



GLOBAL  
ROUND TABLE  
PROGRAMME

INTRODUCTORY CALL:

# URBAN RESILIENCE

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# PANELLISTS:



**Lord Toby Harris**

President, ISRM

Chair of the UK Preparedness Commission



**Xavier Castellanos**

Under Secretary-General

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies



**Dr. Marqueza Cathalina Lepana Reyes**

Academic Programme Director

Asian Institute of Management /Philippines/



**Nadine Sulkowski**

BUILD Erasmus Project Lead, University of Gloucester

/Building Universities for Leadership in Disaster Resilience/

# MODERATOR:



**Dr. David Rubens**

Executive Director, ISRM

## Introduction by Dr. David Rubens:

I would like to welcome the team of panellists that we have for the ISRM Global Roundtable on Urban Resilience which we are hosting on the 29th of July. I think that is going to be an incredibly significant discussion, not just because of the contents but because of the quality of our panel. I think that it is clear that scenarios that we have been discussing have reached a tipping point. There is no question about it whatsoever, that all of the things we have spoken about as projections into the future, they are here. And not only are they here, but they are nasty. In Canada we have five hundred deaths now from overheating. The UK has just put out a report about food security, including cyber threats and food security. Cities are absolutely at the cutting edge of the vulnerabilities to these emerging threats. We have serious problems even articulating what they are. So, I think we have as we move into this post-Covid reality, all of these problems that we were discussing, theoretically, maybe two years ago, they have been sneaking up on us while we had our eyes on Covid, they are still there, and they are very, very real. And yet, I think we are still hoping we can do something about it.

One of the things that the ISRM has spoken about repeatedly is that we do not need more policies. What we need is structure and methodology, we need to have a way of guiding decision makers into how they can engage with this, in ways that are realistic and achievable. We all say that we agree, that makes sense, and we need to do something about it. And I think that in these conversations we've been having over the last 18 months or so, with ourselves within the ISRM but also with other people, there is a realization that it is at the city level that it is possible to get stuff done. The problem is nobody has got time, nobody's got bandwidth, nobody's got resources and it is never quite the right time to do that. And I think that this is our opportunity perhaps to put together a framework and consortium that can actually achieve those two words that we are all looking for which is *impact and influence*. How can we create a methodology and a structure that is recognized and accepted to have impact and influence on a very real level?

Each one of our panellists are involved in significant global programs doing exactly that, So, let me introduce you. Lord Toby Harris, President of the ISRM, and Chair of the UK National Preparedness Committee, which of course is looking into these issues very deeply. Marqueza Cathalina Lepana Reyes, from the Asian Institute of Management, which of course has a significant voice, and is also a central point for conceptualization for policy development, for collaboration and integration from multiple stakeholders. We have Nadine Sulkowski, coming in from University of Gloucester, who is leading a European Union Erasmus programme called BUiLD which is Building Universities as Leadership in Disaster Resilience, and has a fantastic program going on at the moment in Indonesia. And Xavier Castellanos, an old friend of ours and the Under Secretary-General of the IFRC, with whom we have been discussing a number of programs around resilience. Of course, the IFRC is bringing incredible power as the largest and the oldest global NGO in the world, which combines a global level strategic conceptual perspective with a presence on the ground in every town and city in the world. So, thank you everybody for being here. Toby, let us start with you.

**Lord Toby Harris:**

Thank you very much. I'm looking forward to this discussion for no other reason than the National Preparedness Commission in the UK is about to embark, put all the moving parts together if they is what you do with moving parts, on a stream of work on preparedness and place. Certainly, for successful cities and successful localities, amongst other things that are necessary to make them successful, is a level of resilience, a level of preparedness for all eventualities. And that ought to be factored in. And as somebody who is been involved, admittedly some years ago, in trying to run cities in London and particular parts of London, I'm always conscious of the trade-offs that as policymakers, you have to make. So, as an example, the desire for growth and the regeneration of urban areas may well go against some of your environmental sustainability models. The desire to move people quickly or to have a communications infrastructure may mean that you invest in delivery ahead of investing in the resilience of that superstructure and that resilience of that infrastructure. And so, what I would like to explore to get the discussion going, is some of those issues of what constitutes a successful city or successful locality. What are the elements of that, and how important is resilience and preparedness? And perhaps tying in an examination of some of the trade-offs and some of the difficulties that arise.

**Dr. David Rubens:**

Thanks Toby. I think resilience of course is going to be the word that is going to be highlighted as being front and centre in what we will be discussing, and yet so many people just do not understand what resilience is. Resilience is not what happens after something happens. Resilience is what we are paying forward for. If you are not resilient, the day before something happens, you do not suddenly become resilient afterwards. The other thing about resilience, of course as we've learned in Covid, is that it requires an all-stakeholder engagement. It has to be about community engagement and community empowerment, and when we come to Xavier, I'm certain, we will hear about IFRC and the work it does around community engagement and empowerment and bringing people on board.

Marqueza, let us come to you in the Philippines, which of course, not only has a deep experience of this but it is also doing some significant work around these issues.

### Dr. Marqueza Cathalina Lepana Reyes:

Thank you David. As well as the cities in the Philippines, I have worked previously in ASEAN, working in Jakarta for the ASEAN Secretariat and focusing exactly on the themes of climate change adaptation, and therefore, resilience-building in many cities across Southeast Asia. The question is, when we talk about urban resilience, the question is what exactly do we mean by that, what is resilience when it comes to the urban setting? I have also worked on earthquakes in mega-cities initiative. And so, when we talk about resilience, do we mean climate resilience, or we mean disaster resilience? Because there are different definitions of resilience, both in practice and in the literature. For example, when I was working with ASEAN, they developed a disaster resilience scorecard for cities. So, there is ten essentials that they talk about, and it spans the parameters from what Toby mentioned a while ago, concerning disaster preparedness for effective response. But it also includes things like infrastructure resilience, food security, resilient urban design, resilient financial capacity of cities. So, resilience needs to be seen as a wide framework when it comes to cities and urban settings. It is a way to organize disaster and climate change issues, like you have resilient infrastructure, resilient food systems, resilient urban design, resilient social institutions.

And because the concept of resilience is so huge, it is very hard to grasp it in one go, so you have to break it down into these different topologies of resilience.

Now, perhaps it could be, as I mentioned, broken up into sectors like infrastructure resilience, economic resilience, financial resilience etc. But then, at the same time and here's my first concern, how do we really come up with an integrative definition of resilience? Is it a definition in terms of their scorecard, or are you thinking of it in another way?

And because of that, there is no clear definition of resilience.

The other concern in cities, particularly here in my neck of the woods [SE Asia], is how to look at it from a systems approach, which allows us to look at risk technically. And so first of all we need to have governance, because if we are talking about urban resilience then we have to have governance. So, in my program, in my courses, we emphasize a lot of risk governance and resilience leadership.

So those three things I have mentioned, is something that I think we are all working on in different ways and in different projects, so those are the three things for me that resonate with me at the moment.

**Dr. David Rubens:**

Thank you very much Marqueza. I think that in terms of the critical issues you identify, the first of course is that as we are discussing these cities, they are all operating at or beyond the edge of their capabilities already. It is not as though they have time to relax and think about it. Most cities are operating at an acceptable level of dysfunctionality.

We talk about smart cities, but most of them are increasingly failing. And so, they are under 110% pressure already!

The second thing is it has to be systemic. We have to take it from a systemic view, which is difficult, it is certainly neither easy nor simple.

And thirdly, which I think is absolutely essential, is the value that academics can bring to the game. Because what academia does is, it cannot solve those problems or make them go away, but what it does is it gives a structured framework for the discussion of hyper-complex events. And if you do not have that academic structure and discipline, where do you start from? What academia does is it provides a structure which will support that discussion. From my perspective, if you wish to discuss this rationally and in a structured way you need to have the academics involved from the beginning.

**Dr. Marqueza Cathalina Lepana Reyes:**

I just wanted to say something, which is that I agree with you that the academics and people like me, we are like people who are observing it from a balcony, and then the orchestra is playing downstairs on the first floor. We tell them you are play this wrong, you have the wrong pitch, etc. But then we do not really want to go down there in the orchestra and get involved on the ground floor.

**Dr. David Rubens:**

I think they is where The ISRM comes in. If you look at the ISRM Mission Statement, from day one it was that the ISRM is a platform for academics, practitioners and policymakers to come together and have a grown-up conversation. So, that was exactly the gap that we saw was missing. And they is why hopefully we have the ISRM to create a platform for that to happen. Thank you for that Marqueza Nadine, let us come to you at the University of Gloucester. Would you like to tell us a bit about yourself and what you are doing over there.

**Nadine Sulkowski:**

Thank you very much, David and good morning, good afternoon everybody. It is a pleasure to meet you and it is a real delight to be part of this discussion as well. What I will do, I'm going to give you a little background to the project that we are involved in in Indonesia, which I think is hitting quite a lot of points that we have already heard about, just in the past few minutes. Basically, the University of Gloucestershire has secured funding from the European Commission to build eight centres of excellence in disaster resilience across Indonesia, and of course Indonesia is quite an interesting country for this kind of endeavour. It is been recently described as a laboratory for disaster research which I think does hit the nail on the head. And we are working with eight very well reputed universities across all of Indonesia's regions. And basically, the idea is that within those centres of excellence, we are pursuing a range of activities which sort of goes beyond what universities normally do, I mean obviously we want to look at driving curriculum development and disaster resilience and disaster management. We want to drive research and knowledge transfer and innovation.

We want to focus on community engagement and business engagement as well but basically what we also want to do is to ensure that these centres are set up to deliver some form of response, a basis in mitigation and response capability by develop delivering disaster awareness training, not just to their staff and students but also to local communities. The objective is that the centres are also set up to support a response initiative, by coordinating the deployment of volunteers, by providing information. So, basically what we want to do is to create innovative centres which can really be at the heart of local response activities and also disaster awareness education. And what we also wanted to do is to connect those centres through a national disaster resilience network, which can then take the debate to a national level and can connect with ministries, with the National Disaster Mitigation Agency, with the Muhammadiyah Disaster Management Centre, which is leading humanitarian initiatives, and so on. And I think this leads me to what David said earlier about the importance of academia, because what I feel, and I have discussed this with my colleagues' numerous times as well, is that universities really need to rethink their role in society, and they need to rethink educational models.



So one of the key challenges is to relook at not just disaster resilience, disaster management programs but fundamentally at programs across the board, business programs and across other subject disciplines, and think about how do we embed resilience and sustainability education into curricula. This is something that we want to do within the curriculum development component, so it is not just thinking about subject specific education but actually how can we reframe education generally. And I think with this comes a whole range of challenges really. It is not just about understanding what universities need to do but basically what we need to think about is where the pedagogical approaches have to change right from the beginning, from primary school, and whether we need to nurture a completely different mindset. For example, I think there are some examples in Singapore, where primary schools are changing their pedagogical models in order to get basically children to be able to cope with the increasing digitalization of society. And I think the same needs to happen and really, in relation to resilience and sustainability thinking. So, I think they is all for me for now. And yes, it is great to be part of this discussion.

### **Dr. David Rubens:**

I have got to say that when Marqueza is saying we are at the balcony looking at the orchestra, I think we are in the mosh pit at the front of the festival, in the crowd right down there at the front. Because we have to get on the ground, we have to get into the mud, they is where the world lives right now. Which of course, Xavier brings us to you, and I imagine that you have been listening to all of that and thinking 'Thank you very much, they is what we need'. So, Xavier, great to have you here, please introduce yourself, tell us a bit about what you are doing over there in Geneva, and of course all around the world.

### **Xavier Castellanos:**

Thank you very much. It is a great pleasure as usual. The way I see it, I agree very much with what has been said. The main challenge is that when we talk about resilience in urban settings, we talk about these multi-dimensional, multi sectoral, multiple purposes, multiple objectives and how to bring resilience in a comprehensive form when you have such a variety of stakeholders.

And within those stakeholders, they have to bring their own responsibilities of communities and individuals to mobilize as well in conditions of resilience. The other element, and I think it is important to highlight this, is the notion that the modern context of scrutiny is extremely high and is political, And not necessarily humanitarian. It is opportunistic and is not necessarily fit for purpose, which creates another dimension into the challenges of the type of policies that they are bringing on. And therefore, this scrutiny is in every sense from the good side and the bad side, a big challenge. And these links with the capacity and the credibility of institutions or organizations to be the recognized partner of choice for action, which is another component that is extremely important. When we look into the urban resilience as well, we always see elements where you can have people with high risk and high vulnerability already in an urban context, but you also can find people with high risk or low vulnerability in the same urban context. And what does it mean, and how do we work, how do we differentiate the way we do community mobilization, or the work that we do. You can have areas where you have low risk but with high vulnerability or high risk with high vulnerability as well.

Here again, comes the multi-dimensional challenge of urban resilience. If I put an example, if I go back to my years in Guatemala in urban slums, the only ones who were able to enter the slums were the Red Cross and the firefighters, not the police nor the military, because those urban slums were controlled by gangs that would not allow other organizations to enter. And this shows the dimensions of the challenges of addressing urban resilience where there is a really high level of vulnerability already. And the other component is, what sorts of coping mechanisms we are recovering. When we look into this from a community perspective, we are looking at 'Okay, what are the coping mechanisms the people are using? So, it is very much a people-centered approach, and how important are those coping mechanisms in the way they interact with the different communities, and how we can achieve through coping mechanisms as well as community mobilization as a key challenge in order to continue to serve people in different ways. So, the question that I will probably raise would be around the logic of if we want to have a comprehensive approach towards resilience, we need to have a comprehensive agreement in terms of what we want to achieve. I think that in building resilience, what we want to achieve is a wellbeing status that is acceptable among the communities.

The other one is that the conditions of self-protections, the minimum conditions for self-protection, are in place that will guarantee individuals, families, institutions as well to be able to perform their work. The other is the social protection mechanism: how the social protection mechanism should support or not support stronger capacities and greater resilience building. And if social protection mechanisms are not existing, then how are vulnerabilities increasing into the population. So, I think again it is important, and these social protection mechanisms are a direct response to the impact of laws, regulations and policies, and how those policies are applied.

The other point is related to nature-based solutions. I think it is a critical component in urban resilience, how do we see also policy regulation by the participation of the people as well. And finally, and it is linked very much to the coping mechanism, is the conditions of life. If we do not see this interaction between livelihoods, social protection mechanisms, policies and regulations, but at the same time, how are you improving the well-being, status and self-protection of individuals, it will be very difficult to achieve resilience.

But something that I would like to highlight is that either we focus on individual resilience, community resilience or institutional resilience, and as Marqueza said, it depends how big we want to amplify.

But I think that in terms of this discussion, the critical element is to say ‘Me as an individual, what is my role for a change in terms of my own community, in my own neighbourhood and my own engagement with communities?’, which is something very interesting. The more marginalized communities that you will see, and it doesn’t matter if it is in London or in Jakarta, the most vulnerable communities are more interconnected, and there are more expressions of solidarity. The better off you are, you probably do not know your neighbours, which are on the top floor or even on the same floor as you. And those are also issues that have impact on conditions of resilience in the urban economy.

#### **Dr. David Rubens:**

Xavier, I like your last point, which seems to be that when we talk about city resilience such as in Houston, Texas which went off-grid in two days in a snow storm, it seems that we have this schizophrenia about this smart city of the future, which is Geneva, Paris, London, New York, Tokyo, and then you have Dhaka, Lagos, Nairobi, Bangkok, which is of course a completely different urban experience.

**Lord Toby Harris:**

I think a key point in what Xavier just said was, actually everybody in the city has got to have a stake in its success. And so that means not only is this whole-of-society in terms of commitment to resilience and preparedness, but it is recognizing that the whole of society must be involved and have an economic stake in that. And that in turn means, and this is probably one of the more difficult issues, is you have to address issues of inequality and urban poverty at the same time as you are trying to deal with the prosperity of the city as a whole, and its ability to withstand shocks. Because only if you have got that degree by it is the city going to thrive and be able to really deliver a whole of society response.



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