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Evolution of disaster risk governance in Greater Manchester: a case study from the UK

Kathryn Oldham^{a*}, Karl Astbury^b

^a*Association of Greater Manchester Authorities Civil Contingencies and Resilience Unit, c/o Greater Manchester Police, Openshaw Complex, Lawton Street, Openshaw, M11 2NS, United Kingdom*

Abstract

In the face of 21st century challenges including globalisation, urbanisation, climate change and anti-microbial resistance, disaster risk governance must ensure top-level buy-in from city leaders. The Sendai Framework calls for focused action in strengthening disaster risk governance. Over the last decade Greater Manchester has transformed its disaster risk governance to reflect a more sophisticated understanding of resilience. At the start of this century, the UK experienced a series of crises that led to modernisation of its civil protection arrangements. The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 enabled Greater Manchester to formalise existing partnership structures to strengthen the local platform for disaster risk reduction. This created the multi-sectoral, multi-stakeholder Greater Manchester Resilience Forum which coordinates civil protection activities for nearly 3 million residents. The UK recognises that local and national platforms need to work together and this alignment is delivered through a specialist Government team working closely with the Forum. In 2014 Greater Manchester joined the UNISDR's Making Cities Resilient Campaign. Use of the campaign's toolkit led to a review of governance and renewed trans-disciplinary collaboration across multiple thematic local partnerships. A role model city within the campaign, Greater Manchester also participated in an EU-funded project (USCORE) to pilot the UNISDR's Disaster Resilience Scorecard. Outcomes highlighted the importance of place-based assurance together with relevant metrics to inform decisions. This case study draws on this experience of strengthening disaster risk governance arrangements, a journey which will continue as Greater Manchester works with the Rockefeller Foundation's 100 Resilient Cities initiative.

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Kathryn Oldham. Tel.: +44 161 234 5552.

E-mail address: contingencies.agma@manchester.gov.uk

1. Introduction

Greater Manchester (GM), a city region of nearly 3 million people lying in the North West of England, is both a role model city within the UNISDR's Making Cities Resilient (MCR) Campaign [1] and one of 100 cities globally in the 100 Resilient Cities (100RC) programme pioneered by the Rockefeller Foundation. The city region, made up of 10 separate local government districts, constituted a formal multi-stakeholder partnership to coordinate resilience in 2004, developed its first resilience strategy in 2009, refreshed the resilience governance arrangements as the city region's own governance structures evolved ahead of an historic city-level devolution agreement in 2014 and has continued to strengthen resilience governance to embed learning from participating in the MCR Campaign.

GM is now at the start of a process to align its approach to resilience with that recommended by 100RC which is likely to further widen the engagement of stakeholders in this agenda and may again bolster disaster risk governance. At this pivotal point in its resilience journey, the city region has therefore had an opportunity to reflect on over a decade of disaster risk governance and how this has changed and strengthened. These reflections, drawn from local practitioners, form the basis of the case study described in this paper.

The case study methodology draws on two principal sources of information. Firstly, a series of systematic analyses of the Greater Manchester Resilience Forum's (GMRF) work. This includes a self-assessment through the UN's MCR campaign, completion of a Disaster Resilience Scorecard and findings from a multi-stakeholder city resilience workshop for the 100RC programme. Secondly, secondary literature was sourced from the GMRF archives, narrowing the search to governance documents. This case study is therefore an empirical enquiry investigating disaster governance within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence.

2. Resilience

Resilience is arguably a growing policy area for all levels of government across the world. Although the term has carried many meanings [2,3,4] initiatives such as the UNISDR's MCR Campaign and 100RC are beginning to offer frameworks within which city leaders can structure the concept. As the following definition from 100RC indicates, resilience encompasses every citizen; all aspects of a city's architecture, social and functional as well as the built environment; together with a city's wider inter-relationships and inter-dependencies: 'Urban resilience is the capacity of individuals, communities, institutions, businesses and systems within a city to survive, adapt and grow no matter what kinds of chronic stresses and acute shocks they experience' [5].

In 2015 countries across the world signed up to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 [6] and committed to putting disaster risk reduction (DRR) at the heart of efforts to strengthen resilience. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development echoed the Sendai Framework with 'ten of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals having targets related to disaster risk' [7]. Strengthening disaster risk governance is one of four priority areas within the Sendai Framework: 'Disaster risk governance at the national, regional and global levels is vital to the management of disaster risk reduction in all sectors and ensuring the coherence of national and local frameworks of laws, regulations and public policies that, by defining roles and responsibilities, guide, encourage and incentivize the public and private sectors to take action and address disaster risk' [6].

Although the UNISDR, 100RC and others offer definitions of resilience, perhaps in common with many other cities across the world, GM is yet to agree what 'resilience' means for the city region. Arguably, as the governance structures have evolved, so has the understanding of a number of related concepts, with attention moving from civil contingencies to DRR through to a broader concept of resilience. In parallel, work on climate change mitigation and adaptation has also generated input into this arena.

Therefore the terms used in this paper vary across the time horizon within which concepts are being discussed. Similarly, in the UK, the term 'emergency' tends to be used over that of 'disaster'.

3. City resilience

GM is a growing city region and, as it looks to the future, the resilience agenda is of central importance. For the first time in history, more people reside in urban areas than live in rural areas with UN figures indicating that, in 2014, 54 per cent of the global population lived in urban areas compared with just 30 per cent in 1950. By 2050 projections

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