

Session DP GV 3.3: Adaptation Strategies in delta cities

Date and Time of Session: Wednesday, 29 September 2010, 14.00-15.45

Short description of the session topic and the objective of the session

Topic: Many delta cities prepared regional adaptation strategies. In this session, strategies of three delta cities have been compared and discussed. Representatives of these delta cities have told about their experiences and discussed success factors.

Objective: giving insight in differences and resemblances in adaptation strategies of large cities.

Session Agenda and Main Speakers

Session chair: Tom Smit, Royal Haskoning, The Netherlands

Main speakers:

- Rising to the challenge: the City of London climate change adaptation strategy, Alex Nickson, Greater London Authority, United Kingdom.
- The Copenhagen Adaptation Strategy: experiences and ambitions, Jan Rasmussen, City of Copenhagen, Denmark.
- Climate proofing Rotterdam: the Rotterdam Adaptation Strategy, Lissy Nijhuis, Department of Public Works Rotterdam, the Netherlands.

Panellists: idem.

Most exciting insight, moment or outcome

The adaptation strategy of the three cities differs at the following points:

- the way the government communicate their strategy with the inhabitants.
- the flexibility versus robustness of the measures.

Main conclusions, themes, insights or messages

London

- Focus is on a flexible adaptation pathway by choosing and combining optimal measures.
- Combines measures for flooding, water resources and overheating as much as possible.
- Starting point of flood risk measures is the definition of acceptable risk levels.
- To increase the water demand the city started saving water from existing users to supply in the increasing demand by a growing population. Saving water is done by combining the installation of water saving equipment in an existing energy efficiency retrofit programme of houses (1,2 million by 2015).
- To reduce overheating an urban greening programme is in progress; targets: increase of greenery 5% in 2030 and a further 5% in 2050; increase tree cover with 5% in 2025, 100.000 m² green roofs in 2012 and enhance a 280 ha greenspace in 2012.

Copenhagen

- Strategy incorporates: risk assessment, flexible solutions, added value, planning and ongoing review of adaptation plans.

- The rainwater management is up to date (but risks still exist).

Rotterdam

- Target: a climate proof city in 2025.
- Characteristics of strategy: integration of adaptation measures with other policy fields, e.g. spatial/urban planning, economic policy.
- Research and execution of the strategy is done in 5 themes: flood management, urban water system, adaptive building, urban climate and accessibility.
- Development of a climate toolbox: an adaptation strategies matrix with examples of potential measures. This helps to choose what decision has to be taken at which level (region, city, district or building).
- Communication is needed for acceptance of different usage of public space.

Discussion

What is leading in the choice of adaptation measures?

- London: cost-benefit calculations are very difficult because of the large differences between issues and kind of benefits (life-savings, damage), short and long term risks, prevention or responding strategy. The impact on the community is important; there has to be trust in the acting of the government.
- Rotterdam: the benefit for the economy is also an important issue.

How do you work on the awareness in the communities of adaptation needs?

- London: you have to sell it and be clear (*'I'm sorry, this is your future, but we will help you to take your responsibility'*). Challenge by exposing the examples. Ask people their ideas. Explain where responsibility for the government ends.
- Rotterdam: this is still in the starting phase and we are learning by doing; for instance the first water plaza project had to be stopped because of resistance of local residents of the ward.

Is there cooperation between your city and researchers and private companies?

- Copenhagen: an elaborate part of budgets is spend on research.
- Rotterdam: In general the focus lies on mitigation. On mitigation the links with the private sector are more solid than on adaptation, it seems that the feeling of urgency is less on adaptation.
- London: it works with CO2 because there is a currency. Not with adaptation. How do we get investment money for adaptation? We have to make more clear what the benefits are to invest.
- London: large scale development seldom leads to more resilient building!

What do we learn from historic (flooding) events?

- We have to start with communication; people have to understand we can't protect everything in every case.
- We have lost the feeling with the possible threat of water and are not acting anymore in a proper way. We can't visualize it anymore (tragedy of the commons). Acceptance and raising funds are problems.
- Part of a solution: look for a more emotional bond with the protection measure; e.g. Hamburg: dike park project (landscape modeling).

Key phrases or quotes

Jan Rasmussen: Flood helps to increase the urgency.

Rebecca Brown (Australia): There is a difference between political risks and engineering (calculated) risks. Time will tell how we will deal with these risks and which is the most important factor.

What were the messages?

Alex Nickson:

- Start defining acceptable levels of risk instead of focusing on a 100% climate proof city.
- The cities actions has to result in trust by the inhabitants and businesses.

Jan Rasmussen:

- Copenhagen is climate proof today, but risks still exists.

Lizzy Nijhuis:

- Climate change adaptation gives new opportunities to strengthen the economy of Rotterdam.
- We are learning by (argued) doing!
- There is no direct visible urgency (water annoyance in stead of water threat).

Overall conclusion

These cities are dealing with the same issues and the main line of their approach is the same, but each city approaches it from a different angle. Flexible and integral solutions on adaptation are needed and acceptance and trust by the public in taken measures is essential.