

DISCUSSION PAPER

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OUTLINE OF A POTENTIAL BRITISH STANDARD ON CITY RESILIENCE

Background and context

In the national and international policy arena resilience has grown in recent years to be a strong theme across a wide range of different contexts, from cyber security and countering terrorism through sustainable transport, ecology and flood risk management, to psycho-social welfare, community readiness and climate adaptation. While the essence of the concept that sits behind these different areas of work is related, it is not consistent. The position set out in BS65000¹ is that resilience is a fundamental characteristic of entities and systems that demonstrate *the ability to endure disruptive challenges and also remain viable and successful into the long term by adapting to change and responding to emergent opportunities*. This establishes the basic point that resilience is about the collaborative pursuit of both continuity and adaptability for survival and long-term prosperity.i8gfttttt

One of the things that work to extend the scope of work on resilience outwards and upwards has demonstrated is that gaps, disconnects and incoherence between activities, organizations, administrations and across other boundaries will actually undermine resilience, and this applies equally where resilience is being pursued as an objective across geographical and administrative areas. In simple terms, where efforts to build resilience *are not* strategically driven, *are not* integrated or interconnected and *are not* supported by relevant communities of interest then they will fall short of their objectives.

Additionally there are concepts that may currently be seen as competing with each other for attention and resources, whereas they should be seen and managed as complementary. For example, sustainability and resilience are different, but related concepts. Sustainability is primarily framed in terms of environmental systems, resources and impacts, and the need to balance contemporary development with the needs and rights of future generations. The concept of smart cities has attracted considerable attention and support, and is itself the subject of PD8100². Work on smart cities has focused on the effective and innovative use of technology to manage

¹ BS65000: *Guidance on Organizational Resilience*

² BSI (2014) *Making cities smarter - guide for city leaders: summary of PD8100*

urban resources and address existing and emergent problems through engaging and connecting people, places and things. There is no authoritative, yet alone definitive, position on how resilience, sustainability and 'smartness' relate, as ideas and in practice. They appear however to be wholly consistent and complementary in their concern with survival and prosperity into the long term.

Scope and proposal

The proposal here is to adopt an explicitly geographical framework, for integrating sector-specific, local and organization and network-specific resilience-building (and resilience-impacting) activities at the scale of the city region. The failure to consider how actions within one area, sector or sub-system may impact on others has the potential to degrade city resilience when seen from a wider perspective. Just as organizations may have 'silos of independent excellence', cities may have locally effective, but isolated, resilience initiatives, and a city-wide perspective can recognize and manage the interdependencies between systems-of-systems that characterise urban areas.

The city level is a key spatial scale for organising activities in a way that can build resilience in (broadly defined) social, cultural, economic, technical and environmental systems. These systems, and systems-of-systems, interact in ways that affect, positively and negatively, their resilience, and the means to influence that interaction is vested in various policy and practical frameworks such as the land-use planning system, incentive schemes of various types and investment in major infrastructure projects. Additionally urban areas are comprised of communities, which have variable levels of engagement within themselves, with each other and with the various authorities and governance and regulatory structures, and the development of 'community resilience' has been a priority for Government support in recent years, with a particular focus on preparing for emergencies.

Environmental systems, the lived experience of individuals and communities and the full spectrum of risks are not however neatly confined to administrative boundaries, whether between organizations, geographies or different levels in the hierarchy from Parish to UK Government, the EC and beyond. Initiatives to build resilience however are frequently organized by and within bureaucratic structures, and within timeframes that emphasise the short-term over the long-term. While high-level frameworks to build resilience exist (e.g. 2010 National Security Strategy, DEFRA Climate Adaptation Programme, Infrastructure Sector Resilience Plans, Strategic National Framework on Community Resilience) they are *relatively* narrow in scope, focusing on specific components of resilience. There is therefore a gap between these and the provision of relevant, credible and useful yet strategic guidance to reconcile competing objectives and support decisions in pursuit of resilience at the local-urban scale. Some of the guiding principles that might be included in a City Resilience standard are set out below.

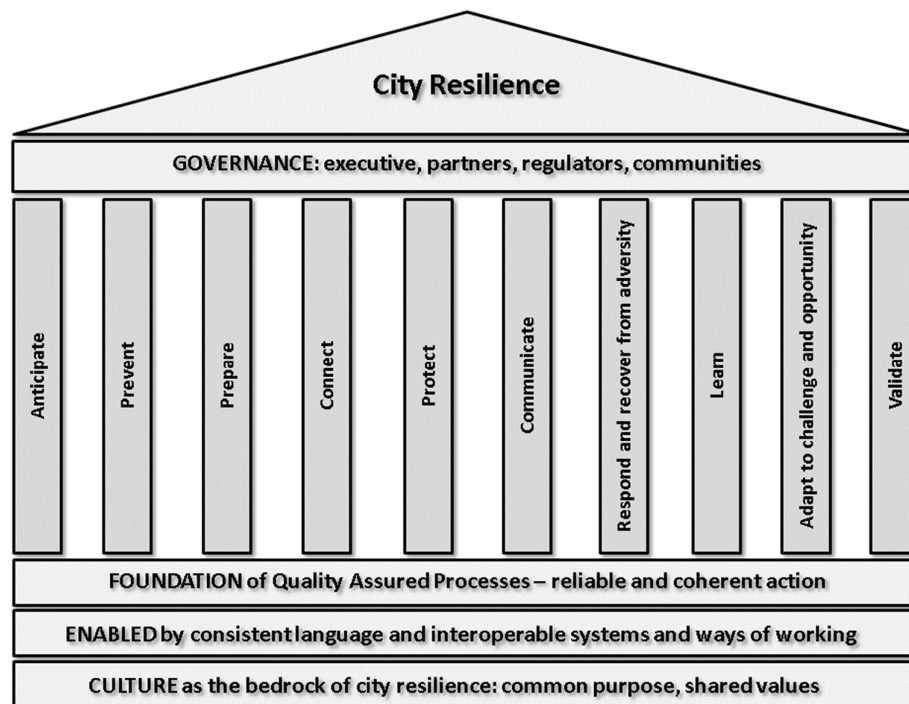


Figure 1: a basic model of elements that build resilience across the city

It needs to be acknowledged of course that urban areas (as systems-of-systems) are inextricably linked to systems elsewhere and at other spatial scales. For example, flood risk is a function of hydrological systems at catchment scales that are upland-lowland, rural-urban and likely to span multiple administrative units. Alternatively, travel-to-work areas are likely to be organized across a wider geographical scale than specific urban authorities, something that is demonstrably relevant to both resilience and sustainability.

Relationship with allied initiatives

There are a number of relevant and potentially allied initiatives, including but not limited to the Rockefeller Foundation 100 Resilient Cities³ and UNISDR Resilient Cities Initiative⁴, ICLEI (Local Governments For Sustainability)⁵ and Smart Cities. A critical link will be with the UK Cities identified in the first two rounds of the Rockefeller Foundation 100 Resilient Cities initiative – Bristol, Glasgow and London and with Greater Manchester, which has been highlighted by UNISDR as an exemplar of good practice. These cities are now establishing their own programmes to build their resilience within the Rockefeller framework. It is important to cast this relationship as one of learning from and capturing the transferable lessons of that experience, set in the context of the wider body of good practice across the UK and internationally, rather than one that sets out to shape how Bristol, Glasgow and London proceed – that is **not** the intention. The intention is to listen and work towards a consensus on transferable good practice in relation to concepts, a practical framework and recommendations to support cities to achieve higher levels of resilience through collective, coherent action.

³ www.100resilientcities.org

⁴ www.unisdr.org/campaign/resilientcities/

⁵ <http://resilient-cities.iclei.org/>

Summary

There are sizeable gaps between international initiatives, national frameworks and local good practice in respect of resilience building activities. There is currently no authoritative point of reference on how local authorities, communities and other organizations can collaborate, both strategically and at the operational level, to reconcile objectives, priorities, programmes, investment and activities to build resilience at the urban scale, and a British Standard would not only bring authority but would also be able to work outside of the existing structures that emphasize sectoral interests.

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