of this work has focussed on the role of information communication technologies (Dorasamy et al., 2017), organizational structures and governance (Boersma et al., 2020) and governmental policies (Koch et al., 2017), the role of affects and emotions—particularly trust and confidence—has been a key focus.

Research on trust in emergency organizing explains it as a key antecedent to the effective and efficient sharing of resources and decision-making within an emergency (Curnin et al. 2015; Kapucu, 2006; Roud & Gausdal, 2019; Roud, 2021). Despite conceptual distinctions between cognitive/affective and individual/institutional trust (Roud & Gausdal, 2019), trust can be understood as an increase in confidence in the benevolence and competence of other organizations and/or individuals therein (see e.g., Bengtsson & Brommesson, 2022, p. 483; Chen et al., 2008, p. 71; Curnin et al., 2015, p. 30; Gimenez et al., 2017, p. 169; Roud, 2021, p. 135; for overviews see Stevens et al., 2015; Sydow, 2002). Consequently, positive, or joyful, affects, namely confidence in individuals and organizations, are widely regarded as pivotal to evidence and enable strong and successful emergency collaboration. Thus, as Curnin et al. (2015) explain, importance is placed by intellectuals and practitioners alike on 'confidence-building activities that contribute to the development and maintenance of trust' (p. 30). Various activities and mechanisms have thus been proposed to increase confident trust, including: joint emergency training and exercising (Kapucu, 2010; Roud & Gausdal, 2019); increased face-to-face interactions

(Gimenez et al., 2017); leadership (Uhr, 2017) and role clarity (Curnin et al. 2015).

Notwithstanding the theoretical claims and evidence within studies explaining confident trust as *the* driver of strong emergency collaboration and outcomes, there remains a sizeable body of evidence that actual emergency responses continue to experience significant distrust, weak collaboration, and the promulgation of sad affects such as frustration, fear, and anger (House of Commons, 2021; Kerslake, 2018). It might be argued this situation merely evidence a 'knowing-doing gap' (Prefer & Sutton, 2000). However, over recent years many of the 'confidence building' techniques proposed by academics have been integrated into emergency response infrastructures. For example, for over a decade, UK Cabinet Office civil emergency guidance has emphasized the importance of role clarity, face-to-face meetings, and joint exercising and training (Cabinet Office, 2013c). Moreover, before COVID-19 the UK was ranked first in the world for being prepared for 'rapid response to a mitigation of the spread of an epidemic' by the Global Health Security Index (GHS, 2019), yet the UK experienced repeated examples of distrust and poor collaboration during COVID-19, as well as relatively poor health outcomes (House of Commons, 2021). The salient question is if we are to continue to assume weak trust leads to poor emergency collaboration and outcomes, as is repeatedly suggested by public enquiries into emergency responses and academic studies, then why does trust remain weak before and during emergencies?

Our thesis in this paper is that part of the problem is the way trust, and by extension collaboration, is frequently equated by academics and practitioners alike with exclusively positive, or joyful, affects—namely confidence. This conceptual orientation obscures the role of negative sad affects within processes of trust and emergency collaboration, while also overemphasizing the presence and significance of positive joyful affects. This leads to a perilous situation in emergency organizing wherein any challenges to confidence, any sad/negative affects, are automatically dismissed as evidence of distrust and weak collaboration rather than considered an inevitable and beneficial part of the process of confident trust formation and collaboration. Indeed, there is a growing body of evidence that casts doubt on the equation of trust and strong collaboration with purely joyful affects. This research does not depart from the prevailing conceptualization of trust as confidence in the benevolence and competence of other individuals and organizations (Stevens et al., 2015; Sydow, 2002) but it does not assume that such confidence can be achieved simply through activities and mechanisms that increase positive joyful affects. In short, confidence may not breed confidence. This is because, as these studies explain, maximizing positive affects, such as confidence, can also lead to negative collaboration outcomes between individuals as it can increase vulnerability to opportunism, burdensome obligations, escalating commitment to failing actions and cognitive lock-in (Jarvenpaa & Majchrzak, 2016; Roud, 2021; Stevens et al., 2015). This body of research opens up the possibility that sad affects, such as fear, suspicion, and doubt, may be beneficial in moderating excessive trust and thus enabling strong collaboration (Jarvenpaa & Majchrzak, 2016; Stevens et al., 2015). In

other words, these theories of excessive trust temper the emphasis on joyful affects in general, and confident trust in particular, as the only beneficial affect within emergency collaboration.

Although we share the general sentiment of these critiques of traditional approaches to collaboration, trust, and positive affects, we contend that in at least four respects this research on excessive trust offers only a rather limited role for sad negative affects within collaboration. First, although it acknowledges how benevolent distrust and sad affects, such as doubt, may moderate excessive trust (Stevens et al., 2015), such affects cannot themselves trigger and sustain collaboration. Second, reflecting the prevailing centring of emergency collaboration research on trust, these studies primarily focus on the role of distrustful sad affects, such as fear and suspicion, overlooking other sad affects such as despair, disdain, frustration, and anger. Third, owing to its psychological conceptualization of affect and emotion (Jarvenpaa & Majchrzak, 2016), this scholarship focuses exclusively on human actors as circulating affects, ignoring the significant role nonhuman bodies, such as information systems or reports, can play in mediating affects (see e.g., Baxter, 2021; Michels & Steyaert, 2017). Fourth, research on excessive trust has not yet explored the role of sad affects in shaping how practices of collaboration are organized and reorganized over time. Responding to these four limitations in nascent theorizations of the role of sad affects in collaboration, we introduce the affect theories of Deleuze and Spinoza to develop a novel understanding of the role of such sad affects in how we can conceptualize emergency collaboration.

4 | THEORIZING AFFECT AND COLLABORATION

Deleuze's (1988, 1992, 2021) readings of affect within Spinoza's treatise *Ethics* (Spinoza, 1996) have become increasingly influential within management and organizational studies (e.g., Gherardi, 2018; Kantola et al., 2019; Pullen et al., 2017; Waters-Lynch & Duff, 2021). These theories differ from psychological understandings of affect and emotion by acknowledging a more complex, and much less unambiguously detrimental, role for sad affects within human experience and social organization. They are thus a particularly useful starting point to build and elaborate a theory of negative sad affects within emergency collaboration. Moreover, unlike psychological theories, these approaches also explain how affects are produced relationally across assemblages of human and nonhuman bodies. This is particularly important to explore the role of affects in emergency collaboration where nonhuman bodies, from response plans to information systems, play a significant role (Adey & Anderson, 2011; Anderson, 2015; Sage et al., 2021). Despite their potential, these affect theories can appear difficult to grasp because they are orientated towards philosophical abstraction rather than empirical tangibility. By drawing on everyday examples we will seek to empirically ground these theories before drawing them into a conceptual framework alongside the concepts of collaboration and trust discussed in the previous section. This conceptual framework

will then be elaborated further with our ethnographic study of UK emergency organizing before and during COVID-19.

At the start of this paper, we minimally defined affect with Deleuze and Spinoza as changes in capacities of human and nonhuman bodies to 'affect and be affected' as they encounter each other (Deleuze, 1988, 1992, 2021; Spinoza, 1996). This idea stems from an assumption that all tangible and imagined bodies, from stones to stars to human beings or even ideas, contain forces, called 'powers of acting', that sustain their existence and that these forces operate within specific thresholds and capacities for affecting and being affected as they encounter other bodies. Encounters between bodies can take two forms. Some encounters increase our powers of acting, and help us sustain our existence, such as getting lost in a new city and encountering a stranger who offers directions. Such encounters are understood to constitute 'joyful' affects. Conversely, other encounters decrease our powers of acting, and may threaten our existence, such as encountering a heavy fog when we are lost. These encounters constitute 'sad' affects (Deleuze, 2021; Spinoza, 1996). Affect is thus a continuously modulating 'capacity for affecting and being affected' (Deleuze, 1988, p. 123; Spinoza, 1996, p. 159) that occurs as our powers of acting resonate either positively or negatively within encounters with human and nonhuman bodies.

At first glance, Deleuze's reading of Spinoza seems to support notions that collaboration is constituted solely by joyful affects (Deleuze, 1988, 1992, 2021). This is because joyful affects occur when bodies encounter each other and resonate positively with each other's striving to persevere (Deleuze, 2021) rather than act to avoid or destroy that encounter. Moreover, in humans this joy is also said to foster knowledge of 'what is common to some external body and our own' (Deleuze, 1992, p. 283). This knowledge is what Spinoza (1996, p. 55) terms a 'common notion'. Common notions produce further joy in the mind capable of understanding the cause of a joyful encounter, further augmenting bodily powers of acting (Deleuze, 1992, pp. 282–288). That is, by developing knowledge of the causes of joyful encounters, humans become capable of possessing and harnessing their powers of acting to purposefully seek and establish joyful encounters and avoid or destroy sad ones (Deleuze, 1992, pp. 280–288; Spinoza, 1996, p. 164). Consider again the everyday example above. If we encounter a stranger offering direction when we are lost, we may experience joy and reply by seeking to establish common knowledge of causes of this joy with the stranger, involving learning more about the city and the location of our hotel, further increasing joyful trust—our confidence in the benevolence and competence of the stranger and perhaps the city. Conversely, if we encounter a heavy fog when we are lost, we may miss the stranger entirely and remain lost for longer, decreasing our powers of acting.

Such everyday examples seem to reinforce the equation of collaboration with joyful trustful confidence. However, a deeper reading of the philosophical writings of Deleuze and Spinoza complicates notions that collaboration—the sharing of resources and/or decisions—always entails joyful affects such as trust and confidence. First, many experiences we have with affect are neither purely joyful nor sad but are mixed—constituting what Spinoza terms

'vacillations of the mind' (p. 80). This is when different parts of our body are affected by contrary joyful and sad affects. For example, we may experience sad joy when we exchange conversation with a stranger who provides us with directions to help us find our hotel: joy on finding our way again but also embarrassment at acknowledging being lost. Second, sad affects can also produce new capacities for encounters for being affected and affecting other bodies' joyfully. For example, the intense fear of being lost in a heavy fog can generate a deepened capacity to be affected by and affect joy at finding direction. Third, common notions can be more or less universal, encompassing joyful and sad affects (Deleuze, 1988, pp. 54–5). This occurs because some common notions are sufficiently universal to express the common causes of joy between bodies that may in other respects not agree at all with ours (Deleuze, 1988, p. 56). As an example, consider the joy of sharing a concern with personal safety and security with a stranger who helps us navigate safely back to our hotel while being annoyed by the political opinions that intersperse their conversation.

To further specify how Deleuzo–Spinozian affect theories can be related to concepts of emergency collaboration and trust, we have developed a conceptual framework (see Figure 1 below). This framework contains two pathways (labelled A and B) through which affective encounters between bodies generate trust and collaboration. The first pathway (A) indicates the typical way in which trust and collaboration is usually conceptualized (e.g., Curnin et al. 2015; Kapucu, 2006). In this process, two bodies (e.g., emergency responders) encounter each other, their powers of acting (or capacity to act) are spontaneously joyfully increased, local common notions of the causes of this increase are formed (e.g., face-to-face meetings), they purposefully seek and affirm these causes (e.g., increasing face-to-face meetings), experience confidence in their shared benevolence and competence, and then share resources and decision-making. The second pathway (B) indicates how sad/negative affects can play a productive role in trust and collaboration. In this process, two bodies encounter each other, their powers of acting either decrease with sadness or are simultaneously increased and decreased with mixed affects (e.g., embarrassed joy). In the first instance, this leads to an attempt by at least one of those of bodies to avoid or destroy this encounter, but this process can also generate new future capacities for being joyfully affected (e.g., joy at destroying the thing we hate). In the second instance of mixed affects, new immediate capacities for being joyfully affected are generated alongside future capacities for joy.

These joyful affects can then follow two pathways. Either they can rejoin the first pathway (A) towards trust and confidence, or, conversely, they can precipitate universal common notions of the causes of their joy (e.g., shared concern with protecting life) that combine joy in affirming encounters with some aspects of a body and avoiding others (e.g., supporting some aspects of a joint response while avoiding others), leading to moderated trust and the collaborative sharing of resources and decisions.

The affect theories of Deleuze and Spinoza contain much potential to help explore how sad affects, including mixed affects,

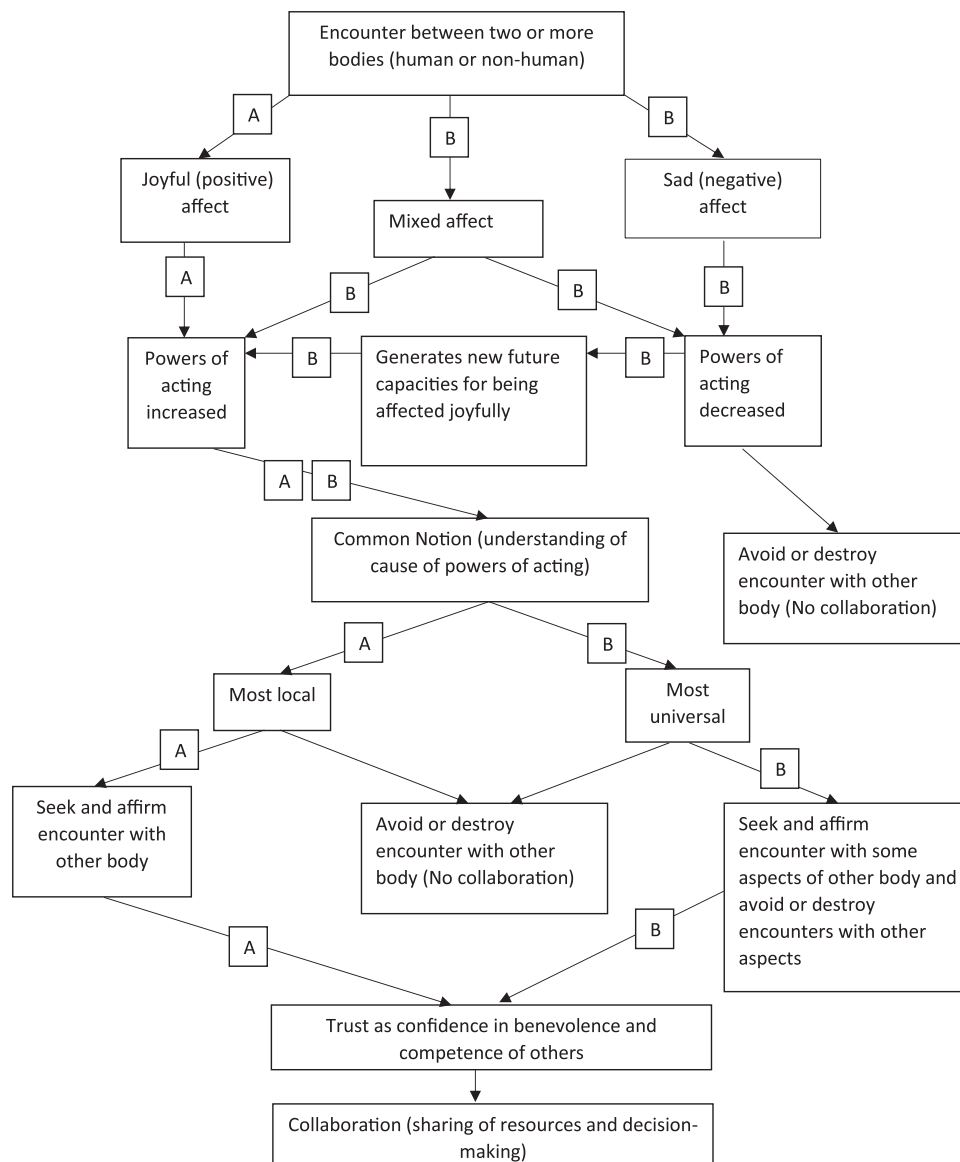


FIGURE 1 Deleuzo-Spinozian conceptual framework on the formation of trust and collaboration.

play a pivotal role in the generation of trust and collaboration within emergency collaboration. However, there is a lack of specification within these theories that limits their potential applicability to generate specific empirical insights into collaboration in emergency organizing. In the following sections, we identify and address these limitations with an ethnographic study of UK emergency organizing before and during the COVID-19 response.

5 | RESEARCH CONTEXT AND METHODOLOGY

Before introducing the specific context and details of our empirical study, we will explain our rationale for utilizing ethnographic research to elaborate Deleuzo-Spinozian affect theories of collaboration to address the limitations of these theories. Unlike quantitative and other

forms of qualitative studies (e.g., longitudinal interview-based studies), ethnographic research involves forming deep and sustained participation in the lived experiences of research participants through participant and nonparticipant observations (often combined with interviews and documentary analysis) (Morrill & Alan Fine, 1997). Consequently, ethnographic research yields richly detailed insights into social processes and subjective experiences but cannot be employed to statistically generalize these experiences and processes to a population (Pacewicz, 2022). Instead, ethnographic studies operate like naturalistic experiments that can be generalized to theoretical propositions (Silverman, 2022). These novel or elaborated theories may then be tested for their wider generalizability by subsequent quantitative or qualitative studies (Hammersley and Atkinson 2019).

Ethnographic accounts are particularly well-suited to building and elaborating social theories for four reasons. First, research cases can be selected and adapted to explore and challenge prevalent theoretical

problems and assumptions rather than randomly selected as in some statistical studies (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019). Second, ethnographic research can sensitise scholars to the detailed complexities of social processes within existing and new social phenomena (Silverman, 2022). Third, owing to the extent of sustained contact with participants, these accounts can be validated as credible or authentic by checks with research participants and users (Morrill & Alan Fine, 1997). Fourth, ethnographic accounts often include self-reflexive accounts that can capture the positionality of the researchers (e.g., gender, race, nationality, experience) and its influence on research analyses and findings. Taken together, these four elements do not only mitigate criticisms of the perceived lack of rigour, bias, and anecdotalism of ethnographic research but make a virtue of the ethnographic emphasis on lived experience, participation, and connectedness. Or, as Biehl (2013) puts it: 'as ethnographers we must attend to the ways that people's own struggles and visions of themselves and others create holes in dominant theories' (p. 592). This often means that ethnographers engage in a circular research process where there is continually interplay between an established set of theories, research design, and empirical materials (Wilson & Chaddha, 2009). In what follows we will explain how these ethnographic imperatives informed our own engagement with UK emergency organizing.

Ethnographic data collection took place in two phases, generating two cases of UK emergency organizing before and during the COVID-19 response. These cases were both selected to challenge theoretical assumptions around the organization of collaboration within emergency response. More specifically, the cases were chosen to elaborate the applicability of Deleuzo–Spinozian affect theories to emergency organizing. As our ethnographic study developed, we became increasingly interested in the prominence of sad affects in emergency organizing and started to develop a Deleuzo–Spinozian understanding of the role of these affects in processes of trust and collaboration (see Figure 1 above). However, there are at least four limitations to this conceptual framework that can be elaborated with our ethnographic data set. First, there is a need to understand what particular role specific affects (e.g., fear, doubt, anger) may play in trust and collaboration. Second, the concept of a common notion introduces the importance of ideas and knowledge about the causes of certain affects in the generation of trust and collaboration, yet this concept offers no specification of what particular knowledge or ideas might be important in the context of emergency collaboration. Third, this framework does not encompass the important question of whether sad or mixed affects can be intentionally organized (e.g., through particular organizational activities) to bring about forms of trust and collaboration or do such affects merely arise spontaneously? And fourth, and relatedly, does the intentional or spontaneous generation of sad or mixed affects influence what these affects can do? These four limitations can be summarized as related to the need for more specificity regarding the relations between specific affects, knowledge processes, intentionality, and collaborative outcomes.

To elaborate the limitations of our conceptual framework, we draw on a two-phase ethnographic study of UK emergency organizing. In phase one, the first two authors of this paper observed

five emergency response exercises across England between October 2016 and April 2018 where multiagency emergency response plans were tested and reviewed. To explore the dynamics of collaboration field notes were made during the exercises, exercise documentation and reports was reviewed, and unstructured interviews were undertaken with three of the exercise participants. These interviews provided an opportunity to further explain particular social processes (e.g., collaboration, or confrontation) during the exercises. In phase two, between August 2020 and July 2021, we undertook an online ethnography to explore digital collaboration across the UK COVID-19 response, with a particular focus on the use of the Cabinet Office owned information platform ResilienceDirect. This platform was established in 2014 to provide 'The UK's secure web platform for planning, response and recovery'. By 2021 ResilienceDirect had over 85,000 users who use the platform to share information including: emergency plans, meeting minutes and agenda, situation reports, maps and lessons learned. To explore digital collaboration in this context, we observed three online meetings of the ResilienceDirect national user group, participated in 14 meetings with the ResilienceDirect management team, reviewed documentation on the platform, and interviewed 63 people working with ResilienceDirect within the central and local government response to COVID-19. Interview questions focused on how ResilienceDirect was being used within the response, how the platform could be improved and how it shaped collaboration within the COVID-19 response. All interview participants had a significant multiagency role, for example, acting as a liaison between central and local government. To adhere to social distancing regulations all interviews took place using video conferencing software and were digitally recorded and professionally transcribed. To ensure confidentiality all names of individuals, local geographical areas and locally geographically specific organizations are pseudonymized. To analyse our dataset, we combined theory elaboration and affective methodologies.

Unlike theory building or theory testing, theory elaboration involves 'specifying constructs, relations, and processes at the conceptual level and assessing the fit of those relations empirically' to improve 'theories so that they accurately account for and explain empirical observation' (Fisher & Aguinis, 2017, p. 441). Our analysis aimed to elaborate the four limitations of Deleuzo–Spinozian affect theories related to the role of specific affects, knowledge processes, intentionality, and collaborative outcomes. To elaborate on these elements, we digitally coded (using QSR Nvivo12) all instances across our ethnographic data set where the powers of acting of different bodies was increased and diminished and collaboration was triggered, sustained and shaped. This was accomplished by paying attention to those instances where individuals joyfully sought or sadly avoided/destroyed encounters with various human or nonhuman bodies (e.g., individuals enthusiastically engaging with or angrily closing down discussions within a meeting).

To further identify the influence of specific affects within collaboration we drew on affective methodologies influenced by the philosophies of Deleuze and Spinoza (Gherardi, 2018; MacLure, 2013; Thanem & Knights, 2019). Following these methodologies, specific affects were identified in our dataset not simply by searching

for empirical instances related to the sad avoidance or destruction of particular encounters or the joyful seeking of encounters but also by attending to our own 'gut feelings [that] point to the existence of embodied connections with other people, things and thought' (MacLure, 2013, p. 174). More concretely, as we coded our empirical materials we noted how instances of individuals avoiding or destroying particular encounters were imbued with more specific feelings (e.g., hope, frustration, despair) by acknowledging how they attuned or not with our own feelings as researchers (Gherardi, 2018). In keeping with ethnographic approaches, it is important to be as self-reflexive as possible about our own positionality as researchers and its possible influence on our research. The authors of this paper are two male academics, British and Canadian, and a German female academic. All authors are white, fluent English-speaking, live and work in the UK, and self-identify as middle-class. We acknowledge our positionality places us in a privileged position to access and understand the mostly male, white, UK-based, and middle-class social worlds discussed within this paper. However, our positionality may also limit the credibility of these research findings being extended to other social groups and research contexts. Notwithstanding these limitations, the credibility of our empirical analyses was checked and confirmed with our research participants. This took place in two ways across the two phases of our study. In phase one, initial research findings and analyses were discussed with research participants both immediately after the emergency response exercises and during unstructured interviews. In phase two, credibility checks were undertaken with research participants and users. These checks involved the discussion of our analyses within regular meetings with the ResilienceDirect management team and wider user feedback on regular reports via email and two extended user workshop meetings that took place in September 2021.

As we analysed our dataset, we were drawn to two instances where both sad and joyful affects were composed within collaboration. These instances concerned: (i) sadness triggering and sustaining forms of collaboration during the emergency Exercise Cygnus that took place over 2 days in October 2018; and (ii) sadness repairing a breach of collaboration between English local and central government during the COVID-19 response in July 2020. Drawing on affective methodologies (Thanem & Knights, 2019), and to attune readers to the lived experience of affect within UK emergency organizing, these instances are presented across two affective vignettes. To support the accessibility of our findings, analysis of each instance is presented after each vignette.

6 | LIVED EXPERIENCES OF SAD AFFECTS WITHIN EMERGENCY COLLABORATION

6.1 | Organizing collaboration with affect: Exercise Cygnus

[Day one] Sarah's voice deepens and slows as she presents a slide explaining how 12 million people globally have already contracted 'Swan

Flu' causing 120,000 deaths, with 1260 deaths in the UK (821 in the last week), and a prediction of 291,000 excess deaths during the pandemic. A couple of fairly plausible mock BBC News reports are then played, including an interview with a fictional Chief Medical Officer explaining how cumulative deaths might be closer to 400,000, with tens of thousands of deaths per week during the peak. The report explains failures will occur in refuse collection, schools and education, and social services. Sarah then presents further slides prepared by the Cabinet Office including one revealing how SAGE (Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies) anticipates around 300,000 deaths over a 3-month period with a maximum of 50,000 to 75,000 deaths per week during the peak and 20% of the workforce absent through illness. Another slide explains how schools are remaining open, and while public services are under pressure almost all of society is functioning well, with the sole exception of managing excess deaths. The scene setting manual given to participants injects an element of distrust into the situation by alerting participants to 'The unintended release of an annex to an official report outlining worst case scenario planning has been reported by some sections of the press as an indication that the Government has failed to get a grip on the situation'. This leak is framed as highlighting 'potentially worrying elements of the pandemic'. The scene setting phase of the exercise ends without comment from the practitioners as a local government officer, Nigel, introduces another slide outlining the aims of the response – starting with 'saving and protecting life' and 'relieving human suffering'.

After the scene setting, and a lengthy series of initial agency updates where the participants stated they were 'under pressure but coping', Nigel opens a discussion around how they will 'manage excess deaths'. John, a local authority manager, explains anxiously that the capacity to store bodies will soon be exceeded and funerals will become impossible. Sarah calmly suggests using an old airfield to park refrigerated trucks for mass body storage, while another local authority practitioner, Clive, interjects a series of fears: 'Who is buried when? Are we giving people an option to wait until a full service or are we prescribing to them what will happen? Who will pay for the storage? We need to protect reputation'. Nigel and Sarah propose adding a series of requests to COBRA asking for resources to manage excess deaths. Their fears are then intensified further as Nigel asks: 'how everyone would cope during the predicted peak of the pandemic'. Mark, a health service executive, responds with anger and despair: 'we'd be overwhelmed ... we would have a large requirement for ECMO [Extra-Corporeal Membrane Oxygenation], oxygen outside the body, beds – currently only 4 available in the whole region [and so] routine and cancer surgeries will be cancelled but how do we communicate that, the problem is the system can't cope at present, we need to communicate that to COBRA'. The room is silent for a few seconds – as participants talk again, they do so more slowly and quietly than before.

[Day two] COBRA sends a response to the LRF [Local Resilience Forum] explaining that all resources will be made available to manage excess deaths but requests around increasing hospital capacity and managing behavioural responses 'do not form part of the exercise'. As the response is given to the room, it is met with disdain and frustration, indicated by eye rolling and head shaking. The participants then

seemingly ignore the scope of the exercise and discuss their own solutions to increase health capacity, including a proposal to cancel elective surgery. However, as Hayley from Public Health England explains, 'You can cancel all electives but in reality, for example children with heart conditions needing surgery, cancer patients, people would die, so you'd need to prioritize with a list'. Again, the room is anxiously silent for a few seconds. Other 'innovative solutions' to increase health capacity are then discussed including supporting communities to check on vulnerable people, employing telephone medical consultations to limit in-person attendance at hospitals, asking for volunteers to support the health service, and tracking people in the social care system. The exercise ends with a short debrief where participants voice concerns, including their disappointment at the COBRA advice and the lack of consideration of human behaviour. Clive frustratedly remarks that 'the exercise was too easy ... not enough has changed by day 2 ... we could be complacent, we haven't tested things'.

Exercise Cygnus begins with a series of tightly scripted encounters between human and nonhuman bodies (e.g., mock news reports, scene setting manuals, PowerPoint presentations and excess death projections). These encounters sustained passages to fear of loss of life, as well as scorn regarding information leaks. However, the purpose of organizing these sad encounters was not simply to encourage practitioners to avoid them (as some readings of Deleuze and Spinoza might suggest). Instead, participants powers of acting were purposefully diminished to develop shared ideas, or common notions, of their causes and consequences (Deleuze, 1992, p. 283). As Cygnus progressed, this 'scene setting' sadness was purposefully amplified with anger and despair, as participants were asked to consider how 'how everyone would cope during the predicted peak of the pandemic'. These organized encounters with sadness were then intensified more spontaneously as participants exchanged anger and despair over a lack of current and future healthcare resources, as well as frustration regarding support from COBRA and the effectiveness of the exercise itself. This knowledge was eventually collated and shared within the exercise report with all participants to know the deficiencies of UK pandemic preparedness (Public Health England, 2017). Thus, despite purposefully intensifying sadness, through the sharing of vital knowledge, Exercise Cygnus constituted emergency collaboration.

We can now elaborate affect theories from Deleuze and Spinoza with this exercise to explain what specific sad affects and knowledge processes were involved in emergency collaboration. More specifically, we return again to the possibility of mixed affects. Exercise Cygnus consisted of encounters with tangible and imagined bodies (e.g., death, suffering, concerns over media leaks, hospitals being over capacity) that cultivated passages towards sad affects such as fear, despair, scorn and anger. However, Cygnus is also organized around hope, even confidence, at the arrival of such sad encounters. Without these sad encounters, that reduce bodily capacities to act, learning from this exercise would be impossible. Cygnus evidence a passage from fearing and doubting sad encounters, towards hope, even confidence in their arrival. The start of Exercise Cygnus was composed around cautious articulations of future fears (e.g., verbal

agency updates explaining how services were 'under pressure but coping'). As the exercise progressed these future fears were rendered with increasing confidence—culminating in a series of unequivocal statements concerning how current health systems are not coping, that 'people would die', and an exercise report stating the UK could not 'cope with the extreme demands of a severe pandemic' (Public Health England, 2017, p. 6). Thus, Cygnus generated shared knowledge not simply through the intensification of encounters with trustful confidence but by organizing a shift from doubting the arrival of encounters with sad affects to confident expectation of encounters with sad affects. To be clear, this confidence does not refer to increases in powers of acting to overcome future events without doubt but rather confidence in the arrival of encounters with bodies that will diminish our powers of acting. If participants had experienced increasing doubt in the arrival of these sad affects, if their bodies and minds had been consumed by fear that fear would not arrive or despair that despair would not arrive, then the exercise could not produce shared knowledge. It is only by purposefully organizing and intensifying affective vacillations, where participants experience affective tensions: hope for fear or confidence for despair, that collective knowledge is generated. Put more broadly, emergency response exercises seem to operate most effectively by maximizing collective confidence in the arrival of future sadness. Thus, Exercise Cygnus reveals the role of organizing affective relations between joy and sadness to trigger and sustain collaboration. However, the highly scripted organizing within an emergency exercise, where collaboration has a relatively predefined purpose, is less well suited to elaborate the role of sadness in how collaboration shifts over time. To understand such experiences of affect we now turn to our second shorter vignette.

6.2 | Repairing collaboration: Responding to COVID-19

It is July 2020 and we have been invited to attend the first meeting in over 18 months of the ResilienceDirect National User Group [NUG]. It feels like we are in the 'eye of the storm' - the spring Covid-19 wave is over, lockdowns have ended but the possibility of a significant winter wave looms. The Cabinet Office chair, Clare, opens the meeting with a series of slides emphasising hopes to improve all parts of ResilienceDirect while recognizing finite public resources. Various ResilienceDirect suppliers' then confidently present their new technical improvements (e.g. a new mapping service). Lots of gratitude is expressed by Clare to the presenters. And then, after one of the presentations, a local government co-ordinator, Andy, frustratedly interrupts: 'the connection with the user is not happening here'. His comments are perfunctorily acknowledged by Clare - 'I hear you Andy, and happy to have that discussion, but we are short of time, and we do need to move on now'. As the meeting continues, Andy emails all NUG members (except the Cabinet Office): 'I am very concerned with how this 'meeting' is going. We, as the NUG, should be able to talk openly and if we are working strategically then why isn't the agenda reflecting this as opposed to a set

of presentations. I would like to suggest that we as the users come together to discuss what we can do about this'. A few weeks later, and after various meetings with Clare and the Cabinet Office, Andy and fellow NUG members reorganise the NUG 'to be a voice for you, the user'. In a research interview a few weeks later Andy explains how he and other NUG members had become 'frustrated' that the NUG was failing to ensure ResilienceDirect was being developed to support the Covid-19 response: 'why wasn't Covid right at the top of the agenda it was completely ignored'. Instead, Andy suggested the NUG was functioning more as a token of user engagement for Cabinet Office managers to 'say to their seniors: Yeah of course, we're working, we have a national user group ... they were using our name and using us as a vehicle to say, well, of course we're interacting'. However, Andy did not want to stop collaborating. Instead, as he explained, NUG members are frustrated because they are enthusiastic about how ResilienceDirect can support collaboration. Thus, he intended to stand 'shoulder to shoulder with Clare against her bosses because she actually stated to me: "I need your help because I am not getting anywhere with certain things" ...she can't shout at her bosses, but I can'.

During COVID-19, local-level emergency responders, such as Andy, frequently encountered bodies, such as didactic presentations and meetings from central government that diminished their powers of acting ('I am very concerned'). And yet, these same encounters increased the powers of acting of various others. Confidence intensified between Clare and ResilienceDirect suppliers as new platform developments were presented. Andy's exasperated email during the NUG suggests that as the joys of others intensified so did his own sadness, frustration, suspicion, and anger. It would, however, be misleading to claim that on the basis of these sad affects Andy sought to avoid or destroy the governmental response to COVID-19. His concern was not with *whether* to collaborate but *how*. That is, he was not concerned with destroying the governmental response but rather an image of the response where collaboration is weak and tokenistic. After years of policy pronouncements, and exercises such as Cygnus, UK emergency organizing was orientated around a universal common notion that trustful confidence is the cause of collaboration (Cabinet Office, 2013a, 2013b, 2018). This common notion served to help Andy understand that the cause of his sadness was related to encounters with different ideas of how collaboration should happen. Once threatening images of weak and tokenistic collaboration were revealed and destroyed, his anger could dissipate. More tangibly, when Clare met with Andy, they could together experiment with how differing images of collaboration affected them. In discovering joy at their shared anger at Andy's image of weak collaboration they established a revised form of collaboration. In other words, here a vacillation between sad and joyful affect was not organized deliberately, as in Exercise Cygnus, but rather it emerges more experimentally to develop a new, more meaningful, form of collaboration. This case contributes theoretically by elaborating our Deleuzo-Spinozian conceptual framework to explain how more spontaneously emergent sad affects can play an important role in repairing collaboration while more intentionally organized sad affects, such as Exercise Cygnus, can trigger and sustain collaboration.

7 | CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

Scholarship and practitioner guidance around emergency collaboration is centred around an assumption that trustful confidence is either the only, or primary, affective ingredient involved in recognizing, triggering, sustaining, and shaping collaboration (Cabinet Office, 2013a; 20213b; 2018; Chen et al., 2008; Curnin et al., 2015; Gimenez et al., 2017; Kapucu, 2006, 2010; Roud, 2021). Our paper contributes by empirically elaborating a conceptual framework that challenges the centring of emergency collaboration around trustful confidence. This framework suggests certain specific sad affects—fear, anger, despair, disdain, frustration—can play a beneficial role in triggering and sustaining collaboration. In short, collaboration did not happen *against* or *despite* but partly *with* and *through* sadness. Fear and despair within UK emergency organizing did not simply moderate excessive trust, reducing vulnerability to opportunism, burdensome obligations, escalating commitment to failing actions or cognitive lock-in (Roud, 2021; Stevens et al., 2015). Rather, such sad affects were intensified more or less purposefully, enabling collaboration to be generated and sustained—allowing shared knowledge to be generated and joint actions to be taken. However, our findings also suggest that while collaboration cannot be reduced to trustful confidence neither can it be reduced to sadness, not least because human affective life is rarely purely joyful or sad (Deleuze, 1992). Indeed, what our analysis reveals is not so much the important role of sad, or negative, affects within interorganizational collaboration but the significance of vacillations of affect *between* joy and sadness.

Affective vacillations make a difference to emergency collaboration in at least two ways. First, affective vacillations can be intentionally organized, as in our example of emergency exercise, generating mixings of specific affects—such as hope for fear or confidence for despair—cultivating the exchange of collective knowledge and learning. Intentionally organized mixed affects can play a role in triggering and sustaining collaboration. Second, vacillations can emerge as bodies encounter each other and diverge in their capacities to affect and be affected and draw on relatively universal ideas of collaboration (e.g., trustful confidence as collaboration) to understand the causes of those differences. Such ideas can prompt new encounters with different ideas of collaboration, generating experimentation with new capacities to affect and be affected and new ideas of collaboration. Such more spontaneously emergent affects can play an important role in repairing collaboration such as in our case of ResilienceDirect. In either case, processes of emergency collaboration revolve around the circulation of affective vacillations not pure affects such as trustful confidence.

In de-centring the role of joyful affects, particularly trustful confidence, within theories of emergency collaboration we do not want to nihilistically celebrate sadness or dismiss the importance of collaborative organizing. Rather, our analysis deepens and broadens how we understand the role of affect within emergency collaboration. It seems intuitive to suggest that emergency collaboration appears predicated on a passage to trust—increasing confidence about the benevolence and confidence of others. However, the lived

experiences of affect we analysed within emergency collaboration suggest that trustful confidence is not a pure substance, no matter how often it is figured as such within policy briefs, training workshops, everyday conversations, or indeed academic publications. By encouraging greater acknowledgement of the complexity of affect, we want to encourage scholars and practitioners to avoid simplifying, and thus obscuring, what triggers, sustains and shapes strong emergency collaboration. This means trust is both less and more important to emergency collaboration. It is less important in the sense that a milieu of other affects can trigger, sustain, and shape collaboration, and trust itself. But it is also more important in that trust is a rare and remarkable achievement—a highly contingent, fleeting, product of encounters modulating with a swirl of vacillating affects. Our paper is intended to open up the ground for further studies to grasp the significance of the lived complexity of these affects more fully within emergency collaboration.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data from this research is publicly available at the UK Data Service: <https://beta.ukdataservice.ac.uk/datacatalogue/studies/study?id=855291>.

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