Civil protection in diverse societies: migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in the context of major risks prevention and management

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1 Issues at stake

How to optimise disaster prevention and management in culturally diverse societies is an extremely complex issue. It raises fundamental questions not only about human life, human rights and human equality, but also about the relationship between public organisations, between different levels of government and, last but not least, from a democratic perspective, between public interest and collective interest. It deals with the interaction between civil protection bodies organised according to the command and control principles and societies where there are various, and sometimes conflicting, ways of considering authority, efficiency and diversity. It requires reformulating and investigating hypotheses on how people are most likely to react in the face of disaster that are often based on an obsolete vision of stable and culturally homogeneous societies. It questions the very capacity of civil protection bodies to communicate and interact with all the people they are meant to serve.

A major disaster can be defined as a situation or event, which overwhelms local capacity, necessitating a request to national or international level for external assistance. Usually disasters are classified according to their causes, the main distinction being that between natural and technological (or man-made) disasters.

Natural disasters	Technological or man-made disasters
• Geophysical (earthquakes, landslides, tidal waves, volcanic activities) • Hydrological (avalanches, floods) • Climatological (cyclones and storms, extreme temperatures, drought, wildfires) • Biological (disease epidemics, insect / animal plagues)	• Industrial accidents (nuclear disasters, chemical disasters, transport accidents) • Conflicts (displaced populations, famine) • War and terrorist attacks

There is a range of frequently mentioned aggravating factors, such as climate change, unplanned-urbanization, under-development/poverty that will increase the frequency, complexity and severity of disasters. It is only recently that the cultural diversity of affected populations has been added to this list. This stems in particular from the work carried out within the framework of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement and was precisely the issue discussed during the workshop.

Natural disasters are more or less predictable. Earthquakes and volcanic eruptions occur at the margins of moving lithospheric plates in specific regions of the earth. Coastal and downstream areas are more likely to be flooded than mountainous regions that are themselves more vulnerable to avalanches and landslides. Cyclones typically form over large bodies of relatively warm water and tend to affect regions located in a worldwide band of thunderstorm activity near the equator, referred to as the Intertropical Front (ITF). The time elapsing between two similar disasters varies considerably and can sometimes span over centuries.

Technological disasters are much more difficult to anticipate. When they do occur, they are more likely to affect densely populated regions, precisely there where industrial plants, power stations, transport hubs and symbols of power are concentrated. As it is traditionally in cities that most economic assets are located, urban areas have always been vulnerable from the material point of view. More recently demographic change has increased the human vulnerability of urban societies.

Because cities concentrate a growing proportion of the overall population they are increasingly vulnerable. Urbanization has indeed accelerated considerably since the beginning of the last century and the trend is set to continue albeit to a lesser degree in Europe than in other parts of the world. The proportion of urban population in the world has risen from 13% in 1900 to 29% in 1950, 49% in 2005 and, according to World Bank estimates, to 60% by 2050.[1] In Europe, the figures are much higher, respectively 51.3% in 1950, 72.9% in 2011 and could reach as much as 83.8% in 2050.[2]

The figures are even more spectacular if one considers the relations between urbanization and international migration. Indeed migrants move predominantly to urban centres where they are more likely to find employment and other members of their ethnic group. In the Spanish city of Fuenlabrada, for example, the proportion of migrants has risen over the past 10 years from 3% to 16%. Almost everywhere in Europe the proportion of migrants is higher in cities than in rural areas. If cultural diversity is indeed a source of vulnerability in disaster situations, cities are particularly exposed. What emerged quite clearly from the workshop is that the vulnerability of culturally diverse populations in disaster situations depends to a large degree on how the local authorities engage with the migrant groups living in the city.

During the workshop several case studies were presented:

- The inclusion of migrants during the critical phase of the March 11, 2011, Great East Japan Earthquake, also called the Tohoku earthquake[3]
- The engagement of the local police with the migrant population in the city of Fuenlabrada, Spain
- The Municipal emergency plan of the city of Lisbon, Portugal
- The development of non-verbal communication techniques by the French Civil Protection Body
- The promotion of security through plurilinguism by the Austrian Armed Forces Language Institute
- The landslide mitigation flowchart developed by the French Landslide Observatory[4]
- The migrant friendly communication tools developed for Japanese municipalities by the Resource Center for Multicultural Community in Tokai, Aichi prefecture, Japan
- The multilingual information and communication policies of the Earthquake Planning and Protection Organization of Greece.

In addition to these local case studies, the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) presented the ***Making Cities Resilient Campaign***. The aim of the campaign is to achieve resilient, sustainable urban communities through actions taken by local governments to reduce disaster risk. It encourages cities to prepare Climate and Disaster Resilient City Action Plans. The campaign forms part of the UNISDR's Hyogo Framework for Action: 2005-2015 (HFA) which considers, amongst other things, that "*Cultural diversity, age, and vulnerable groups should be taken into account when planning for disaster risk reduction*".[5] A Post-2015 framework for disaster risk

[1] *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2005 Revision*. United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/WUP2005/2005wup.htm (accessed July 4, 2014)

[2] *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2011 Revision. Highlights*. United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UN. http://esa.un.org/unup/pdf/WUP2011_Highlights.pdf (accessed July 18, 2014)

[3] This magnitude 9.0 offshore earthquake triggered a destructive tsunami that affected the coastal area of Sendai and resulted in 15,887 deaths, 6,150 injured and 2,612 people missing. Around 4.4 million households in northeastern Japan were left without electricity and 1.5 million without water. Hundreds of thousands of people have to evacuate after the meltdown of 3 reactors of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant

[4] Observatoire des Instabilités de Versants

[5] Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters. Extract from the final report of the World Conference on Disasterr (A/CONF.206/6) http://www.unisdr.org/files/1037_hyogoframeworkforactionenglish.pdf (accessed July 24, 2014)

reduction (HFA2) will be submitted for approval at the 3rd UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in March 2015 in Sendai, Japan.

Participants were also presented the results of a questionnaire sent to the 26 signatory states to the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement.[6] The main finding is that cultural diversity is seldom considered as an issue deserving special attention in disaster management planning. This contradicts the evidence provided by research on the effects of previous disasters in culturally diverse societies and highlights the need to pursue efforts in this field.

From a more comparative perspective, the workshop also looked at some conceptual and theoretical issues. It was noted that one of the key theoretical concepts frequently used in disaster management, is "community resilience", defined as a "set of networked adaptive capacities" with four major components[7]:

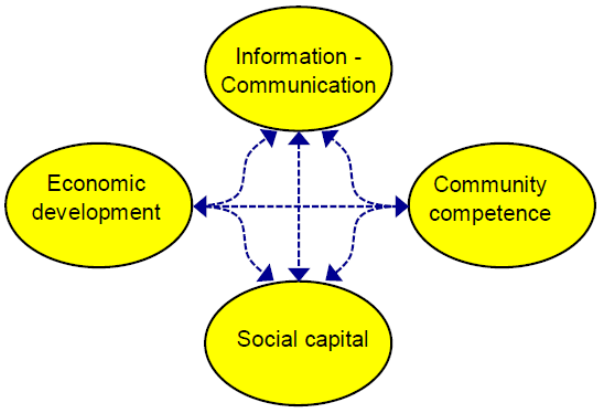

Figure 1 : The four components of community resilience

By considering how migrant populations are positioned compared to these four components, it is possible to formulate some general proposals about how diversity can be managed effectively to reduce the vulnerability of societies affected by natural or technical disasters.

The prevention, preparedness, response and recovery (PPRR) model is a comprehensive approach to risk management that has been used by Australian emergency management agencies for decades. It views disaster management as a four-phase sequence or phases necessitating long-, middle- and short-term intervention.

[6] The preliminary results of questionnaire are summarised at the end of this report.

[7] Norris F.H., Stevens S.P., Pfefferbaum B., Wyche K.F. & Pfefferbaum R.L. (2008). "Community Resilience as a Metaphor, Theory, Set of Capacities, and Strategy for Disaster Readiness", *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 41/1-2 pp. 127-150
http://www.emergencyvolunteering.com.au/ACT/Resource%20Library/CR_metaphor_theory_capacities.pdf (accessed July 17, 2014)

Figure 2 : The PPRR disaster management cycle

1. **Prevention** - actions taken to reduce or eliminate the likelihood or effects of an incident.
2. **Preparedness** - steps taken before an incident to ensure effective response and recovery
3. **Response** - actions taken to contain, control or minimise the impacts of an incident
4. **Recovery** - steps taken to minimise disruption and recovery times

Combining these two typologies provides a useful matrix to analyse about how disaster prevention, preparedness, response and recovery can be managed with regards to culturally diverse societies.

	Information - Communication	Community competence	Social capital	Economic development
PREVENTION	long-term	long-term	long-term	long-term
PREPAREDNESS	middle-term	middle-term	middle-term	middle-term
RESPONSE	urgent	urgent	urgent	urgent
RECOVERY	short-term middle-term long-term	short-term middle-term long-term	short-term middle-term long-term	short-term middle-term long-term

Figure 3 : The disaster management / cultural diversity matrix

2 Cultural diversity and disaster prevention

What measures can be taken in the long-term to reduce or eliminate the likelihood or effects of a disaster in a culturally diverse society?

2.1 Target group and risk assessment

One of the first concerns is to identify the target groups. How to do this depends on the local context. Defining target groups according to administrative categories such as migrants, asylum seekers or refugees may be useful in certain cases but it can also provide an incomplete picture of the population that is more at risk because of cultural factors. It seems more appropriate to determine target groups according to certain features such as their countries of origin, the languages they speak, the religions they practice, where they live and work, etc. Proceeding in this way makes it possible to include people who do not fit into traditional migration management categories such as undocumented migrants, transfrontier workers, foreign tourists or nationals with a migration background. This can be particularly useful for cities such as Patras, Greece, where a large cluster of asylum seekers can be found, in Luxemburg, where about half of the workforce is formed by people commuting daily from neighbouring countries,[8] or in touristic destinations such as Cyprus, Croatia, Malta or Turkey. Thus, working "upwards" from cultural factors to define the target groups provides a more complete picture of those groups whose cultural characteristics (language, religion, communication styles, integration into the host society) could put them more at risk than the rest of the population in the event of a disaster. For convenience sake, all groups corresponding to this criterion will be referred to hereafter under the generic term of "migrant groups" or "migrants".

Once the target groups are defined the next step is to assess to what extent they are more at risk than the rest of the population. First of all, it should be noted that migrants often have below-average incomes and live where accommodation is comparatively cheap. The price of accommodation is determined, amongst other things, by the age and quality of construction, its location with respect to natural hazards and its proximity to public transport networks or other facilities. There is a fair chance that low-income households, amongst which there are proportionately many migrants, will be more severely affected in the case of a major disaster than people living in "safer" parts of town in buildings that respect modern security standards. The local authorities in Lisbon, Portugal, are aware of this. The Municipal civil protection office has drawn up several local emergency plans that take into consideration the vulnerability of communities living in the older parts of the city where houses are more likely to collapse in the eventuality of a major earthquake like the one that destroyed the city in 1755.

In addition to material factors, migrant groups can be more vulnerable than the rest of the population for cultural reasons. Most importantly they may not know the local language well enough to understand what is happening or what they are asked to do. Effective communication may also be hampered by cultural differences relating to gender relations, religious beliefs, and attitudes towards public authority or kinship bonds. Disaster management bodies that do not include cultural diversity management in their planning procedures will be much less effective than those that do. Investing in culturally sensitive prevention is much more profitable that investing in response. Cultural diversity and group dynamics are very complex to grasp and it will be too late to try to understand them once disaster strikes.

2.2 Information and communication

When an emergency situation arises, the fast dissemination of information and effective communication is crucial to reduce casualties and optimize relief operations. In culturally diverse societies civil protection bodies need to know what languages migrants speak, where they get their

[8] Frédéric Schmitz, Guillaume Drevon, Philippe Gerber (eds), *La mobilité des frontaliers du Luxembourg : dynamiques et perspectives*. Numéro Hors-Série des Cahiers du CEP/INSTEAD, octobre 2012 http://www.statistiques.public.lu/catalogue-publications/cahiers-CEPS/2012/hors-serie-FR.pdf (accessed July 17, 2014). This document is also available in German under the title : *Die Mobilität der in Luxemburg beschäftigten Grenzgänger : Dynamik und Perspektiven*

information from and how they communicate with each other. They need the capacity to react quickly by having at hand updated multilingual and culture specific information. Finally they need to know how to find the key persons in the various communities and be prepared to engage with them in a non-patronizing way. In short civil protection bodies need to acquire intercultural competence.

2.3 Community competence

Intercultural competence is indeed a prerequisite to effectively include migrants in all four phases of disaster management. This can be quite problematic for civil protection bodies. During and after of the 2014 floods in Bosnia and Herzegovina, military and security organizations played the central role in response and relief operations. In many other countries, civil protection bodies have gradually become more independent from the armed forces but conserve some characteristics such as military ranks, uniforms, strict vertical hierarchy and cultural homogeneity. Civil protection bodies are still predominantly staffed, especially in management positions, by nationals. For this reason they are less sensitive to the questions of minorities and migrants. This accrues the risk of cultural misunderstandings and consequently higher casualties and lesser relief for migrant populations affected by disaster. In the long-term the best way to reduce this risk is to recruit staff that mirrors the sociocultural and ethnic diversity of the local population. This may require overcoming the reluctance of migrants who come from countries, like Turkey for example, where voluntary engagement in relief organisations or fire departments is virtually unknown. Most importantly, however, it requires a change in the organisational culture of civil protection bodies and an acceptance of cultural diversity as potentially profitable to the organisation when confronted with a disaster.

2.4 Social capital

Social capital is basically an economic idea that refers to the connections between individuals and entities that provide mutual benefit. Groups and societies function because people trust each other and are prepared to cooperate. Social capital increases with the diversity and quality of connections people have with other people, or groups with other groups. Migrants who are socially isolated interact mainly with relatives or people from their own community and have little social capital. This is particularly true of newcomers, temporary workers, asylum seekers or undocumented migrants. Building new connections, and the trust that is needed to benefit from them, requires time. The investment may not be worthwhile if the migrant is just “passing through” or treated as such by the host society. Limited social capital increases the vulnerability of migrants. Because of the lack of connections with the host society, some migrants, even if they can understand the language of the host society, do not have access to the crucial information they need to cope with an emergency situation. On the other hand, and this is important from the intercultural perspective, members of migrant groups are often very well connected and inter-group solidarity is sometimes much stronger that in the host-society. Kinship bonds, common language, shared symbols, religious practice and, last but not least, the same communication styles, often bring expatriated communities together irrespective of their economic status. Hence the importance, as mentioned above, of engaging with the community leaders and migrant activists.[9]

2.5 Economic development

From the economic perspective, civil protection bodies need to be aware of how resources are distributed within society. People with limited means are more at risk in crisis situations. They may not have a car or some other private means of transport to leave an area threatened by an imminent disaster. They may have found cheap accommodation a danger zone. Members of their family may not have the means, or indeed the possibility, to provide them with basic necessities immediately after the disaster. In these respects, migrants are particularly bad off. Some have the additional difficulty of not understanding what is going on or finding someone close to turn to. They are therefore more likely to bear the brunt of suffering and loss if their economic and cultural disadvantage is not taken into consideration in disaster management planning.

[9] In this respect it could be argued that the higher mobilization potential of migrant groups in crisis situations compensates to a certain extent the weakness of social capital of each migrant taken individually.

2.6 Recommendations on future actions

During the prevention phase, the core element liable to increase resilience is a good understanding by civil protection bodies of the cultural diversity of the population. Such understanding should not be theoretical but built on empirical knowledge of the internal dynamics of the various groups living in the city. Only thereafter is it possible to examine planned courses of action, and interaction, and to see whether they are liable to reach out to all the inhabitants of the city.

National, regional and local authorities may consider mapping the various kinds of information related to immigration, cultural practices, places and organisation and using the results as a tool to introduce culturally sensitive disaster management planning. The work accomplished by the ASCAR Foundation in Barcelona provides a good example of how interactive digital mapping can contribute to increasing awareness and knowledge about cultural diversity.[10]

Disaster management organizations may consider setting up training courses on intercultural communication and awareness for staff at all levels of the organization. Such courses should have a strong empirical focus and include discussions with migrants of various origins and social backgrounds.

3 Cultural diversity and disaster preparedness

What steps should be taken before an incident to ensure effective response and recovery in a culturally diverse society?

Being prepared to face up to a disaster means having the capacity to act, and have people act, most often at very short notice, in a way that minimizes impact. Preparedness strategies include such measures as emergency planning, evacuation and warning systems, developing employee preparedness, ensuring effective cooperation between all agencies and organizations that could be involved and making sure equipment and services are available if a disaster strikes. Such technical measures could however be relatively ineffective if no consideration is made for cultural diversity or if no steps are taken to ensure the disaster preparedness of migrant and minority groups. This cannot be done at short notice but requires engaging with the migrant population over a considerable span of time. As mentioned before, cooperation requires trust and trust cannot be built overnight.

3.1 Information and communication

Information and communication are crucial elements of disaster preparedness. In culturally diverse societies this implies not only having the appropriate information ready before the disaster strikes but also knowing how to convey this information to the target groups in the most effective way. What is at stake here is equal access too meaningful information. Migrants, wherever they come from and whatever their legal status, have the same right, no more and no less, as the host population to be informed about the potential risks and what to do to minimise harm when a disaster occurs.

The best way to make sure information reaches out to migrant groups is to prepare it in languages they understand. That does not mean simply translating documents into other languages. In a pluricultural context literal translations can cause misunderstanding and sometimes even be misleading. Graphic symbols that are frequently used in emergency situation communication to convey essential information quickly may not be understood at all by some people depending on where they come from. Different countries have different colour codes and a graphic symbol in one country can mean something quite different elsewhere. Just like the translation of written documents, the use of graphic symbols should be culturally sensitive and the understanding of the symbols by all not taken for granted.

[10] http://oslo.geodata.es/acsar/estudi-immigracio.php (accessed July24, 2014)

Once information is available in the languages understood by the migrant groups, it still needs to reach them. This requires using various means of communication: radio, television, brochures, Internet, social media, etc. In Japan, the Sendai International Relations Association in the city of Sendai has made available on CD and YouTube a Multilingual Disaster Prevention Video providing practical advice in 10 languages on how to react during earthquakes.[11] To make children less fearful of relief workers in uniform, the Municipal Civil Protection Office in Lisbon even has a mascot, a man-sized dog puppet called Tinoni, who attends events organised with the city's civil protection educational programme for children. What is important is to convey essential information through the various channels that are available.

Evidence suggests that the most efficient way of communicating is by direct contact. It is noteworthy that oral communication is often more widespread in migrant groups than in host societies. It can therefore be very useful for disaster management bodies to identify people who are proficient in the languages spoken by the migrant groups and, above all, who are trusted and well connected with the community as a whole. Such people do not necessarily need to have a formal position in a NGO or another organisation. What counts is the outreach of the person and the potential impact he or she has when passing a message on.

Disaster management bodies also need to know where migrants are more likely to meet depending of the time of the day. This means keeping an updated list of organizations, institutions, community leaders, ethnic media, etc., that are capable of relaying information very quickly if the need arises. In Fuenlabrada, Spain, the local police have set up a Diversity Management Team that has developed a network of contacts within the migrant population who can be contacted very quickly if needed. In Italy, the city of Milan has a constantly updated website with the addresses and contact persons of all the organisations providing Italian courses for migrants.[12] In just a few minutes it would be possible to send a message to all the organisations who could then convey it to the people attending the language courses. In cities that do not have such networks or databases, the risk is much higher that essential information will reach migrant groups too late for them to take adequate measures.

One interesting point made during the workshop was that communication problems can occur within and between relief organisations working on the ground. This is due mainly to two factors. On the one hand, cultural diversity within crisis management organizations has increased over the past decades. This has led, for example, the Austrian Armed Forces to provide German language training for military personnel with a migration background. On the other hand, disaster management, in the age of globalization, often requires stronger trans-boundary and cooperative efforts between organizations that do not necessarily share a common language. Even if they do, communication can be problematic in crisis situations when the environment is too noisy or when relief workers have to wear masks. To overcome the problem, the French association B4Com has developed ToxCom, a "dictionary" of about 120 hand signs that enable relief workers to communicate effectively despite degraded conditions.[13]

3.2 Community competence and social capital

In culturally diverse societies effective disaster management requires that relief organizations be interculturally competent. This does not only mean having knowledge about migrant groups, how they communicate and are likely to react in specific circumstances. More importantly it means engaging with the migrant groups throughout the whole disaster management cycle. This can be done in various ways.

Migrant groups can be encouraged to take part in relief exercises and make suggestions on how their cultural specificities (for example dietary, gender or spiritual requirements) can be reasonably accommodated in crisis situations. This may mean making concessions to multiculturalism. On the

[11] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N86fw1D-8-8 (accessed July 24, 2014)

[12] http://milano.italianostranieri.org/ (accessed July 24, 2014)

[13] www.b4com.eu. It is noteworthy that the people recruited to teach ToxCom are deaf and can only communicate with participants using sign language.

other hand, such concessions are often necessary to build the trust that is needed to ensure the cooperation of migrant groups.

According to the intercultural model of integration, the staff of public organisations should reflect the cultural diversity of the population as a whole. Hiring employees with a migrant background in disaster management bodies will increase the intercultural competence of the organization and facilitate communication and conflict-resolution with migrant groups before, during and after a disaster.

It should be stressed however that migrant groups have some competences that could turn out to be extremely useful in crisis situations. The first thing that comes to mind is their capacity to communicate with other members of their community. Migrants do however have other competences that are often ignored by disaster management organizations. They often possess a range of experiences and skills in dealing with emergencies and have the capacity to withstand hardship and show great resilience in difficult situations. One just has to think of the conditions in which most asylum seekers travel to Europe or the living conditions of illegal migrants.[14] Migrant groups frequently have a very strong internal solidarity and tend to give greater importance to kinship relations than members of the host society. Disaster management bodies that have established trustful relationships with migrant groups will find it easier to spread information within such groups than among members of the host society who may have more diversified social relationships but live in a more individualistic way.

One of the cultural factors that may hamper cooperation of migrants in prevention and relief operations is the absence of experience of voluntary work in their country of origin. In some countries cooperation is restricted to the family or the clan. Outside of such networks, mistrust prevails and interactions are dictated by material gains. It can therefore be quite difficult to get some migrant groups to participate in courses, exercises and voluntary civil protection organizations. To overcome such cultural reluctance several suggestions were made during the seminar. Since 2011, for example, Luxemburg has introduced so-called “integration contracts” that migrants can sign up to and imply taking part in a three-day training course.[15] It was suggested that the course could include a module on civil protection. Another idea that came up is to add training in this field to the compulsory first-aid courses that migrants often have to attend to acquire a valid driving licence. As most schools organise evacuation exercises for the pupils, it was also proposed to include the parents in such exercises in schools situated in areas with a large migrant population.

The most important contribution migrants can probably make in an emergency situation is the mobilization of their social capital within their ethnic group. By engaging actively with migrants during the prevention and preparedness phases, disaster management bodies can contribute to extending the social networks of migrants beyond their community. This in turn will make it easier for the migrants to interact with members of the host society when looking for solutions in emergency situations.

3.3 Economic development

From a more economic perspective, disaster management bodies should be prepared to channel the resources needed after a disaster to where they are the most needed. In some cases, this can be precisely in places where migrants are concentrated. It was precisely because evacuation resources were allocated in priority to the white districts of New Orleans that hurricane Katrina has been called a “Multicultural disaster” by the American Psychological Association.[16]

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[14] Needless to say this does not mean that they can be provided with fewer resources than members of the host society.

[15] http://www.olai.public.lu/en/accueil-integration/mesures/contrat-accueil/index.html (accessed June 23, 2014)

[16] *Hurricane Katrina: A Multicultural Disaster*. American Psychological Association, 2006 http://www.apa.org/pi/oema/resources/communique/2006/03/katrina-special-section.pdf (accessed June 17, 2014)

3.4 Recommendations on future actions

Disasters cause intense stress on organizations and cultural / ethnic diversity, if not well managed in advance, can increase the stress in an already stressful situation. Including cultural diversity in preparedness strategies can contribute to alleviating the organizational stress that occurs inevitably when disaster strikes.

National, regional and local authorities may consider taking steps to ensure that people with a migration background are included in the entire disaster risk reduction process and that, wherever possible, their viewpoints are taken fully into account. Staff of disaster management organizations with a migration background should be recruited in managerial positions to ensure that cultural diversity becomes an intricate part of the strategic disaster management planning.

4 Cultural diversity and response to disasters

What can be done to contain, control or minimize impact during and immediately after a major disaster occurs in a culturally diverse society?

During the response phase everything accelerates and things never really occur exactly as expected despite however much work has gone into planning. As cultural differences can lead to different reactions to critical events, uncertainty increases if cultural diversity was not accounted for during the prevention and preparedness phases.

4.1 Information and communication

In an emergency situation, getting the right information to the right people at very short notice saves lives and reduces suffering. If the information intended to the migrant groups is readily available and effective communication channels have been carefully defined, as suggested in the previous chapters, there is a fair chance that migrants will suffer no differently than members of the host society living in similar conditions. In this respect the experience of the city of Sendai, Japan, in the immediate aftermath of the 2011 earthquake provides a good illustration of the link between prevention, preparedness and response.

In 1990 the city of Sendai set up the Sendai International Relations Association (SIRA) to promote international exchange and intercultural relations within the local population. In 2000 SIRA started running the "Sendai Disaster Interpreter Volunteer" program which aims to include foreign residents in disaster risk management. A large earthquake had struck the region in 1978 causing 28 deaths and 1,325 injuries. The local authorities were aware that another earthquake was just a matter of time and commissioned SIRA to set up a Disaster Multilingual Support Centre in 2010. By chance, the Centre started operating just less than two months before the Great East Japan Earthquake struck the peninsula in March 11, 2011. Through the various activities it had been running over the years SIRA had developed a strong network within the migrant population. When the earthquake struck many migrants spontaneously volunteered to handle enquiries and provide information in foreign languages. Prior "face-to-face" interaction between SIRA and the migrants had created the mutual trust necessary for cooperation. Akiyoshi Kikuchi, the multicultural society coordinator at SIRA, explained this perfectly during the workshop: "*It is true that close bond with those people allowed us to operate the centre efficiently even immediately after the earthquake. In other words, networking is more important than a manual, because disaster is an extraordinary situation and a manual usually doesn't work properly*".

What the SIRA experience underlines is the importance of having an organization that deals with the multiple aspects of migrants' integration in the city. SIRA provides language courses, support for children with a migration background and general guidance for foreign residents living in Sendai. It carries out research, organizes intercultural festivals and issues newsletters, guidebooks and a monthly electronic newsletter.[17] By offering such a large spectrum of services SIRA has developed over more than 20 years a strong network within the migrant population. As a result migrants were much easier to mobilize after the earthquake in 2011 than if SIRA had not existed.

[17] For the activities of SIRA, see http://www.sira.or.jp/english/activity/index.html (accessed June 18, 2014)

Better than that, they volunteered spontaneously. This shows to what extent cities or regions that offer similar services, be it through NGO's or administrative units specifically in charge of the multiple aspects of integration, are in a better position to cope with a disaster in a culturally diverse context those who do not.

4.2 Community competence

Another advantage of including migrants in the response phase of disaster management is that they can suggest solutions that may not have anticipated by the civil protection bodies. While the latter have a clear set of pre-defined priorities, they should also be open to suggestions from civil society generally, and from migrants in particular.

4.3 Social capital

What the experience in Sendai suggests is that the work done by SIRA has reinforced the social capital of those migrants who felt confident enough to volunteer to provide assistance after the earthquake. In other places, where no such structure exists or where there is no inclusive integration policy, migrant groups may be more distrustful of official institutions and much harder to mobilize. To reach out to them in an emergency situation will require much more resources, something that could prove very controversial in a situation when resources are already stretched to their limit and various social groups are competing to access them.

4.4 Economic development

Including migrants in civil protection organizations or engaging with them during the response phase also makes it easier to assess needs and distribute the resources accordingly. They are probably more aware of people from within their community who are particularly at risk or have insufficient material or social resources to cope with hardship. They can play an important role during the recovery phase as mediators if criticisms are voiced about resource distribution.

4.5 Recommendations on future actions

The efficiency of disaster management in culturally diverse societies is conditioned first and foremost by the work accomplished before crises occur.

Disaster management organizations *may consider taking steps to ensure that they have constantly updated multilingual and culture specific information and the capacity to communicate such information at very short notice by engaging with migrant networks before crisis situations. Ideally such a task should be entrusted to the public officer or organization in charge of integration that caters to the various needs of migrants and has therefore the trust needed to ensure effective cooperation and communication.*

In culturally diverse societies, disaster management organizations may consider ensuring that practitioners of intercultural integration with direct access to migrant groups be attached to the coordination centres set up to manage large-scale disasters. Such persons could be the heads of the administrative units in charge of integration or of NGO's commissioned by the local / regional authority to deal with integration issues on the ground.

5 Cultural diversity and recovery

What steps can be taken to minimise disruption and recovery times in culturally diverse societies?

5.1 Culture as a tool of intervention

The efficiency of disaster management in culturally diverse societies is conditioned first and foremost by the work accomplished before crises occur. All the remarks made above, in particular those relating to the intercultural competence of disaster management bodies and their capacity to cooperate with people of various cultural backgrounds, also apply to the recovery phase.

Disasters cause widespread material destruction, death and hardship. How people react in such situations can also be conditioned by cultural factors. Communities with a strong sense of religiosity may organize themselves around religious institutions such as churches, mosques or temples, and set up support services for fellow believers. Prayers or religious ceremonies can serve as powerful tools of intervention insofar as they help people overcome grief and ultimately return to a normal life. Here again, intercultural competence implies acknowledging the importance of religiosity in certain groups and engaging with religious leaders to circulate information and find the best solutions to satisfy culturally specific needs.

5.2 Recommendations on future actions

In addition to allocating resources and relief support according to needs, disaster management organizations may consider acknowledging the role that beliefs and customs may play in overcoming grief and coping with hardship.

6 Conclusion

In conclusion it appears that the effectiveness of disaster management schemes in culturally diverse societies is conditioned by the overarching public policy towards diversity. If migrants are considered and treated as temporary guest-workers who are just passing through (guest-worker model), diversity will not be an issue for policy-planners and migrants will be likely to suffer more than the host population in disaster situations. If diversity is denied and migrants expected to assimilate into the dominant culture (assimilationist model), there is a risk that some will not be able to and find themselves excluded from prevention and relief programmes. Conversely overemphasising diversity and considering society as divided in separate cultural groups (multiculturalist model) will encourage opportunistic attitudes that consider non-cooperation as a rational strategy.

The intercultural model of integration developed by the Intercultural cities programme of the Council of Europe provides a more adequate framework for disaster management policy-making.[18] It recognises strongly the need to enable each culture to survive and flourish but also stresses the fact that cultures thrive only in contact with other cultures, not in isolation. It seeks to reinforce intercultural interaction as a means of building trust and reinforcing the fabric of the community. The development of a cultural sensitivity, the encouragement of intercultural interaction and mixing is seen not as the responsibility of a special department or officer but as an essential aspect of the functioning of all city departments and services.

Effective disaster management in culturally diverse society requires widespread cooperation not only between organizations but also between organizations and the various cultural groups that form society. “Top-down” disaster management policy-making increases the risk of ethnocentric bias and, consequently, unequal treatment. Culturally sensitive and inclusive policy-making reduces the vulnerability of migrant groups and, by doing so, contributes to the effectiveness of disaster management programmes in culturally diverse societies.

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[18] Phil Wood, ed. (2009), *Intercultural Cities. Towards a model for intercultural integration* http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/culture/cities/ICCModelPubl_en.pdf (accessed July 17, 2014)

Council of Europe (2013). *The intercultural city step by step. Practical guide for applying the urban model of intercultural integration*. Council of Europe, 2013 http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/culture/cities/ICCstepbystepAugust2012.pdf (accessed July 17, 2014)

Appendix I: Background

Are culturally diverse societies more vulnerable to major disasters than monocultural societies and, if so, what can be done to increase the resilience of such societies in crisis situations? What are the specificities of migrant populations that need to be considered when conceiving and implementing protection and evacuation schemes? How can civil protection bodies reach out to migrant groups that do not understand the language used by the administration or the local media? How can relief teams from different countries communicate effectively when working together after a large-scale disaster that requires an international response? What competences do civil protection bodies need to operate more effectively in a culturally diverse environment? How can host societies identify and mobilise the specific resources of migrant populations to manage more effectively a disaster before it occurs, during the crisis and in its aftermath? These are some of the questions addressed by the participants in the workshop held in Strasburg on 12-13 June 2014 organised within the framework of European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA) and the Intercultural cities programme of the Council of Europe.

The **European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement** (EUR-OPA) is a platform for co-operation in the field of major natural and technological disasters between Europe and the South of the Mediterranean.[19] In 2011 the Committee of Permanent Correspondents of EUR-OPA adopted Ethical Principles on Disaster Risk Reduction and People's Resilience. In 2012 the Committee decided to focus part of its work on guidance for a more operative practice with three specific groups: people with disabilities; children; migrants, asylum seekers and refugees.

The **Intercultural cities programme** of the Council of Europe supports cities in developing policies and strategies for effective management of diversity to the benefits of cohesion and local development. [20] Currently 25 cities in Europe are taking part in the programme and there are 60 associated cities. All share the view that cultural diversity, if managed well, offers more advantages for host societies than it creates problems. The programme develops a knowledge capital in different policy areas to help cities design or re-design policies for migrants' inclusion and empowerment in all areas of public life.

[19] http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/majorhazards/ (accessed July 17, 2014)
The EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement has up to date 26 Member States: Albania, Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Georgia, Greece, Lebanon, Luxembourg, Malta, Morocco, Republic of Moldova, Monaco, Portugal, Romania, Russia, San Marino, Serbia, Spain, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", Turkey, and Ukraine.

[20] www.coe.int/interculturalcities (accessed July 17, 2014)
Currently there are 25 cities participating in the programme and located in 19 countries: Cyprus, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Malta, Poland, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Russia, Serbia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine and the United Kingdom. There are an additional 60 associated members including Montreal and Mexico City.

Appendix II: The workshop

EUR-OPA and Intercultural cities joined their expertise to organise the workshop which explored the access and participation of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers to disaster prevention, protection and response mechanisms and their contribution to making such mechanisms more adequate in relation to their needs. The workshop was organised with the support of the Japan Foundation.

Participants included representatives of civil protection agencies of EUR-OPA member States, cities members of the Intercultural cities network, the Japan Foundation, international organisations as well as experts from the academic field.

During the workshop knowledge was shared on good practices and views exchanged about the conceptual tools needed to grasp the multiple dimensions of disaster management in diverse societies. Such a confrontation of practical experience with theoretical insight appeared very useful given the fact that the topic is a virtually blank area. Indeed it is only recently, most notably in the aftermath of the 2005 hurricane Katrina in Louisiana USA, that international organisations, civil protection bodies and research institutions have started thinking seriously about the relationship between disaster management and cultural diversity.[21] The workshop therefore had mainly an exploratory ambition. After the presentations, the participants worked in four groups according to the "World Café" method and were asked to address the following questions:

- What is the current status of emergency/disaster preparedness among migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in your country/region?
- What is the current status of participation of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in civil protection in your country/region?
- What is the currents status of intercultural awareness/competence among first responders/crisis managers in your country/region/organisation?
- What steps need to be taken in order to increase the emergency/disaster preparedness/resilience of socio-culturally diverse societies?

[21] Probably the most elaborate work on this topic Emergency Management Australia : *Guidelines for Emergency Management in Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities*, Australian Emergency Manual Series, Manual number 44, 2007
http://www.em.gov.au/Documents/Manual44GuidelinesforEmergencyManagementinCulturallyandLinguisticallyDiverseCommunities.pdf (accessed on July 4, 2014)

Appendix III: Preliminary results of the questionnaire on civil protection in culturally diverse societies

Technical aspects

The questionnaire was sent out to (specify) on (date)

It included 8 questions (specify type of questions: multiple choice, open…)

18 questionnaires were returned from 15 countries: Azerbaijan, Armenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Georgia, Greece, Luxembourg, Morocco, Monaco, Portugal, Spain, Turkey, and Ukraine

Question 1 – Potential risks

Various (e.g. natural hazards, technological accidents, man-made disasters)

Question 2 – Administrative bodies/organisations in charge of risk prevention and management

Various (predominantly state institutions and public authorities on national, regional and local levels)

Question 3 – Specific needs of migrants without language proficiency

Considerable variety of answers ranging from “no specific needs, e.g. most migrants speak the language of the host country” over “not identified” over “specific activities in place or planned” to “identified and considered”

Question 4 – Migrants’ needs and cultural issues considered in emergency and evacuation plans

Emergency and evacuation plans and risk maps exist in all (areas of the) countries replying.

Considerations of migrants with limited or no proficiency in the host countries language or other cultural issues range from “no need for specification, because plans work irrespective of cultural differences” over “activities like multilingual risk information are in place or planned” to “linguistic and other cultural issues are identified and considered in all plans”.

Question 5 – Information for migrants concerning existing risks

Considerable variety of answers, ranging from “no specific information/ activities (e.g., because migrants are informed over same media like majority population)” over “risk information resources (like websites and written material) in different languages (partly, provided at the time of entry)” to “special presentations to organised migrant groups about CP”

Question 6 – Migrants/migrant organisations’ involvement in evacuation planning

Majority of answers indicate no specific involvement to date, but several responses indicated plans for activities to change this.

Question 7 – Migrants’ organisations’ participation in evacuation exercises and provisions for encouragement

Answers predominantly indicate neither specific participation of migrants nor actions for encouragement, but some respective planning. Migrants are involved as population parts in mandatory exercises (e.g. in schools).