

THE GOVERNANCE OF CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION: A REVIEW OF LONDON



ARCADIA FACTSHEET 10

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The governance of climate change adaptation is multi-level. It cuts across different policy sectors, involves a wide range of actors, stakeholders, and interests. In the UK, its institutional landscape has been subject to a number of restructurings. This factsheet summarises key messages from an analysis of identified gaps in London's climate change adaptation strategy, led by the Mayor of London, and secondly the strategies approach to resilience.



Context

- ◆ The latest changes to the governance of climate change in the UK were introduced by the Localism Act, 2011 which abolished regional governance and withdrew the system of National Indicators, which monitored local authorities' progress on adaptation planning.
- ◆ The Climate Change Act 2008 has been retained and so has the requirement for all major government departments to produce their respective Departmental Adaptation Plans.
- ◆ In London, legislative changes in 2007 transferred the responsibility for climate change adaptation, mitigation and energy strategies from central government to the Mayor.
- ◆ The Mayor has a 'climate change duty' which requires assessing the consequences of climate change for London and preparing relevant strategies to address these.
- ◆ The Mayor also has extensive planning powers and is responsible for producing London-wide strategies for spatial planning and environment (the latter includes adaptation, mitigation and energy policies).
- ◆ Thus, the Greater London Authority (GLA) (the Mayor and the Assembly) has a uniquely powerful position in the institutional landscape of climate adaptation in London.
- ◆ This enables the GLA to coordinate the actions of other partners, notably its allied agencies – the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority, Metropolitan Police Authority and Transport for London.
- ◆ An important part of London adaptation governance has been the production of the London Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (LCCAS). This sets out priorities and actions for managing climate related risks.

Method

- ◆ An analysis of London's climate change adaptation strategy was carried out.
- ◆ Firstly, various actors and agencies involved in climate change adaptation in London were mapped by drawing on three main sources of data: web-based information, semi-structured interviews with key actors and structured workshop discussions with project stakeholders.
- ◆ Secondly, and informed by the outcome of the first stage, a detailed content analysis of draft LCCAS was made in which the Strategy's emergency planning approach was compared with the approaches taken in other world cities.
- ◆ The analysis also focused on identifying 'gaps' in draft LCCAS with regard to its understanding of the risks and their impacts and the involvement of key actors and agencies in addressing them.
- ◆ Thirdly, the resilience approach taken by the draft LCCAS was analysed against three different understandings of resilience (engineering, ecological and evolutionary) in order to examine the extent to which the draft LCCAS has taken advantage of the social and environmental transformative potentials of climate change.

Key messages from the gap analysis of the Draft LCCA: Overarching

- ◆ Adaptation planning may need to operate within geographical regions that exceed or overlap the catchments of governing authorities.
- ◆ Existing policy mechanisms and tools may not have caught up with the powers, timelines, and rigour necessary for adaptation planning.
- ◆ Numerous partnerships and collaborations required for adaptation planning are positive for learning, co-ordination and motivation, but can also lead to fragmentations, duplications, tensions and delays.
- ◆ The private sector may have different drivers and timelines compared with the public sector and may have more stringent requirements for committing time and personnel to partnership working.
- ◆ Different organisations and regulatory regimes impose different planning periods (e.g. 5-100 years).
- ◆ Adaptation is not just a technical environmental challenge, but a social, political and normative challenge.

Key messages from the gap analysis of the Draft LCCA: London's approach

- ◆ The 'emergency' focus may lead to overlooking incremental, step-wise, adjustments to a changing climate.
- ◆ It may also lead to underuse of the communicative and place-making advantages of climate change opportunities.
- ◆ The predominant emphasis on the predictability of events focuses planning around climate risks for which evidence of likelihood is clearer, while side-lining less predictable but potentially equally harmful events.
- ◆ Greater transparency and clarity is needed about leverage of Lead Actors' nominated responsibility for the Strategy's proposed actions and consequences of failure to deliver.

Key messages from the resilience analysis of Draft LCCA

- ◆ The term 'resilience' is not clearly defined in the Strategy and shifts its meaning in different contexts.
- ◆ The Strategy's predominant approach to resilience is an engineering one.
- ◆ This contrasts with the evolutionary resilience approach, which promotes adaptive capacity building and enabling transformation.
- ◆ The transformative potential of climate change is hardly evident in the Strategy, which offers only brief glimpses of a future beyond its proposed emergency planning interventions.
- ◆ The engineering approach to resilience takes the Strategy's attention away from social processes which can enhance or diminish resilience.
- ◆ Vulnerability is framed as a descriptor of the individual's circumstances rather than an outcome of wider social processes such as social injustices and inequalities.
- ◆ The strict categorisation of actions and linearity of the 'emergency planning' approach is also contrary to evolutionary resilience which considers cities as interconnected systems with porous boundaries and extensive feedback processes which occur over multiple scales and time frames.
- ◆ In line with its 'emergency planning' approach, the Strategy is focused on responses to sudden and extreme climate events rather than on long term, small and incremental changes.
- ◆ While the Strategy is imbued with concerns over efficiency and rapidity of response, it is not strong on developing flexibility and diversity.
- ◆ Although attempts are made to examine climate impacts on the Strategy's 'crosscutting' issues, it is not clear what happens if several events occur at the same time.
- ◆ Developing and communicating a scientific understanding of the probability of events has occupied a large portion of the GLA's time and efforts and the bulk of the Strategy's contents.
- ◆ By contrast, the Strategy's understanding of consequences and impacts of events is much less informed by evidence, which has led to a lack of prioritisation of the proposed actions.

For additional information see:

- ◆ Davoudi S et al., (2011) *The London Climate Change Adaptation Strategy: Gap Analysis*. Available from: <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/guru/documents/EWP44.pdf>
- ◆ Davoudi S, Brooks E and Mehmood A (2013) 'Evolutionary Resilience and Strategies for Climate Adaptation', *Planning Practice and Research*, 28 (30), 307-322.