

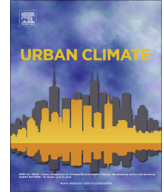


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Urban Climate

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/uclim



Initiating and sustaining action: Experiences building resilience to climate change in Asian cities



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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 13 June 2013

Revised 10 October 2013

Accepted 25 October 2013

Keywords:

Adaptation

Urban climate change resilience

Mainstreaming

Knowledge

Finance

Policy

ABSTRACT

Across Asia, and more widely, significant investment is being made by donor organisations to catalyse awareness about climate change impacts in dynamic urban environments. This investment has initiated processes that enable cities to adapt and become more resilient, thereby reducing risk to rapidly growing urban populations – notably those that are most vulnerable or marginalised. The key question is to what extent such donor funded programs are able to create the foundations for sustained action that ultimately results in the integration of urban climate change resilience (UCCR) in future policy, development plans and everyday decision making. At present there is limited evidence to inform either what those foundations might look like, or the pathways to putting them in place.

This paper draws on the experiences of 10 Asian cities participating in the Rockefeller Foundation funded Asian Cities Climate Change Resilience Network (ACCCRN) identifying key areas for action – stakeholder engagement, generating credible knowledge and integration in policy and planning at a local, regional and national level – whilst recognising the importance of influencing city budgets and attracting private sector funding.

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1. Introduction

Significant investment is being made by donor organisations, such as the Rockefeller Foundation,¹ UN-HABITAT² and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ),³ to catalyse awareness about climate change impacts in urban environments and to initiate processes that enable cities to adapt and become more resilient, thereby reducing risk; a process referred to as urban climate change resilience (UCCR) (Brown et al., 2012; da Silva et al., 2012). Whilst these types of programs are valuable, they are constrained by finite budgets and timescales (typically a few years), and the scale of funding involved is minor in relation to urban investment funds that are held by city, state and national governments (Brugman, 2012). The long term impact of such programs will depend on the extent to which this early investment influences future funding and investment patterns and leads to climate risk being integrated into everyday decision making, policies and planning; ultimately resulting in more resilient cities.

Experience emerging from cities such as Durban and Quito, that are innovators in tackling climate change, suggests that in the absence of national policy, established best practice or external drivers, funding alone is insufficient to fuel the type of transformative change at the city level that is required to mainstream UCCR (Carmin et al., 2012; ISC, 2012). Local champions and civil society groups play a critical role in initiating action by advocating for change and influencing local governments; peer-to-peer networks within and between cities enable information and ideas to be shared; and the involvement of municipal leaders can help to legitimise such activity. Nevertheless, municipalities are only likely to be motivated to sustain and ultimately mainstream UCCR if this process advances existing agendas, responds to civil society pressure, and/or creates a competitive advantage and opportunity to demonstrate leadership (Carmin et al., 2012; Parker et al., 2012). In response to these motivators, donor funding may be used most effectively to create the conditions for long term change in how policies, plans and ultimately decisions are made.

To explore how these conditions might be achieved, this paper analyses and reflects on the experiences and actions being taken in 10 Asian cities participating in the Rockefeller Foundation-funded Asian Cities Climate Change Resilience Network (ACCCRN). The particular focus is on the activities and approaches employed by local partners to sustain action on UCCR beyond the timeframe of the ACCCRN program funding which ends in 2016. The hypothesis emerging from the diversity of activities and approaches taken by ACCCRN partners, supported by academic papers relating to pioneering new urban agendas, is that in addition to funding, sustained action is founded on the ability to engage a diverse group of stakeholders, generate credible knowledge, and integrate UCCR in policy and planning at a local, regional and national level.

Twelve key factors are identified that collectively contribute to sustained action, which might be used to inform the design, implementation and evaluation of future programs and investment by donors to combat changing climate risk (Fig. 2). The authors recognise that the paper's findings and conclusions are influenced by the programmatic approach taken on ACCCRN, and may be less applicable in the context of other change models; for instance, social mobilisation to generate political pressure on governments.

The term urban climate change resilience (UCCR), which is used throughout this paper, has emerged in the course of the ACCCRN program (Brown et al., 2012; da Silva et al., 2012). UCCR embraces climate change adaptation (CCA) whilst recognising the complexity of rapidly growing urban areas and the uncertainty associated with climate change predictions (da Silva, 2012). Greater emphasis is placed on considering cities as dynamic systems where building urban resilience is a process of evolutionary transformation in response to changing circumstance as well as specific hazards (Davoudi, 2012). For ACCCRN – unlike in much of the existing literature – resilience does not refer to 'bouncing back' to a pre-existing state, rather the ability of institutions, infrastructure, ecosystems and knowledge networks to evolve and adapt so that urban populations can survive and thrive even when faced with a wide range of unpredictable shocks and stresses (Brown et al., 2012; da Silva et al., 2012; Tyler and Moench, 2012; Folke 2006). This transformative process is fuelled by the capacity of

¹ Asia Cities Climate Change Resilience Network (www.acccrn.org).

² Climate Change and Cities Initiative (http://www.fukuoka.unhabitat.org/programs/ccci/index_en.html).

³ PAKLIM (<http://www.paklim.org/about/about-paklim/>).

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