

Capacity Building to Operationalise Urban Resilience Transition

PhD thesis

Katarzyna Alicja Wieszczyńska

Abstract

There is growing recognition at both international and local levels, particularly in developing countries, of the need for capacity building to effectively address major global challenges, including climate change. However, current discussions on capacity building for climate change and urban resilience have not adequately addressed the specific challenges faced at the urban level, resulting in significant gaps in implementing systemic, beneficiary-led efforts. Urban resilience requires transformative actions to tackle multiple global challenges, but a lack of sufficient knowledge and capacity continues to hinder the development of effective solutions. Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of capacity building needs, gaps, and strategies is essential.

This research aims to foster the operationalisation of urban resilience in the Global South by developing a comprehensive Capacity Building Framework. The framework is designed to facilitate the assessment of needs and gaps, as well as the design, monitoring, and evaluation of capacity building efforts, to strengthen urban resilience. The study was guided by three specific objectives: (1) understanding capacity building in urban resilience from a scientific perspective, (2) assessing capacity building gaps and needs in practice, and (3) testing and refining the proposed framework in real-world contexts.

Phase I involved a literature review that identified key concepts, definitions, and frameworks crucial for understanding capacity building in urban resilience. Capacity building is a multi-level process that enhances knowledge and capacities to address urban challenges, such as climate change. It involves multi-actor participation, knowledge co-creation, and a transdisciplinary approach. It transcends disciplinary boundaries, generating complex understandings and driving change.

Phase II employed semi-structured interviews with practitioners and stakeholders engaged in urban resilience. The study identifies various skills and competencies needed for urban resilience, including governance, management, human resources, and digital technology. Challenges include existing structures, power dynamics, and knowledge acquisition. To improve, multi-level governance frameworks, sustainable funding, knowledge brokerage, and strong leadership are needed.

Phase III focused on applying and refining the Capacity Building Framework within the City Resilience Action Planning (CityRAP) programme. This framework offers a structured methodology for assessing capacity needs and gaps, designing capacity-building initiatives, and monitoring their impact, allowing for continuous improvement and increased effectiveness in urban resilience efforts. The refined Capacity Building Framework incorporates eight core parameters essential for effective, long-term capacity building: (1) Purpose and Capacities, aligning objectives with stakeholder needs; (2) a Multi-Stakeholder Approach, promoting inclusivity and collaboration; (3) Finance, securing funding and building financial skills; (4) National Level Alignment, ensuring local

initiatives complement national policies; (5) Gender Integration, advocating for equal participation of all genders and marginalised groups; (6) Knowledge Brokerage, facilitating the exchange of best practices; (7) Change, empowering local actors to drive transformation; and (8) Local Context, tailoring initiatives to specific local needs.

The implications of this research extend beyond academic discourse, providing practical recommendations for policymakers, urban planners, and community leaders. By enhancing the understanding of capacity building needs and practices, this thesis contributes to the dialogue on urban resilience and provides a pathway for future research to strengthen the resilience of urban communities worldwide.