Workshop report

RISKSEC2.0 Local stakeholders' collaborative workshop

27 – 28 November 2023, Stockholm

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1. Introduction

The RISKSEC2.0 project hosted a workshop 27-28 November 2023 in Stockholm. The workshop aimed at exploring and comparing local climate adaptation strategies by bringing together 18 experts and practitioners from Dordrecht (the Netherlands), Halmstad (Sweden), Stavanger (Norway), and Bergen (Norway). The workshop began with an introduction of key findings from the RISKSEC2.0 project, followed by interactive exercises to brainstorm around similarities and differences in local climate adaptation strategies and identify short-term responses and long-term strategies to manage climate risks. The workshop concluded with a field trip to Slussen for participants to learn about how the city of Stockholm works with climate change adaptation and flood risk mitigation. Appendix 1 shows the workshop agenda.

Overall, the workshop highlighted that adaptation, while primarily addressing climate risks, also involves navigating a spectrum of complex challenges. These include reconciling conflicting goals and interests, short planning horizons, clarifying roles and responsibilities and contending with uncertainty. Recognizing and tackling these multifaceted issues is crucial to developing effective adaptation strategies, which are essential for fostering resilient and sustainable societies in the future.

Findings informed a SEI blogpost (https://www.sei.org/features/four-approaches-to-climate-change-adaptation/) and journal article (manuscript published in Risk Hazards & Crisis in Public Policy Special Issue).

2. Background

While the securitisation of climate change is well-documented at national and international levels, the way securitization affects local-level governance and adaptation is much less known. The RISKSEC2.0 project seeks to bridge this gap by analysing opportunities for complementarity between international, national and local adaptation efforts. This involves both positive dynamics, such as shared understandings and coherent action, and negative dynamics like conflicting perspectives and local disempowerment.

In addition to a literature review, the RISKSEC2.0 project examines climate change adaptation in four European municipalities: Dordrecht (the Netherlands), Halmstad (Sweden), Stavanger (Norway), and Bergen (Norway). The aim is to explore whether local strategies are driven by risk or security narratives.

3. Key outcomes from the workshop

3.1 Operationalisation of climate change adaptation

While nearly all participants considered adaptation to be a strategy to tackle climate risks, its operationalisation varies across municipalities. Overall, differences in adaptation strategies are largely influenced by national governance systems, such as the local self-government structure in Sweden.

In Halmstad, adaptation strategies are focused on spatial planning to safeguard vital societal functions and infrastructure from flooding, landslides, and erosion. Long-term planning is challenging, as the Halmstad Master Plan envision society until 2050.

Similarly, in Dordrecht, adaptation efforts aim to create more space for water, considering the Netherlands' competing demands for land use due to a growing population and limited available resources. In Dordrecht, climate adaptation accounts for water-related hazards. Other climate-related hazards tend to be neglected.

In Norway, definitions of adaptation and climate risks are outlined in white papers but are absent from official policy documents. These definitions do not effectively reach the local level. The municipality of Stavanger treats adaptation as a general risk management issue. The risk management team took a lead on adaptation as it began to climb the local agenda, primarily due to a lack of ownership by other municipal departments.

3.2 Roles and responsibilities

Since the impacts of climate change are primarily felt at local level, municipalities play a central role in adaptation. But the degree of responsibility and action scope for local authorities varies widely between countries and communities.

In Sweden, the responsibility for protecting individual properties lies with owners and insurance companies. Therefore, with a residential area prone to flooding, Halmstad municipality can only undertake adaptation efforts that benefit the community at large, not specific private properties. Being a property owner, the municipality is responsible for adapting its buildings and properties to account for flooding, erosion, and landslides. To enhance citizen preparedness and adaptation, the municipality has implemented an early warning system that notifies residents via mail. Residents are urged to take proactive protective measures. First responders have begun denying assistance to households that experience recurring flooding but fail to implement any protective measures.

By contrast, Dordrecht is legally obligated to protect private properties from rainfall exceeding 16 mm. Failure to fulfil this duty entitles residents to take the municipality to court and seek compensation for any damages. For the areas outside the dikes, residents are not protected from flooding. Every year, the municipality sends a letter to these

residents, regardless of weather conditions, to raise awareness about the risks of rising water levels. This letter aims to educate people on the potential consequences and encourage them to take proactive measures.

Moreover, the Netherlands has a more robust regional governance structure compared to Norway and Sweden. Dordrecht employs a three-level approach to water safety: prevention, city planning and building, and disaster risk management. The city is a frontrunner in this area and has adopted a self-reliant island strategy, which includes an annual drill that has also become a social event. While Dordrecht excels in technical collaboration, it lacks a comprehensive approach to broader collaborative efforts.

In Bergen, the municipality steps in to protect private properties when the solution falls beyond the owner's jurisdiction. For instance, Bergen municipality intervenes to shield residential areas from heavy rainfall runoff from publicly owned hillsides. Bergen conducted a climate survey, and the results revealed that private households are not concerned about their property being affected by climate change. There is a significant lack of awareness regarding their responsibility, as most people expect the municipality to respond to climate-related issues.

3.3 Political support

While participants agreed that climate change is a serious problem, they also acknowledged the many other issues that politicians must address at the same time. Opinions among politicians vary regarding the necessary actions: some believe too little is being done, while others do not see climate change as a significant issue. For instance, a politician in Halmstad is a known climate change denier.

Long-term planning is challenging at all levels. Politicians often focus on short-term achievements to report to their voters within a four-year election cycle. There are also challenges emerging from multi-level governance. For example, local politicians in Stavanger have made decisions that support climate adaptation. However, at the national level, parliament faces more difficulty in passing effective climate policies.

3.4 Funding

During the workshop, participants noted that adaptation funding often exceeds local budgets, necessitating creative solutions from local government.

In response to this financial gap, both Norwegian municipalities seek external funding opportunities. Stavanger, for instance, has developed climate dashboards and risk assessments with support from the EU and the Norwegian Environment Agency. In Bergen, the municipality uses internal funding to finance planning, modelling, and risk analyses. The municipality applies for external funding to work more broadly through projects.

External funding schemes can pose challenges. Dordrecht's reliance on such funding has trapped it in a cycle of pilots and living labs, with limited budget for long-term adaptation solutions. However, Dutch regional water authorities have their own taxation system, which operates independently from the national government. Part of the Delta programme in the Netherlands is adaptation. The figures can say how much you can spare in monetary terms.

Halmstad received national funding to integrate climate risks into its land use plan. Yet there is no specific funding for implementing adaptation measures. While there are national grants, their variability makes long-term planning challenging. For instance, one year the grant might be 25 million, then 75 million the next, and in response to an event late in the year, 500 million might be allocated, which must be spent within three weeks.

During the workshop, there was an extensive discussion about who bears cost for adapting private properties. In Norway, the public sector can implement adaptation measures to protect private property owners if the solution lies beyond the individual's jurisdiction. The municipality is not responsible for covering economic losses but is accountable for safeguarding life, health, and preventing future incidents. Specifically, if flooding is caused by water from municipal pipes, the municipality is responsible. There will not be more money for the municipality of Stavanger to finance additional measures. The participants from Stavanger raise an interesting question: How should we fund these projects in the future, when there are so many other sectors shouting for the same (and these sectors are more visible and acute than climate impacts)? In contrast, in Sweden, such damages are covered by insurance.

3.5 Tools

Participants highlighted many tools used for climate change adaptation in their respective countries and municipalities.

In Stavanger, the municipality has a person with a background in game development who creates films with strong visuals to illustrate potential future scenarios. These digital twins are also used to present new projects as realistically as possible. Similarly, SMHI has developed a climate adaptation game for schools, educating students on the importance of environmental resilience. In the Netherlands, citizens can access funds to make their gardens greener and more adaptable to climate change.

Both Stavanger and Halmstad have integrated climate change in their master plans. In contrast, a climate action plan was recently approved in Bergen. The city also conducted a management review of its work related to climate adaptation, identifying gaps that can be addressed to secure more resources and support. While Bergen has set good targets, the focus is now on better operationalization, with the review serving as a potential tool for improvement.

Appendix 1 – Agenda

Day 1 – 27 November	
Before 12.00	**Arrive to Stockholm**
12.00-13.00	**Lunch at K-märkt.**
13.00-13.30	**Introduction** - Presentation of the agenda - Round of introductions of project team and stakeholders - Presentation RISKSEC2.0 project
13.30-14.00	Presentation Stavanger case + Q&A
14.00-14.30	Presentation Bergen case + Q&A
14.30-14.45	**Coffee break**
14.45-15.15	Presentation Halmstad case + Q&A
15.15-15.45	Presentation Dordrecht case + Q&A
15.45-17.00	**Full group discussion** - What are the similarities and differences between the cases in terms of discourses, actors, and tools? - Why do you think we see these differences in climate change adaptation across the cases?
19.00	**Dinner at Blue Chili**

Day 2 – 28 November	
8.30-10.00	**Collaborative exercise: By whom and by which means is climate change adaptation managed in the different cases?**
10.00-13.00	**Field visit** 10.00 Pick-up 10.30-12.30 Guided tour at Slussen organized by the city of Stockholm
13.00	**Lunch and wrap-up at Hermans.**