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COMMUNITY RESILIENCE JOINING UP THE WHOLE OF SOCIETY

PLUS: London multi-agency counter-terror exercise; Interview with EU Commissioner Christos Stylianides; Heat waves in Pakistan & India; Terror attacks in Tunisia; PTSD in Police & Firefighters; Austerity & crisis response



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Resilience in cities

Sweden is pioneering a holistic resilience initiative that eschews silos and involves all entities that make up a city, reports **Magnus Qvant**

We all want to live and work in cities and regions that are smart, efficient and attractive but, above all, in cities that function properly. The tolerance for interruptions, queuing, delays, non-deliveries, etc, is becoming smaller.

Yet we live in an era of new challenges. The consequences of climate change are noticeable in the form of torrential rains, flooding and heat waves. Urbanisation, along with ageing infrastructure, creates further stressors.

Some strains are sudden, for example storms and heavy rain. Others are slow and chronic. The effect of urbanisation can often be near imperceptible on a day-to-day basis, but makes itself evident in the form of increased numbers of people in a city without permanent housing, longer queues, demands for more efficient logistics with regard to resources and goods, and higher demands upon – along with greater expectations of – a city's services.

If these problems are ignored, the city will no longer be an attractive prospect to its residents and businesses and, perhaps with a combination of sudden stress, could experience a severe breakdown of societal functions.

Mayors are responsible for a city's ability to function under stress. But this complex task needs collaboration and a holistic approach, which is open to new technology and innovation, in order to be successful. Cities and their region must work with integrated solutions and cut across silos, because there are so many actors involved in a successful, resilient city community.

Companies, privately or municipally owned, account for as much as 80 per cent of a city's operations. Electricity, gas, waste management, water, schools, hospitals and public transportation are just a few examples of urban functions that are, in many cases, outsourced to the business sector.

So for a city to be smart, sustainable and resilient, collaboration between the local government, academia, the business sector and policymakers, is essential.

In Sweden, the Resilient Regions Association (RRA) has developed a regional concept – called Resilient Communities – for smart collaboration towards greater resilience. It

recognises that pressures on cities have a regional impact and the ability to cope requires co-operation beyond city borders. This is both a public and business sector issue, so collaboration between the private sector and public city authorities is required.


A Resilient Community in this context works as a neutral platform to analyse, discuss and take actions to increase urban functionality. The platform operates through two steering networks, the first being a political network, which establishes the overarching agenda for its resilient community. Its members comprise local politicians from municipalities and regional politicians. The other is an executive network consisting of municipal leaders and managers from the business sector. They agree on actions, investment, start innovation projects, and develop and share knowledge. The RRA acts as an umbrella organisation, facilitating and providing services to the resilient community.

Together with its stakeholders from municipalities, universities and the private sector, the RRA has developed a model called Urban Flows. This describes a system of six flows: Energy; information; goods; services; people; and money. It provides a comprehensive perspective and a common language, making it easy for politicians and businesses that currently do not see themselves as resilience actors to understand their importance within the functionality of their cities and regions. It enables them to have a common understanding of resilience in the context of urban functionality.

Resilience solutions add efficacy, effectiveness and attractiveness by increasing the functionality on a daily basis, as well as during times of pressure.

Most of the output of the Resilient Community of Skåne in southern Sweden has been in the realm of research and capacity building, as well as stakeholder engagement. A number of workshops and seminars have been initiated by stakeholders on different challenges and subjects, such as food supply chain security.

Stakeholders of the Resilient Communities have also been active, producing business intelligence on global urban resilience issues, providing assistance in different project applications, along with project and knowledge dissemination. A most appreciated activity has been the arrangement of study trips, where members have gained new knowledge and expanded their national and international networks.

The RRA also arranges an annual conference, Functional Cities, the first and only solution driven conference focusing on functionality of cities and regions in northern Europe. 

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