

## Feedback from a young person on Bristol's Resilience Strategy Report

Cities across the globe are thinking about 'resilience', not just Rockefeller RS100 and, for example, Global parliament of Mayors<sup>1</sup> and C40 Cities<sup>2</sup>. Bristol is well known in the UK for its long-term efforts at environmental sustainability and arguably in Europe, not least due to European Green Capital Status in 2015. However, the challenge of a growing population in the city and the wider West of England area will impose serious further challenges to the city leaders. The Resilience Strategy might be seen as a first step post European Green Capital to plan for the long-term adaptation to climate change. The key concern which may mark out this Resilience strategy from past Bristol City Council documents on the environment may be the Mayor's imprint. His highlighting of the need for equity in the city as part of this journey poses a major challenge to a Council which continues to face large budget cuts and loss of experienced staff.

A first insight into the strategy when reading through made me wonder whether it reflected the views across the whole of Bristol and whether it captured a 'one city' idea. The current Mayor talks about having 'a conversation' rather than 'a consultation'. Yet, while the Strategy accounted for different organisations inputs including the Schumacher Institute, it clearly reflects a strong environmental perspective and perhaps lacked the insights of different social groups and world views. Thus, I came to question how much emphasis was given to future generations through questioning the existing youth parliament and other young people groups and especially whether they truly reflected the voices of young people from across all the wards of the city. Achieving a representative sample may have thrown up the critical issue of environmental sustainability and how it works or does not work with social justice. So, while the development of the resilience strategy has clearly reached out to young people there remains a question as to who's voices have been heard and those who have not i.e. the voices of young people from poorer areas of the city may be little heard. This could also be true across all age groups. An example of how difficult it is to engage with communities from poorer areas of the city is well reflected in the current challenge faced by BCC in trying to get a representative response to the Quality of Life survey to truly reflect the views across all ethnicities and income groups. This has largely not been achieved. It may be true also of the Resilience Strategy.

The Strategy overall provides an in depth and well thought out vision of Bristol being a resilient city yet it is arguable that it may struggle to be delivered by the Mayor. The current Mayor, Marvin Rees is inexperienced in sustainable system thinking and perhaps towing the party line unlike former independent Mayor George Ferguson. This may be a hindrance to the ability of the Strategy to be carried out effectively. In addition, in times of austerity the Council lack funds to invest in greener infrastructure and to provide money for institutes and organisations such as Schumacher to advise and shape the future of Bristol. There is also a

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<sup>1</sup> <https://globalparliamentofmayors.org/> Accessed 17/07/2017.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.c40.org/> Accessed 17/07/2017.

risk that it becomes more inward facing in managing staff cuts and frequent re-organisations. Therefore, despite Bristol being one step ahead of other cities in the UK and in Europe, if there is a lack of solid leadership and resources to advance Bristol in becoming a 'resilient' city, alternatives may need to be discussed such as bottom up social movements perhaps started by young people?

Throughout the report there is reference to Bristol being involved in the 100 Resilient Cities Network in which the introductory letter from the President. This could have been an opportunity for Bristol to highlight good practices from other cities and adopt new ways of doing from across the globe. Bristol's top two shocks and stresses are an ageing infrastructure and an ageing population. By connecting with other cities who share the same challenges, new way could have been proposed for facing these particular issues.

In the delivery of the Resilience Strategy, involvement of greater and representative citizen participation must be guaranteed in terms of the actual implementation of the 42 'pattern disrupters' listed. As part of this, the issue of co-creation is discussed. It may be that implementation of the Strategy should not be owned or controlled by the City Council in order for communities to feel that they have real ownership, rather than 'having things done to them by the Council' and so the city residents can better shape the solutions that are developed across the city. Bristol as a city has already a large number of bottom-up community engagement projects and organisations, such as Playing Out, Knowle West Media Centre, and the Bristol Pound, as well as 'think-tanks' such Soil Association, National Association of City Farms, as well as the Schumacher Institute. It might be that one of these last three would be well placed to act as a coordinating body to take forward the actions of the Resilience Strategy. This might fit well with the ABCD (Assets-Based Community Development) policy discussed – to draw on the assets of local communities in finding ways to live more resilient lives in the future. More emphasis on ABCD would have seemed logical given the need of the Council to get more citizen to manage local resources e.g. parks as Council funding stops.

Number 41 is Horizon scanning and this is the only place where the Schumacher Institute has been recognised in the Resilience Strategy. Horizon scanning is about exploring what the future might look like to understand uncertainties better. Horizon scanning helps government to analyse whether it is adequately prepared for potential opportunities and threats. This helps ensure that policies are resilient to different future environments.<sup>3</sup> Clearly, with part of the Schumacher institute remit to undertake research, there is an important role in keeping abreast of emerging global, regional, national and local trends in order to best apply experience from other cities.

Given the level of knowledge contained within the Schumacher institute in addressing resilience there is, however potentially far more contribution it could make to the Resilience Strategy. The question is whether, as discussed earlier Bristol City Council wants to recognize the potential role of other organizations with significant experience in this field. The next step may be for the Institute to approach the city council again with a proposition about how a

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/horizon-scanning-programme-team> accessed 20/07/2017.

Resilience Strategy Implementation Plan is developed with many partner agencies. Ultimately one or more of these may be better placed than the council to take the lead in implementing the Plan.

Overall, the Council should be congratulated for joining the Resilient Cities movement and producing a Resilience Strategy. The document sets out a reasonable approach to looking ahead – as far as 50 years ahead – and trying to plan for the immediate and near future as well. Where the Strategy is weakest is perhaps in demonstrating meaningful engagement from all areas of the city to really reflect the different world views. Following on from this is how best the city, not just the Council, can utilise its assets to help implement the listed 42 pattern disrupters listed as well as the many other ideas that will be added in the coming months and years.

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