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MPA 2024 Study Tour: Supporting Community Resilience



School of Public
Leadership
Master of Public
Administration
Programme

forward together
sonke siya phambili
saam vorentoe



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1. Introduction

This report documents the engagements and learnings of the staff and students who joined the 2024 Master in Public Administration study tour to the Netherlands and Italy from 24 May 2024 to 9 June 2024. The study tour focused on exploring alternative options to strengthen the resilience of communities and the public sector.

2. Purpose of the study tour

The delegation explored innovative ways to increase community resilience and self-reliance, and further, to build stronger partnerships between the public sector, private sector and communities towards addressing complex societal challenges. The programme provided for an enriching blend of theoretical engagements with academics at various prestigious universities, as well as sessions with risk and resilience officers from municipalities in South Africa, the Netherlands and Italy. The group also met with individuals involved in shaping the governance ecosystem for more efficient resilience management.

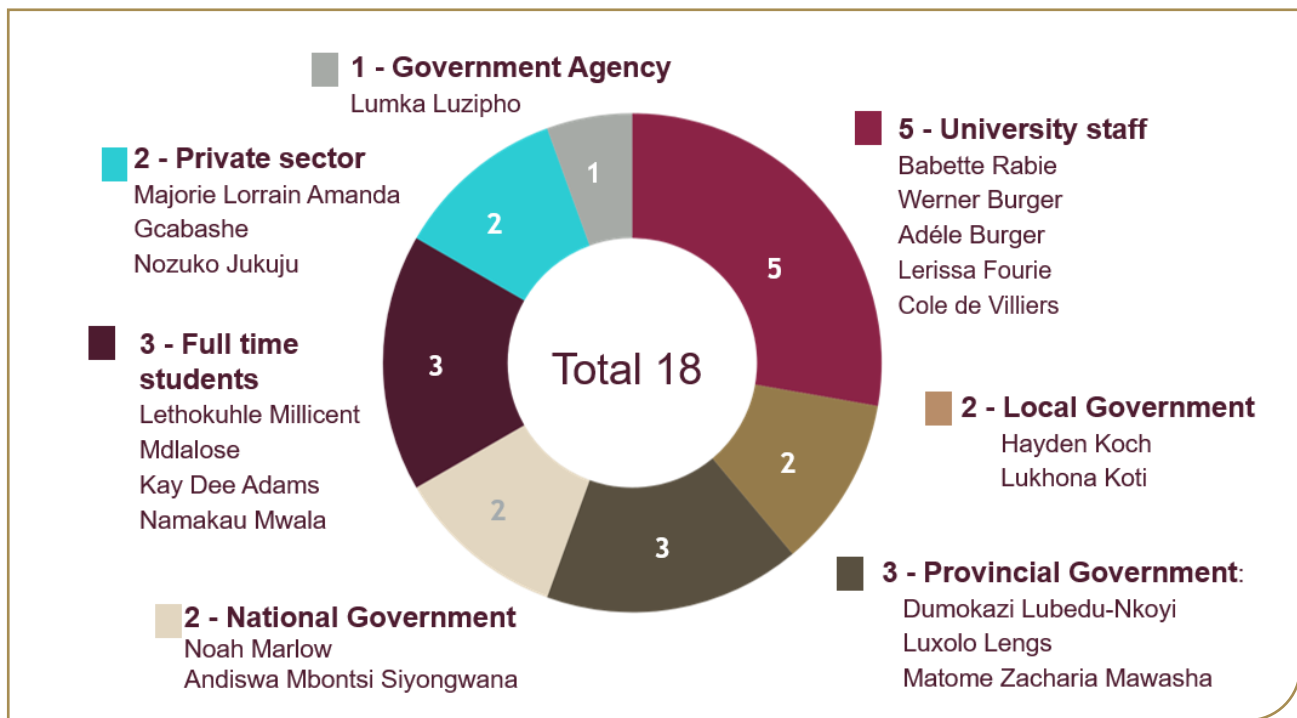
Areas of interest

- *Policy and Governance Frameworks*: Comparable policy and governance frameworks for risk management.
- *Risk Assessment and Mitigation Measures*: Alternative risk assessment methodologies and mitigation measures for predicting, preventing, mitigating and recovering from adverse events.
- *Stakeholder engagement*: Strategies for engaging communities, stakeholders, indigenous groups, private sector, civil society, regulators and government decision-makers to enable an integrated risk management approach
- *Community resilience*: Participatory approaches to risk assessment, planning, and implementation
- *Innovative Technologies*: Innovative technologies and solutions for predicting and responding to adverse events.
- *Adaptive Strategies*: Adaptation strategies of communities, industries, and governments to respond to risks in the context of increased uncertainty

3. Delegates

The delegation consisted of 15 students from the 2023 Master of Public Administration class of the School of Public Leadership, led by Prof Babette Rabie, Ms Adèle Burger and Mr Werner Burger.

The group represented a diverse range of sectoral interests. A detailed breakdown of the group is captured below, with contact details provided on the next page.





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4. Overview of engagements

4.1 The Resilience Cities Network: Experiences of selected African cities

Date: 7 May 2024, 13:30 – 14:45

Place: TEAMS meeting (online)

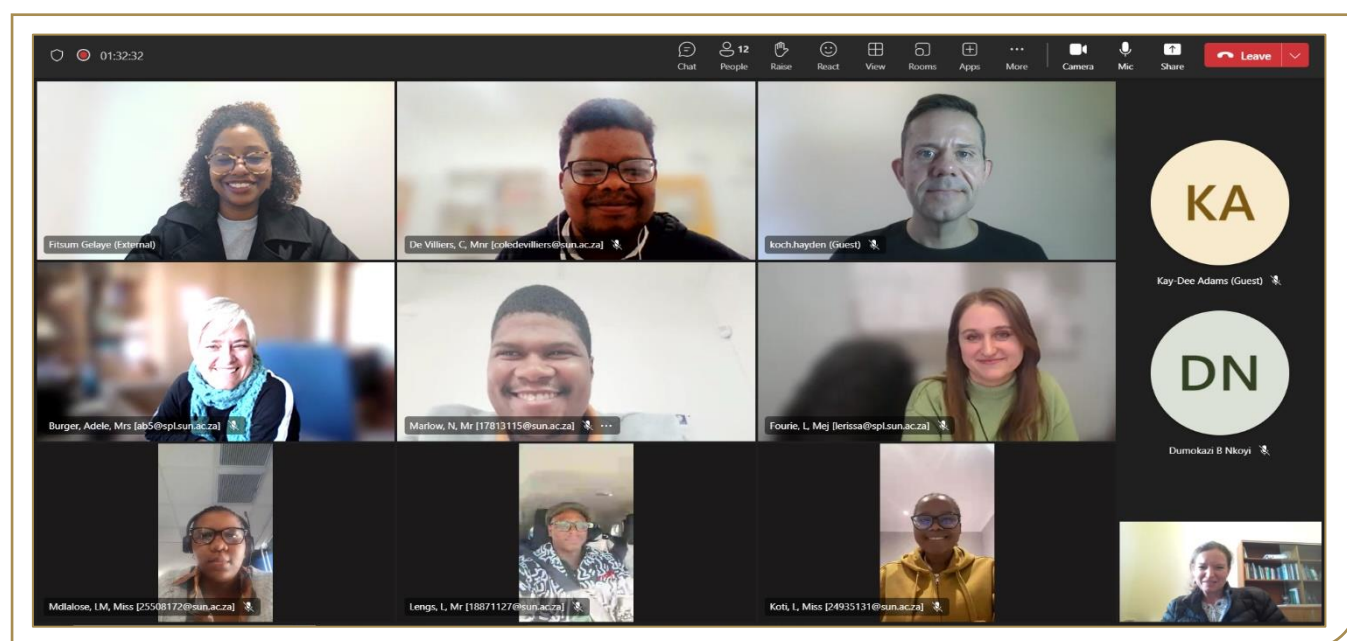
Primary contact: Ms Fitsum Gelaye, Regional Engagement Coordinator, Africa | Senior Manager, Programs: Resilient Cities Network, E: fgelaye@resilientcitiesnetwork.org

Summary

The Resilience Cities Network focuses on increasing the capacity of cities, as localities for mass human activity and vulnerability, to improve resilience towards foreseeable and unpredictable risk events. The network strengthens the risk planning and management capacity of cities to better anticipate, manage and respond to various shocks and stressors through improved collaboration with communities and stakeholders. To join the network of more than 100 cities, a city needs to provide the financial and human resource commitment for resilience planning. Membership offers access to strategic support documents to support the development and implementation of a resilience strategy, as well as access to a community network of resilience officers across the world.

The resilience strategies adopted by Cape Town, Lagos, Addis Ababa and Kigali offer interesting lessons to mainstream resilience in Africa. African member cities often face the following challenges:

- **Technical and human capacity:** Cities face a lack of capacity for project preparation and projecting the impact of risks. Human capacity constraints, specifically the limited availability of resilience thinking, data analytics, risk management and planning make it difficult to monitor and report on risks. Effective project implementation and management are also problematic in some settings.
- **Resource mobilisation:** Cities have limited financial resources to implement projects that may mainstream resilience. Financing of tangible projects, e.g. infrastructure, that offer visible impacts is often favoured at the expense of resource support for strategy development and improved resilience. Development partners often provide financial, technical and human capacity for project implementation and to manage regulatory constraints.
- **Advocacy and influence:** It is difficult to prove the unique value offered by the resilience strategy when influencing funding decisions. It is difficult to obtain and sustain buy-in and recognition by city leadership. Increasing the visibility of resilience work is needed to influence resource allocation and to sustain allocations despite political transitions.



4.2 Cape Town Risk and Resilience Unit

Date: 24 May 2024, 9:00 – 15:00

Place: Cape Town, Bellville and Somerset West

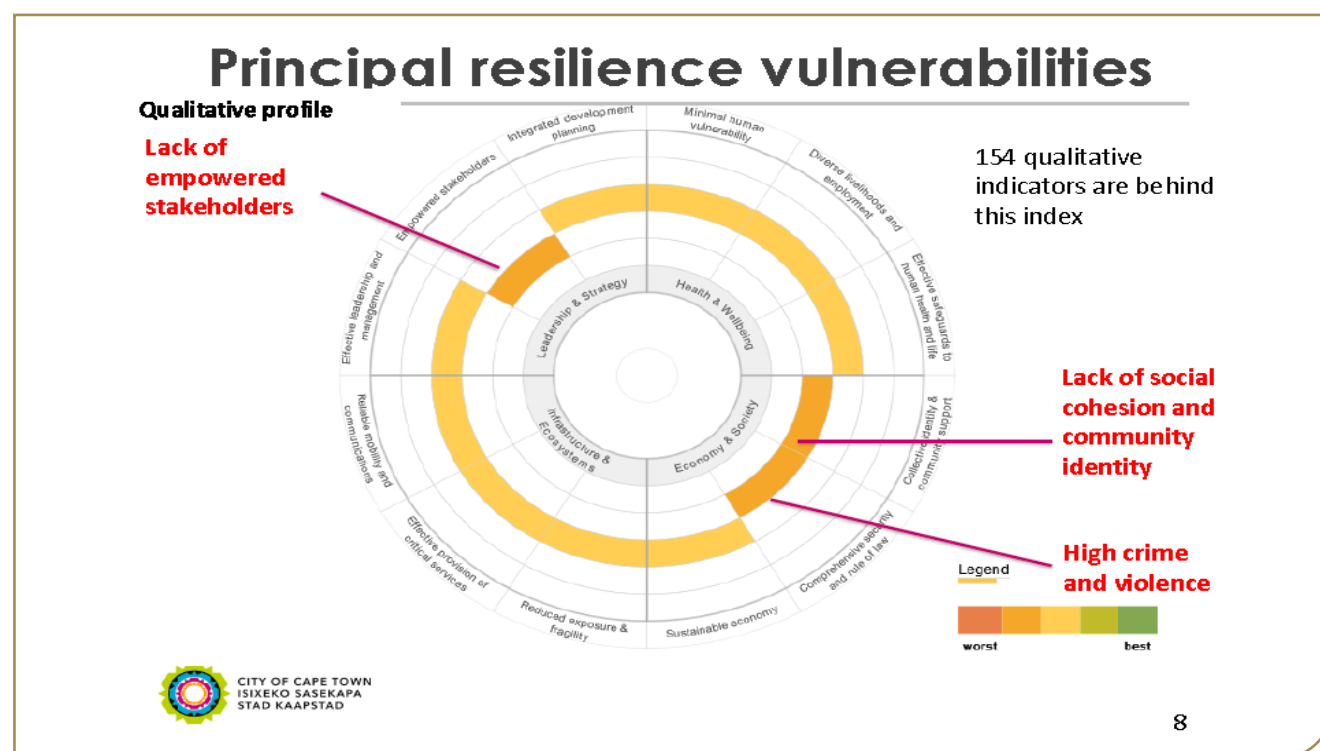
Primary contact: Mr Daniel Sullivan, Director: Risk and Resilience, Future Planning and Resilience. City of Cape Town, T: 021 4005098, C: 0784889826, E: DanielLawrence.Sullivan@capetown.gov.za

Further contacts: Mr Andrew McDonald, Principal Professional Officer: Catchment and Stormwater Management, E: AndrewJohn.McDonald@capetown.gov.za

Summary

The Resilience Cities Network team regards the City of Cape Town as a positive success story. Daniel Sullivan, the Chief Resilience Officer of Cape Town, presented lessons on fostering buy-in, navigating the Covid-19 pandemic and expanding the resilience team to a function of 20 persons. The City of Cape Town's vision is based on the foundation of a resilient city. This signifies that resilience management has been recognised as a mainstream, cross-cutting consideration relevant to all departments and programmes of the city.

The Cape Town Resilience Strategy was developed following the worst drought in recorded history and the possibility of running out of water. The resilience strategy was developed in phases. Phase 1 (Sept 2017 – June 2018) focused on the development of a preliminary resilience assessment and four enablers of resilience. Phase 2 (July 2018 – March 2019) conceptualized and consulted on various initiatives for inclusion in the resilience strategy. In Phase 3 (May 2019 onwards) the strategy was formally approved by the council for implementation.



Key shocks included in the strategy are climate shocks (e.g. drought and flooding), state failure (e.g. infrastructure failure, civil unrest), globalisation (e.g. financial crisis, pandemics) and rapid technological change (e.g. cyber-attacks). Prior social vulnerability, in some communities, intensify the impact of shocks. Social stresses include crime, unemployment, substance abuse, food insecurity, informal settlements, lack of social cohesion, rapid urbanisation, poverty and inequality and unlawful land occupation. Further stresses include sea level rise, traffic congestion and insecure municipal finances. The strategic plan selects a shortlist of adaptation options as part of a department's business planning and project implementation processes. The resilience strategy is essential to establish a resilience approach, as not all resilience actions are possible to implement.

Seventy-five (75) actions are adopted in the resilience strategy that can be accessed here: http://resource.capetown.gov.za/documentcentre/Documents/City%20strategies,%20plans%20and%20frameworks/Resilience_Strategy.pdf. Resilience is actively pursued by building capacities for food security, infrastructure development, supporting citizen action, applying a system mapping approach for resilient organisation, reflective learning and the ongoing identification and management of risks. There is an adopted

Heat Risk Action Plan that focuses on heat readiness, heat response, research and knowledge management, and monitoring and evaluation of actions. Similarly, a Flood Risk Management Programme focuses on floodplain mapping, cost/impact analysis, research and monitoring and evaluation of actions.

Mainstreaming resilience management is achieved by building competence, identifying and ongoing monitoring of shocks/stresses, active response planning (in terms of scenario development and risk action plans), as well as community enablement. Implementation is achieved through intergovernmental initiatives between national and provincial departments and the city. Looking to the future, the intention is to move towards embedding resilience as a way things are done in the workings of the city.



The delegation visited the Somerset West Lourensford flood plain where a significant infrastructure project is underway to reduce the risk of flooding to houses and businesses adjacent to the river.

Study tour members posed questions to the host team relating to the engineered solution being implemented, as well as relating to other aspects of the project, such as the role of stakeholders and community relations.



4.3 City of Den Hague Resilience Unit & Innovation Centre

Date: 27 May 2024, 9:00 – 13:00

Place: The Hague, Infopunt Scheveningen De Kust Gezond

Primary contact: Ms Marjon Stijger, Opgavemanager Resilience, Gemeente Den Haag; Bestuursdienst Internationaal; Resilience The Hague, M +31 6 29 63 65 96, E: marjon.stijger@denhaag.nl

Further contacts:

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- Tijn Kuiper, Living lab Scheveningen (innovation centre)
- Jack Amesz, Morales Boulevard-Coastal Defence & Public Space

Summary

The City of Den Hague adopts a three-pronged approach to resilience. The first component entails identifying, monitoring, assessing and prioritising risks within the organisation and the city. The second component analyses risks and possible impacts through scenarios of variable impact to inform mitigation strategies. The final component focuses on unknown risks, impacts and unexpected events. These require responses that improve the resilience of organisations and communities to better recover from adverse events when these occur. The adopted integrated approach to resilience management focuses on four areas:

- Operational systems and management that enable inclusive service provision, sustainable finance and adaptive system operation.
- Strengthening and empowering end users and stakeholders.
- Integrated infrastructure planning, coordinated and committed leadership, and transparent and enabling regulations.
- Risk-informed infrastructure management and responsible natural resource use.

The following key lessons were shared from the process of developing and implementing the resilience strategy:

- Creating administrative and bureaucratic momentum for something that 'may happen' in the future is challenging when investments only paying off much later, and only if scenarios materialise.
- Ensuring a comprehensive and integrated response to identified risks requires ongoing collaboration and coordination with different departments and political portfolios.
- There is limited evidence to assess the impact of many potential crises.
- Innovation is a mindset. Experiments by those more risk-accommodating can provide success cases that can be transferred to others more risk-averse.
- Sharing experiences helps to create a shared culture for experimentation. While not all projects present anticipated results, the opportunity to test and learn from novel solutions is useful.

The resilience team is relatively small (four to six members) compared to the total number of civil servants. The risk unit allocated a significant amount of their time (60-70%) to working with other departments. Internally, it is important to have a high-level champion who advocates for experimentation and learning. Externally, it is important to create strong communities to increase resilience.

Den Haag is considered one of the most diverse cities in the Netherlands. Communities with a strong feeling of cohesion provide more immediate support to neighbours in the case of adverse events. However, the team is observing a trend of increased polarisation. While some districts have good cohesion, other areas with higher migrant labour are characterised by less cohesion and more clashes.

The team visited the Scheveningen tourist boulevard which applies smart city technology for research, learning and experimentation. The innovation hub was developed during the upgrading of the boulevard. The new boulevard spreads the risk of rising sea levels horizontally, rather than by constructing large upright barriers that would obstruct views of the sea. Underground fibre and electricity installed during the renovations connects to hubs above the ground. Various innovative technologies are tested on a small scale in the innovation hub, enabling opportunities for quick learning and the adoption of successful innovations throughout the city. The cost of these innovations is funded by partnering departments or external donors, and not through the municipal budget. This keeps the direct costs of the resilience unit low.



4.4 City of Rotterdam Resilience and Strategy Unit

Date: 28 May 2024, 14:00 – 15:00

Place: Rotterdam. De Rotterdam building

Primary contact: Arnoud Molenaar, Chief Resilience Officer Gemeente Rotterdam E: a.molenaar@Rotterdam.nl

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Summary

The Resilient Rotterdam Strategy 2022 – 2027 sets out four capabilities to enable Rotterdam to withstand multiple social, economic and natural crises:

- Resistibility (the capability to resist shocks and stresses);
- Recoverability (the capability to recover from shocks and stresses);
- Learning ability (the capability to acquire knowledge and skills from shocks and stress experienced); and
- Adaptability (the capability to adapt and change in order to thrive).

All four of these capabilities are required to structurally tackle the major crises, problems and risks faced by the city. The six major risks are identified as: climate crisis, biodiversity crisis, natural resource and pollution crisis, inequality crisis, health crisis and cyber crisis. Other disruptions are captured as a seventh risk.

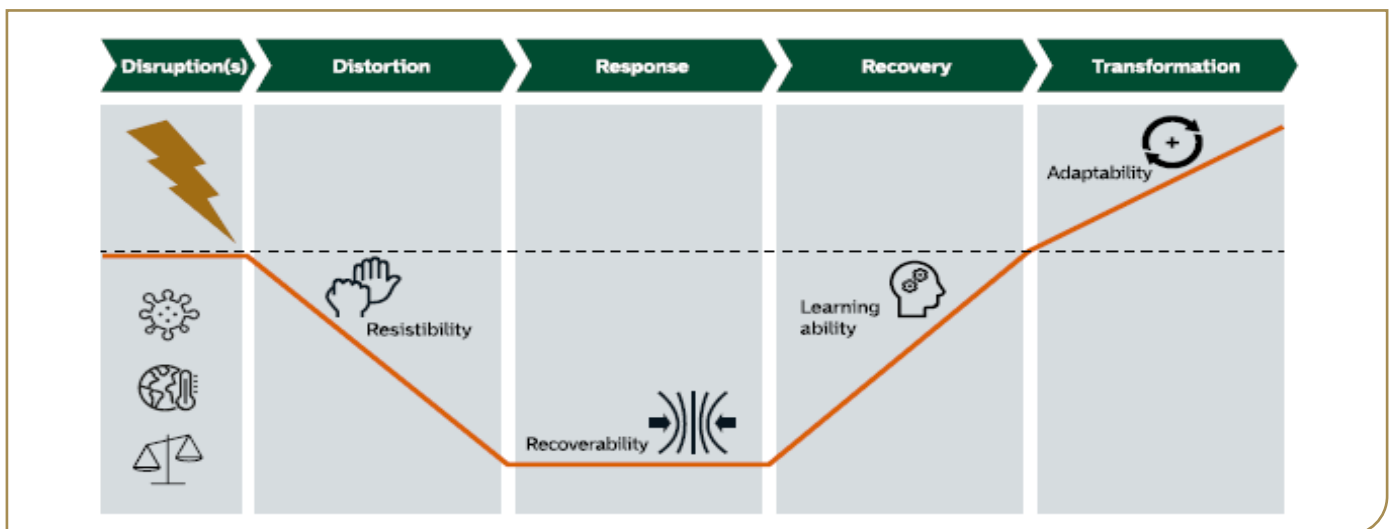


Resilience is essential for a prosperous, happy and economically stable city. That's why it should be clearly reflected in everything the city does. Rotterdam will be focussing on tackling crises through seven different themes during the forthcoming years. In this way, we'll be progressing from risks to resilience. And we'll be doing that together with the city.

Key lessons from the implementation of the Rotterdam Resilience Strategy (2016 – 2021) include that:

- Being resilient requires a structural (programmatic) and systemic (focussed on system interventions) approach.
- Part of a structural approach is knowledge development with partners, both thematically and methodically, and on a multi-year basis.
- A neighbourhood-oriented approach with residents and partners, aimed at resilience, works.
- New forms of collaboration are needed, which will require (temporary) flexibility in dealing with the existing frameworks, procedures and programme lines.
- The pandemic has demonstrated the importance of not just 'bouncing back' to the prior conditions that may have given rise to the crises, but to use the crisis to 'bounce forward' to a more resilient future.
- Resilience requires integrated working across departments.

Lessons from the BoTu 2028 (Bospolder-Tussendijken) strategy emphasise the need to start with social challenges as a starting point and central focus; focusing on the neighbourhood's strengths instead of the problem; involving residents and key partners in the neighbourhood right from the very start; creating ownership; formulating a common objective which inspires and provides direction; and looking beyond the boundaries of the neighbourhood also offers sustainable solutions.



It is noteworthy that the resilience team is a catalyst team, of relatively few members, that act as connectors. Resilience projects are not always clear-cut or without contestation, there are sometimes conflicting priorities that need to be managed. For example, a desire for energy transition versus the need for housing, versus the risk of flooding/sea-level rise.



The team visited the Benthemplein, the world's first full-scale water square. The square can retain nearly 2 million litres (528,344 gallons) of stormwater, retaining the water to reduce infrastructure damage and allowing it to slowly drain through the city's stormwater system once the rain subsides. During dry weather, the square can host various types of sports, theatre and relaxation activities, turning this resilience infrastructure into a community space. It signifies a different manner to conceptualise public spaces while increasing community and infrastructure resilience.



4.5 The Resilience Cities Network: Creating Capacity for Resilience

Date: 28 May 2024, 15:00 – 16:00

Place: Rotterdam. De Rotterdam building

Primary contact: Nadine Burbar, Manager, Partnerships & Events: Resilient Cities Network, Rotterdam
E: nburbar@resilientcitiesnetwork.org

Further contacts:

- Isabel Parra, Senior Manager, Communications
- Valerie Brown, Manager, Programs, Climate Resilience

Summary

The Resilient Cities Network was launched in 2020 following the success of the 100 Resilient Cities initiative. Funding from The Rockefeller Foundation enabled cities to hire a Chief Resilience Officer (CRO) and develop a resilience strategy whilst sharing ideas and knowledge with other cities forming part of the initiative.

The network supports cities to articulate and develop their most innovative ideas and turn these into implementable projects. The mission is to reduce vulnerability and improve the well-being of over 220 million urban dwellers around the world. The network is active in more than 100 cities across 40 countries around the world. Work is broadly organized into three pillars: Climate Resilience, Circularity and Equity.

The website of the network offers a variety of resources, toolkits and publications that may be of use to non-members when strengthening resilience management. Membership of the network still requires a commitment to establish and fund a resilience officer that provides dedicated capacity to the function. The website also captures the success stories of different cities around the world that serve as an inspiration, and provide lessons to other cities embarking on their resilience journey.



The hosts of the meeting shared various insights relating to the successes and challenges that were faced in developing resilience in cities across the globe. Matters including the varied placement of Chief Resilience Officers in city structures, as well as resource constraints, were discussed. One of the great propositions of joining the network was said to be access to the community of practice network.

4.6 Labsus: Encouraging Engaged Citizenship

Date: 31 May 2024, 9:00 – 14:00

Place: Turin, Valentino Castle Politecnico di Torino

Primary contact: Prof Daniela Ciaffi, Vice-president of Labsus, Associate Professor Inter-University Department of Territorial Sciences, Projects and Policies (DIST), T: +39 0110907486, E: daniela.ciaffi@polito.it

Further contacts:

- Mr Andrea Couvert E: andrea.couvert@gmail.com

Summary

Labsus regards people not just as citizens with needs that the government should serve but as actors with capabilities that can be offered to the community to contribute to finding solutions to issues of common interest, in alliance with the government. It advances opportunities and models where 'normal' citizens can adopt an active role in local policy decision-making and implementation to advance the common good rather than a sole interest in individual benefit.

In the late 1990's, the City of Bologna created collaboration pacts with citizens and private organisations. It shifted the initiation of policy-making to communities, with project implementation not determined by the availability of public funding, but through the initiation and implementation by citizens with a particular need. The pact with the municipality is to provide some support (e.g., a venue) for the initiative, and other stakeholders who can share the 'public administration'. A new 2014 principle in the municipal constitution facilitated more pacts as alternative and complementary models to public sector service delivery.

Neighbourhood homes in Turin have a manifesto that states that the use of space is not exclusive to one entity, but that anyone can use the space. Instead of dividing space into public space and private space, these public spaces offer a common space that is used for advancing the common good. Labsus play an important role in strengthening awareness of the importance of these shared spaces to promote community self-reliance and resilience. More than 300 cities have adopted the shared-commons principle, and 700 pacts of collaboration have been formalised across Italy, even though the quality of the pacts do differ in substance.

The group reflected that in South Africa, policy-making is dominated by the government. Typically, the government would decide what the problem is, formulate an accepted solution, assign resources and endeavour to solve the problem for citizens. This may possibly embed a culture of dependency, where people wait for services to be delivered, often ending up disillusioned by a lack of service delivery that is provided within the constraints of limited public sector resource and capacity.

There is a need to instil a participatory approach which does not see the public sector driving solutions but encourages the active engagement of communities to drive the problem definition and solving process. In respect of public participation, it is important to aim to ensure adequate diversity, for example, when public meetings occur. If not, the meaningfulness of such processes may be diminished. There is also a need to reconsider the naming/branding of public spaces. For instance, the "City of Johannesburg's Park" implies that the park is the responsibility and asset of the city, rather than of citizens. This may explain why citizens resort to destroying public buildings that are seen as 'government' buildings. Furthermore, there is a need to strengthen the community's ability to access knowledge resources.

A draft Civic Participation bylaw developed by Civic Action for Public Participation, a network of civic organizations in Cape Town, was shared as an example of active citizenship. Information around the process of developing the proposal through an active civic participation process was also provided.

Details of the project, as well as the draft bylaw are available at: <https://peoplesbylaw.wordpress.com/> and https://peoplesbylaw.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Draft_Community_Participation_By-Law_19_December_2018.pdf



The team visited a commons space in Turin — an old bath house that was repurposed into a shared community facility. The space is managed through a pact/agreement between the municipality that owns the property and several local non-profit organisations (that offer paid and free community services on the premises). The municipality also offers social support services at the premises. An office of five persons with a permanent facility manager coordinates the various activities. There is also a restaurant on site which caters to visitors. The rental fee for various facility rooms/spaces is decided based on the ability to pay and the nature of the service/s that are to be offered.

The commons provide local actors with an opportunity and accessible physical space to pursue activities towards the common good. It provides a communal space where public, private and civic actors from different walks of life can meet, engage and address community issues through joint initiatives, action and innovation.



4.7 Use of Technology for Increased Resilience, DISIT Lab/Snap4City

Date: 3 June 2024, 9:30 – 12:00

Place: Florence, University of Florence DISIT lab

Primary contact: Prof Paolo Nesi, DISIT LAB, University of Florence, E: paolo.nesi@unifi.it

Further contacts:

- Roberta Rosati, E: roberta.rosati@unifi.it
- Nicola Mitolo, E: nicola.mitolo@unifi.it

Summary

The Distributed Systems and Internet Technologies (DISIT) Lab of the University of Florence is the most active Big Data/Artificial Intelligence (AI) lab operating at the University of Florence, metropolitan Tuscany area. DISIT actively develops innovative project solutions for industry and the public sector. The DISIT Lab has provided solutions relating to, inter alia, predictive maintenance, early warning, anomaly detections, traffic flows, smart parking, smart biking, and user behaviour analysis. The lab currently plays a leading role in applying artificial intelligence (e.g. Machine Learning, generative AI, deep learning) towards what-if analysis, digital twins, decision support and expert systems. One of the lab's projects is the Snap4City initiative (<https://www.snap4city.org>), a platform/framework designed to allow users including cities, to analyse local data, implement decision support systems and smart applications, as well as run customised simulations.

Uses for technology and data systems in building urban resilience are numerous. It is important to be able to begin with an understanding of the current environment and conditions so that this can inform a move to a more optimal (resilient) state. In addition, aside from known factors and risks, an important concern is the development of the capacity to manage any unforeseen unknowns which may present themselves in future. A city might be thought of as a complex system with cascading effects and understanding urban behaviour and predicting future conditions may be a challenging task. However, given the proliferation of (smart city) sensors and Internet of Things devices, much data is nowadays available. In the Tuscany region, 1500 sensors monitor traffic flow patterns. This enables real-time simulation (90-second delay) to monitor and simulate traffic flow in all areas of Florence. Such data can provide the ability to inform data-driven decision systems and processes within cities.

The DISIT Lab provides a scalable open-source solution for big data and the Internet of Things. The Snap4City framework allows for data from various sources to be ingested, aggregated and processed, whereafter, data analytics can take place. Outputs/results can then be utilised in different ways. For instance, visual dashboards could be produced to provide/display metrics or trends of specific interest. Alternatively, more advanced tools may be employed.

An especially exciting development is the concept of a 'Digital Twin'. This is a virtual representation of the physical city. Big data, and Artificial Intelligence, allow for a model to be created, whereafter, simulations or experiments may be run virtually to test scenarios or make predictions.



In addition to the ability to generally monitor and predict, as granularity (the level of detailed data) improves, more targeted interventions could be developed to improve resilience through predictive maintenance, anomaly detections and early warning. Specific community groups or vulnerable areas (such as wards or suburbs) that are identified at a highly localised level, can be targeted with customised support programmes. The use of tailored programmes could improve effectiveness and simultaneously reduce the overall costs of resilience interventions. Big data use can also provide the basis for measurement of Key Performance Indicators, and inform progress towards more strategic high-level areas such as progress made towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

The SNAP4 system is downloadable from the DISIT/Snap4City website and is supported by a series of online training videos to set up monitoring dashboards. The dashboard wizard enables users to create customised, visual data that respond to specific information needs. While at times technically intricate, it was apparent from the study visit that the usefulness of big data technology in building urban resilience should not be underestimated, and ought to be embraced.

4.8 Resilience and Social Innovation in Emilia-Romagna

Date: 4 June 2024, 15:00 – 18:00 and 5 June 2024, 9:30 – 13:00

Place: Reggio Emilia and Modena, Department of Economics Marco Biagi

Primary contact: Prof Margherita Russo, Department of Economics "Marco Biagi"

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Further contacts:

- Prof Alberto Rinaldi
- Prof Stefano Ghinoi
- Prof Massimo Baldini
- Prof Eugenio Caperchione
- Prof Anna Francesca Pattaro

Summary

Emilia-Romagna (ER) is a paradigmatic case of industrialization based on Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) and industrial districts (IDs). Fast industrialisation and economic growth in the 1950-1970s were driven by SMEs rather than big industries, with regional SMEs clustered in industrial districts to maximise synergies. Alberto Rinaldi reflects on the reaction of ER's local production systems to both structural shocks (i.e., globalization, creation of GVCs) and sudden shocks (i.e., 2008 financial crisis, 2020 Covid pandemic) in recent years. Overall, ER shows a higher resilience than the other major industrial regions in Italy. Resilience in ER is

characterised by a regeneration (of related variety) that shifted towards a more knowledge-intensive mix of sectors, and a reconfiguration of existing IDs with the rise of lead firms and the coming of MNEs. Economic sectors changed over time to focus on higher-specialisation sectors and less on lower production (e.g. a shift from leather to mechanical engineering). This enables the region to respond well to sudden shocks over time, but there is a downward trend in the manufacturing sector that might lead to a shift from specialised technical positions to low-paid, short-term and precarious jobs, thus increasing inequality in the longer term. The shift towards machine production also requires redesign to fit a changing production order. Firms that offer short-term, low-paid positions also lose the opportunity to introduce young workers who may contribute to the innovation and change process. Resilience requires constant scanning, innovation and adaptation to remain relevant and profitable despite changes and shocks.



The presentation by Stefano Ghinai provided an overview of the research project focused on social innovation in marginal areas through a network approach. Marginal urban areas in Italy are characterised by the presence of low educational levels and employment rates among young adults. In recent years, local institutions and third-sector organisations have decided to adopt place-based policies to address these issues, aiming towards the regeneration of marginal areas through the creation of job opportunities and new initiatives for social innovation. The evaluation focuses on a Save the Children programme implemented to reduce inequality for children in marginalised areas. The specific objectives are to understand the dynamics at the community level for supporting children in terms of: 1. local partnerships, 2. based on local networks, and 3. measuring how community members participate in local transformative processes. Focus is on how social innovation takes place, how different actions enable local actors to work together, how local relationships have been structured, and, which actors are most prominent. The project intends to map networks of inter-organisational relationships which have been created — and are still in development — as a result of the above initiatives. In particular, it aims to explore five different urban areas by adopting a longitudinal network perspective. For details on the analysis method, see Simulation Investigation for Empirical Network Analysis (SIENA).

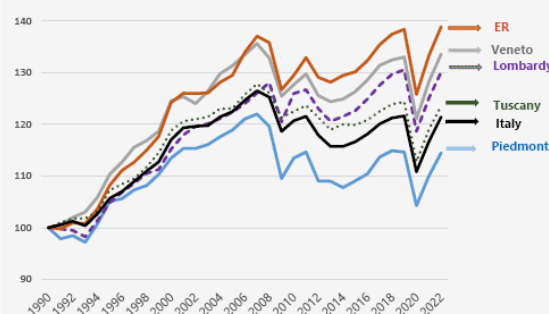
Margherita Russo shared experiences of University of Modena and Reggio Emilia (UNIMORE) students and staff in response to online teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic. Drawing upon an online survey conducted during the 2020 lockdown by the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, the presentation highlights the main difficulties that emerged during the lockdown. It finds vast differences in the accessibility and uptake of technology between students. Whilst some could confidently and actively partake, limited resource availability (e.g. shared laptops) prevented others from attending classes. Students reported being alone and experiencing a loss of freedom as students. There is a lack of social cohesion in the group of students who did not have the experience of personal interaction, shared campus challenges, and finding solutions. The presentation offered important lessons for emergency teaching, including, the need for technology support from the university and strengthening staff capabilities to provide online teaching. Despite the challenges, the ability to pivot to an online learning environment in a short space of time is considered a great achievement and shows capacity and resilience.

A further presentation by Alberto Rinaldi reflected on Industrial Policy in Emilia-Romagna. The region experienced political stability since the end of World War II (W/WII), with major local governments controlled by

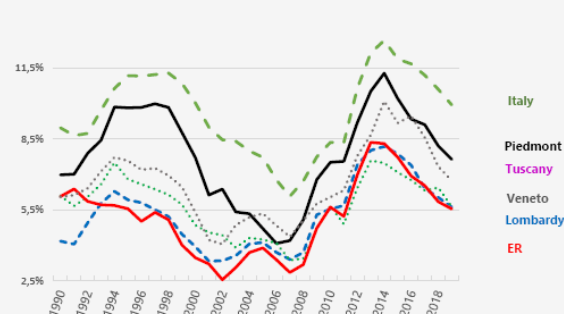
the same party until 1991. The communist party focused on the promotion of left-wing organisations for workers, labourers, as well as small entrepreneurs and cooperatives. The second largest party, the Christian Democratic Party, also had a pro-SME stance. SMEs are regarded as a type of business that aligned with their social policy vision. After WWII, the Partito Comunista Italiano's (PCIs) leader, Palmiro Togliatti, focused on the importance of small firms counteracting monopolies and supporting them. This leads to the formation of left-wing organizations for workers, labourers, artisans, shopkeepers, farmers, sharecroppers, and cooperatives.

ER: A RESILIENT REGION

Index of the GDP in some selected Italian regions
1990-2022 – constant prices (1990 = 100)



Unemployment rate in some selected Italian regions,
1990-2019



9

During the 1950s-70s, municipalities and provincial governments support local SMEs through the establishment of industrial estates and technical schools. Regional governments are created in Italy in the 1970s. In the 1980s, a new vision for local development regards SMEs not as starting points for larger firms, but as efficient entities in their own right, that can offer complementarity with larger firms. This leads to a new regional industrial policy and the creation of service centres for SMEs in IDs. SMEs are clustered in Industrial Development Zones (IDZs) to maximise complementarity — the discovery of industrial districts (IDs) in the wake of studies by economists led to the drafting of a new regional industrial policy in ER: the creation of real service centres to upgrade SMEs clustered in IDs. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, dialogues with regional stakeholders lead to the question of the long-term competitiveness of IDs in the face of structural shocks such as globalization and the ICT revolution. This results in a new vision for local development, i.e., the creation of regional clusters of firms hinging on larger firms (lead district firms and Multinational Enterprises (MNEs)). In 2000, ERs industrial policy moves towards local development focused on technopoles, clusters, digital infrastructure and attracting foreign multinational enterprises and human capital development.

Massimo Baldini shared perspectives on the creation of an observatory and ongoing activities and results between UNIMORE and the municipality of Modena. The project originates from a history of tax benefit micro-simulation and aims to create a digital twin of the region through a selected sample of 5200 individuals. The aim is to compile a detailed picture of each individual at a point in time by using data from existing databases. This data is then extrapolated to obtain a detailed perspective of the residents in each district in the region. This is only possible with a representative sample and more reflection may be needed on the sampling strategy. The project is also to be used as a basis to introduce Masters students to the first steps of applied research — students are to be assigned to collect parts of the information needed for the sustainability domains.

Eugenio Caperchione offered reflections gained from participating in the jury of the European Public Sector Award. The presentation provided interesting and stimulating hints for practitioners, showing how innovative approaches to problem-solving are possible in local government if one is clear on how to proceed, and if certain conditions are met. Ideas for innovation can come from many different sources, e.g., applying Formula 1 pitstop principles to the changeover of patients in hospitals to retain critical information. The request for change starts with a problem that increases to a crisis, the ability to respond, and, financial and HR capacity. External conditions that stimulate innovation include a central government favourable to change, education among citizens that makes them risk-aware, a sense of community and a culture of accountability. Internal conditions that stimulate innovation include the commitment of politicians to bear the risk of failed innovations, managerial quality, as well as relationships between politicians and managers, personnel and stakeholders.

Chapter 8 of Robert Behn presents an interesting summary of innovations in local government, showcasing the idea of tacit knowledge: we don't always know what we know. Reference was also made to Hartley: *Eight-And-A-Half Propositions To Stimulate Frugal Innovation In Public Services* and Borins: *Encouraging Innovation in the Public Sector*. To encourage innovation, look at the problem; be confident that you can respond; build a team of people who are willing to make a difference; and study what others have done in other settings/countries to stimulate innovative ideas.



Anna Francesca Pattaro focused on co-planning and the co-creation of public services. The research project is still in the infancy stage, but is part of a municipal and territorial context of great planning, and an openness to new ideas and management tools. It could therefore be an opportunity to discuss actors/roles/tools with colleagues. The researchers aim to capture experiences of local governance projects recently launched in the Municipality of Reggio Emilia around the theme of "Co-planning & co-creation of public services aimed at protecting vulnerable groups of citizens and involving public/private (for and profit) partnerships". This includes projects that depend on a co-production of services, where services traditionally produced by the government are now delivered in partnership between citizens, the private sector and the government. The session also provided for discussion around the definition and concept of a 'social economy'.

4.9 A Colorni-Hirschman International Institute

Date: 8 June 2024, 9:30 – 13:00

Place: Rome, Sapienza University

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- Raffaele Del Monaco and Antonio Viscomi, HIG
- Francesco Messina, Centocinquanta srl
- Daniela Caianiello, public officer at Pozzuoli municipality

Summary

A Colorni-Hirschman International Institute (ACHII) implements and promotes research, training and awareness to publicize and foster the economic, social and political culture inspired by the work of Eugenio Colorni and Albert O. Hirschman, thereby deepening and disseminating their contributions to the development and emancipation of women and men through an international and multidisciplinary approach. The purpose of ACHII is to build and mobilise an international network of people who adopt analogous operational methods to achieve integration of knowledge, skills and experiences, fostering engagement, dialogue and cooperation among the various parts of the world. It supports concrete applications of these concepts through the validation of various experiences (cultural, economic, political etc.) that have been inspired by these ideals, and the articulation of

associated know-how that they have repeatedly exercised. It builds a multi-level network of private, public and public-private experiences based on the principles of democracy, development and social justice. In the pursuit of these goals, the initiatives launched and promoted by the Institute are inspired by freedom, social justice, economic development, democracy and federalism, with a special focus on the 'South' of Italy. It is a group of persons not interested in becoming rich but, rather, interested in fostering development and change.

Italy seems to be two countries with strong development differences between the North and the South and more significant challenges faced by those in underdeveloped parts. Development is a complicated affair that may provide only limited results from large efforts. Effecting change requires finding people in the administration who are committed to change and want to get things done. Earlier attempts backed by the prime minister and the president to change the public sector offer limited results as these attempts were not backed by the administration, the local people or the unions.

ACHII works independently to avoid dependence on the political system and public or private sector funding. While the institute is privately funded, its aim is similar to the public sector, with a mission being working towards the public good. It takes a key interest in developing democracy and development and keeping these two ideas together. It actively pursues innovation in the public sector — Hirshman's idea of 'possibilism' is pursued through the identification of new ways to do things and finding a way to make it possible to effect change.

Raffaella del Monaco shared insight on the Harmonic Innovation Group that furthers Southern Italy as a geopolitical innovation hub within the Mediterranean. The group promotes a network of hubs and ecosystems of innovation in Southern Italy. It provides a contemporary monastery space that offers a creative environment for innovators, industrial players, institutional role players and investors to work together to promote ethical practices that are harmonious with sustainable development and that are culturally embedded.

Harmonic Innovation Group provides spaces of collaboration for innovation between start-ups, investors and the public sector. The organisation directly interfaces with the government and 100 companies annually. They support 250 startups and 300 SMEs with local and international networks and access to business opportunities. The group brings public and private sector agents together to address important societal challenges, e.g., technological, economic and demographic challenges. It adopts a rooting in 'possibilism' and a strong theoretical approach. It encourages enterprises to shift focus from a private sector, closed competition for maximum profit perspective, to an open innovation, collaboration and network approach that pursues the common good through harmonic innovation. One of the company's ongoing projects (which sparked significant interest amongst the study group), involves the conversion of decommissioned post offices into innovation/co-working centres.

The Harmonic Innovation hub supports integration between the other components including Harmonic Innovation Research, Harmonic Innovation Skills, Harmonic Innovation advisory, Harmonic Innovation Tech, Harmonic Innovation Xcelerator and Harmonic Innovation Licensing. It is building campuses in Southern Italy where innovation and training can be stimulated.



Daniela Caianiello reflected on the difficulties in cultivating innovation in the public sector. Pozzuoli municipality's innovation journey started 10 years ago with a difficult economic situation. While the municipality employed more than 1000 staff, skills levels were low, resulting in low levels of tax collection and financial flows. It took time and significant effort to convince politicians and administrators that taking care of the budget in a legal way is not just the municipality's role, but also a political priority. This idea is difficult to embed with politicians who wish to spend money immediately, rather than investing in financial stability that can guarantee sustained and efficient service delivery. In time, the conflict between the administration and politicians declined, 200 low skilled staff retired and employment policies started to favour young persons with specific skills and avoiding nepotism. The municipality forms part of an Italian network of 4000 municipalities that provides free training and information for a small registration fee. This network assists smaller municipalities to keep abreast with rapidly changing laws, opportunities for dialogues, sharing of ideas and other synergies. It provides a safe space where ideas, questions, and even mistakes, can be shared freely without retaliation. The support network provides members with a sense of community to face political, financial and administrative constraints collectively, in a collaborative, rather than competitive, manner.

Francesco Messina from the Centocinquanta (150) Society in Sicily shared lessons on assisting and empowering organisations to reduce waste. The society educates management to identify and address challenges, to bridge the gap between their current and ideal reality, and to solve problems collectively and holistically. For instance, though traditional bureaucracies seemingly have a preference for single-loop learning for go/no-go decision-making, the use of double-loop learning (attributed to Argyris) can prove beneficial. The society started without a clear vision, comprising a group of people experimenting with ideas. This initial broad mandate ensured a diverse set of skills and activities that resulted in a vibrant, active society. To date, the society has created 300 sustainable companies by providing ongoing support to entrepreneurs. Support provides entrepreneurs with workable economic models and strengthened decision-making capabilities. It helps them to understand how they make decisions, what information they consider, and how this information is processed and interpreted from a cultural perspective. Furthermore, the society supports entrepreneurs in the implementation of the strategy, producing a remarkable success rate.

Changing people's narratives about problems is crucial for success. Reframing a negative "I don't have time" to a positive "I don't yet know how to reorganise time/priorities to have the time to do this" enables people to adopt 'possibilism' and develop innovative solutions to problems.

5. Reflections

Members of the delegation captured their reflections on a short questionnaire after each engagement. The collective understanding that emerged, as well as selected quotes in support of this understanding, are presented here. Reflections are clustered by thematic area.

Defining resilience

The study tour played an important role in improving our collective understanding of what 'resilience' means. Resilience is simplistically defined as the creation of robust systems, communities and processes that can withstand mild or severe shocks, enabling such systems or communities to 'bounce back' and/or adapt to changing circumstances through innovation and collective action. It became clear that risk and resilience should be defined broadly to provide for the complexity of a wide variety of stressors and shocks, including economic, political, social, technological and environmental threats, including assessment of the degree of prior vulnerability or capacities across communities to withstand, adapt and cope with such threats when they occur. In dealing with complexity, it was evident that resilience responses require pre-emptive action to increase baseline resilience in cities, public sector administrations, the private sector and communities.

Effective risk and resilience management requires advocacy to create shared understanding and preparedness amongst multiple stakeholders within a complex, adaptive system. "To anticipate shocks and stresses, you must have a structured way of understanding trends and identifying potential/emerging shocks and stresses." Effective disaster management capacity is required to respond to predicted and unknown risk events and therefore planning extends to 'unknown' events that may not be foreseeable within current data trends. Resilient communities are characterised by social, economic and other forms of resilience which enables them to cope better when shocks occur.

A resilience strategy or plan is needed to enable long-term commitment, funding and development. There are no 'quick fix' resilience projects that can address systemic problems. The formulation of risk and resilience strategies by cities, organisations and communities is therefore important. Such strategies should be tailored to the unique situation, and while one may learn from the experiences of others, resilience strategies cannot adopt a 'one size fits all' approach across differing contexts.

Strategies require longer-term goals, funding, targets and political commitment, as innovative approaches may take years of redesign before they become successful. Solutions to respond to risks involve complex trade-offs amongst conflicting interests and priorities, and adopted responses may themselves pose new threats. Lockdown measures during the Covid-19 pandemic are a good example of unintended consequences that result from good intentions. Increased resilience planning implies significant investment in developing, through technical and vocational training, the capacity and competencies required. This includes resilience development, risk management, ideation, innovation and, additionally, the maintenance of a sustained appetite for development.

While all spheres of government should champion resilience management, it is especially important to mobilise efforts at the community and citizen levels. Whilst resilience efforts might focus on addressing social challenges in communities, it is also important to make use of their strengths. Community strengths may provide an entry point to address the identified weaknesses and to co-design resilience programmes that are contextually aligned. "Resilience programmes should always start with what is strong within the community, and not what is wrong with the community". There are potentially untapped resources in each community that offer a basis for innovative and collaborative efforts that produce a strong foundation for effective risk and resilience responses.

Systems thinking

The Sustainable Development Goals placed cities at the centre of solutions and as key catalysers of change. Cities may be considered complex systems with interconnectivity and cascading effects. Whilst adopting a systematic and scientific approach to risk and resilience management is important, proposed solutions cannot only be technical or technological. It requires "multi-faceted solutions to the problems that are affecting communities". Solutions should also consider a wide range of potential impacts, including social, economic, environmental and human consequences.

Systems thinking implies an integrated approach when dealing with different risks and challenges to ensure that all aspects are considered when trying to 'fix' problems. This has important implications for reviewing governance structures and institutions which tend to adopt a siloed, mandate-restricted approach when responding to problems. Effective risk and resilience responses therefore require strengthened intergovernmental relations and partnerships with communities, private stakeholders, and the non-profit sector.

Political commitment

"Political leadership support is key for a sustainable resilient strategy". Resilience efforts depend on senior political leadership to support and sustain initiatives, especially in the initial years when the return on time and money may not be immediately evident. Visits to various resilience units emphasised the importance of obtaining, and maintaining, sustained political support and interest to move the work forward. In Reggio-Emilia the political dispensation and stability played an important role in building the first industrial districts that significantly increased economic resilience in the region despite several crises over the years. The engagement with the Colorni-Hirschman International Institute highlighted that development is a complicated affair and that sometimes there may only be limited results from substantial effort. "Political commitment takes the project and innovations further" while "political interference can impede the wonderful work of resilience".

Dedicated capacity

Engagements with the Resilient Cities Network head office and member cities highlighted the importance of creating dedicated capacity to steer the resilience portfolio. The resilience unit often adopts a facilitative and catalyst role to drive resilience thinking. They play a key role in raising awareness, connecting teams responsible for different areas of work, and supporting internal and external stakeholders to consider resilience gaps. Whilst the teams may be relatively small, their ability to implement change is achieved through engagement with various internal partners and external community, private and non-profit sector stakeholders. To play this facilitative role, resilience units should be strategically placed so they can influence mainstream planning and implementation efforts of different units and teams. The implementation and execution of the resilience strategy are achieved through the redesign of ongoing programme and projects in the strategic plan of the organisation, rather than through earmarked "resilience" projects. The unit should continuously communicate the value

proposition of problems being addressed, as it may not always be evident why investment in increasing baseline resilience should be prioritised above the immediate, visible problems that communities and organisations face. Members of the resilience team need to be credible professionals who exert influence and win people over through expertise and demonstrable results. A multi-disciplinary team with advanced skills in problem identification, data analysis and systems thinking, combined with high levels of energy and strong interpersonal relations skills is required. It may be useful to recruit persons with international exposure to widen the available skills base. Resilience units are more successful when they have continued political and high-level administrative support, pursue multi-disciplinary approaches to problem-solving and can engage people in the organisation who want to see change.

A national policy directive to encourage the creation of dedicated capable units across government may play an important role in entrenching resilience management in the South African public sector.

Fostering resilience and innovation

"Fostering resilience is not an easy task and requires a deep commitment to the project and willingness to fully understand the challenges it brings". A desire or culture for experimentation may not exist everywhere and requires commitment from a variety of actors to find space. It benefits from leadership that supports both concrete and more difficult conceptual changes. "Bureaucracy typically prefers single loop for 'go, no go' decisions. Double loop learning means the construction of mental models." The ability of government to transform itself to become more innovative and conceptual in its thinking will determine our ability to become more resilient. Effecting change should be supported by innovative implementers in all spheres of government. The study tour offered a wide range of innovative projects and solutions that can increase community resilience. Incubation, acceleration, technology transfer, co-working spaces, private sector innovation and academic research offer exciting prospects. This demonstrates that innovative ideas arise from multiple bases and proves that cities play a crucial role in enabling social and economic resilience. Local government can play a leading role in stimulating innovative practices, but in South Africa, the focus is often predominantly on delivering basic services with little time, effort and investment in initiatives that can increase the baseline resilience of communities (e.g. local economic development efforts).

Innovation can be stimulated through exploring new technologies, new approaches and new ideas. The engagements at the Hague showed the importance of encouraging the testing of new ideas on a limited scale to learn valuable lessons. A "fail-fast" mindset encourages experimentation and what may be learned from unsuccessful projects. In Turin, the experience in repurposing unused or redundant public spaces/buildings offers value for approaching development issues in South African cities. Decommissioned public buildings may be repurposed to offer safe spaces that encourage collaborative community efforts and "provide opportunities for dialogue, sharing of ideas and the exploitation of synergies", thereby creating opportunities for development initiatives driven by communities.

There is a need to cultivate a culture of development experimentation in the South African public sector and within communities. This requires mentorship, support and team-building while avoiding punitive measures (e.g. relating to 'wasteful' expenditure) when innovative projects do not have the desired results. Punitive measures may emanate from jealousy and competition for available resources, rather than the failure itself. Unfortunately, if not actively deterred, a culture of malicious compliance with existing procedures and rules may prove restrictive.

Funding for innovative projects can come from different sources, including public sector funding, private sector sponsors or donors. Where funded from the public sector fiscus, innovative projects should be funded from line department budgets given the difficulty to justify allocations where 'innovation' is the sole purpose. Many of the resilient projects have more than one purpose. For example, Benthemplein mostly functions as a multi-purpose community space, transforming into a risk management water reservoir only when the need arises. "Beauty with safety is what resilience is about". The fiscus and mindset for resilience is to a large extent investment in many small-scale solutions embedded in existing programmes.

Meaningful public engagement

The 'human factor' is the centre of any resilience process. Community engagement and public participation are regarded as critical in the development and implementation of a resilience strategy. The nature and true value of participation may vary significantly. Meaningful participation requires reflective practices that consider the intended objective with public participation, who should be involved, how different perspectives should be managed, how the engagement can be sustained and whether the community is better off as a result of their participation. Communities and stakeholders should be engaged from the initial conceptualisation of the

problem and not only once decisions have been made. This is to ensure that solutions are contextually aligned and acceptable, so that communities agree, appreciate and contribute towards the implemented initiatives.

The engagement with Labsus at the Politecnico di Torino and with the Colorni-Hirschman International Institute emphasised that participation requires communication, events, consultation and empowerment of communities. It was felt that South African cities often implement the first three processes, but more for compliance reasons, rather than towards true participation. Efforts to empower communities should be strengthened so that communities may become social change agents. Participatory processes rely heavily on trust and working relationships between citizens and government.

Encouraging community participation through the stewardship of the commons or social innovation presented novel ways of meaningful and sustained community engagement. These initiatives encourage communities to take ownership of their development through self-organising efforts and the collective ownership of development initiatives at a grassroots level. There seems much potential in creating practical and legal ways that encourage and empower communities in such practices. Again, a 'one size fits all' approach is discouraged as it will not be appropriate for different contexts, communities and stakeholders. The private sector may be in a position to financially support initiatives that benefit their communities, and add to the project management and skill requirements. As an example, improving collaboration with the private sector, e.g. private insurance firms, could be useful towards ensuring that households are adequately protected from potential shocks.

Several observed challenges with local community engagement efforts should be kept in mind when developing participatory strategies. Firstly, "different opinions, views and approaches on matters by the people and the municipal stakeholders, often cause loggerheads at community engagement level and can stagnate the development process". Secondly, groups and individuals that participate usually do so to advance specific interests. Communication can be more transparent and open if participant interests are disclosed up-front — this could aid in identifying areas of shared interest and desired outcomes amongst participants. Lastly, it is important to ensure that community participation does not become elitist. There should be active and deliberate efforts to encourage all community members to engage and participate. This requires an understanding of historical and current power relations, as well as a dedicated effort to bridge the cultural and language divides that may impede buy-in and participation across all groups. Resilience partnerships appear to work better where government, private sector and non-government entities have fairly equal power bases.

Data systems for resilience

Resilience strategies should identify and prioritise local and global risks, as well as factors that may impede or support resilience. Information related to risk and resilience should be carefully weighed and continuously monitored to support adaptive management. Deciding on key metrics to 'quantify' relative risk and resilience may not be simple, and the granularity of available data or information may vary. Highly granular data may be useful to identify risks per group or area so that resilience-building actions may be specifically tailored.

Many engagements emphasised the importance of data as a key requirement towards functional, smart cities. The World Economic Forum Global Risks Reports (<https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-risks-report-2024/>) provide potentially useful data and information as a starting point. "The harnessing of big data and supporting analytics is an opportunity for South African cities to build smarter through better planning facilitated by digital decision support systems". Granular information can be obtained by recruiting the owners of existing data sets to share information and thereby increase the value or usefulness of their data. "Sharing and collaboration in respect of data is becoming a given. If operators refuse to share, there are other ways to get similar data and identify trends" thereby increasing pressure on those initially reluctant to share to become part of the communal data information system. The collection of human data for smart cities presents an ethical dilemma to planners and developers that requires careful consideration and the adoption of uniform standards.

A highlight of the engagements with The Hague and the DISIT lab was the visualisation of real-time data and the application of a systems thinking approach to explore the implications of the data. "Digital twins enable cities to apply simulations and test scenarios which contribute to understanding the risks faced and developing appropriate mitigation strategies". Similarly, "the concept of a living lab allows for the creation of multiple solutions for a particular city problem" and the exploration of multi-disciplinary responses to such problems.

It is clear from several of the visits that technology would play an increasingly important role in facilitating and enhancing resilience in cities. The importance of strengthening the foundations for the adoption of smart city technology in South African cities therefore became apparent. This includes ensuring stable electricity supplies, the roll-out of affordable and widespread broadband connectivity, and also, the installation of security infrastructure to safeguard technological systems that will support real-time monitoring systems.

6. Further opportunities

Several opportunities exist for Stellenbosch University to participate in further engagements and collaborative projects with the organisations and individuals visited. A number of areas of particular interest/usefulness are detailed below.

Case studies for teaching and learning

The focus on risk and resilience offers a series of contemporary case studies on how various cities and governments are working with communities and the private sector to improve resilience and respond to risks. Specifically, engagements with the resilience/risk management units at the City of Cape Town, The Hague, Rotterdam and the Resilient Cities Network (work in Africa and abroad), offer interesting examples of how government can support resilience through a holistic approach, that places community members at the centre of resilience strategies.

The resilience management case studies presented during the study visit are expected to be of particular interest for the School of Public Leadership (SPL) Master's module in Risk Management, the Master's module in Municipal Management and the third-year BCom module focused on Integrated Public Management.

Collaborative research/module design

Comparative analyses between South Africa and the experiences in Italy offer further opportunities towards developing a better understanding of how community resilience can be supported from a grass-roots level. Opportunities for collaborative research projects that relate to strengthening the co-planning and co-creation of public services were discussed with colleagues from the University of Modena and Reggio-Emilia, Sapienza University, the Coloni-Hirschman International Institute and the Politecnico di Torino.

The interactions with the DISIT lab are of particular interest for a redesigned Integrated Public Policy module in the SPL Master's module in collaboration with colleagues from the Policy Innovation Lab in the School for Data Science and Computation Thinking.

Strengthening public value

Improving the focus on public value in public sector departments, municipalities, the private sector, non-government and community-driven organisations through a range of potential social impact engagements merits further exploration. A number of possible opportunities are identified which could be considered for use locally. This aligns with the vision of the SPL to provide solutions through unique research, graduate, postgraduate and executive programmes by adding public value for the public good within a global and African context. It also supports the University's vision of advancing knowledge in service of society.

7. Developing resilience as a team

The study tour group developed personal resilience throughout the trip. While the photos below will no doubt speak a thousand words, they are nevertheless captioned to provide context and further information.

One of the more challenging, and often exciting, personal resilience-building experiences was navigating transport in all its forms. Aircraft, trains, metros, buses, taxis and even lifts! The group relied extensively on the public transport system during the trip and had to quickly adapt to using tickets and timetables to get around.



The team had to balance hard work with hard play. Here the group finds themselves rushing between engagements...



... and having a working lunch to determine what input was outstanding to finalize the presentations for our international hosts.



In the Netherlands, the weather wasn't always entirely predictable, with short downpours of rain sometimes being experienced with little warning. Study tour participants quickly learnt that being prepared to face varying weather conditions was sensible practice. Adaptability was key!

Food played a major role in ensuring the physical well-being and resilience of the group. Fortunately, there was no shortage of fabulous eateries and restaurants to satisfy most desires!



Left: Navigating around unknown cities becomes less easy without the use of modern GPS technology. Here, a good old-fashioned map finds employ in the city of Rome, where participants took time to explore and discover the various historic attractions across the city.

Right: Having to squeeze one's luggage into a train-station locker is no easy feat. Participants managed to make it work nonetheless!

One of the participants celebrated their birthday during the trip, and kindly invited everyone to a party. Drinks and snacks were well received after a long day of engagement/s and travel!



Going for a hike, only to find that walking 2 km over hills feels significantly further than 2 km on the flat and straight.

Given the busy schedule, participants rapidly realized that every short break ought to be put to use. Here the group takes a few minutes to sit back and recoup before their next scheduled appointment.



The group for me would make the perfect resilience officers. We learned on the way nothing was set in stone. The tour was like an ongoing evaluation. As we moved between cities we learned how each city works, and learning gained in previous cities assisted in making travelling easier. It was nice to see how innovative we were to make the tour fun while learning. We got to know each other on a personal level.

"Resilience, innovation and fun" are not three words that typically go together, yet that is what we achieved as a group. I would certainly tour with the same group again: this was the best time of my life!



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MPA Study tour 2024: Supporting Community Resilience