

By: Laurits Rauer Nielsen, lecturer, Emergency and Risk Management Programme, Metropolitan University College, Copenhagen, [laun@phmetropol.dk](mailto:laun@phmetropol.dk)

### **Citizen mobilisation in emergency response - the case of Jyllinge Nordmark Boxing Day 2016**

On Boxing Day 2016 Denmark felt the effect of the storm "Urd", which, among other issues caused a storm surge in the Isefjord and Roskilde Fjord inlets on the island of Zealand. The municipality of Roskilde particularly felt the consequences, since a part of the town of Jyllinge is particularly low-lying, and the harbour front in the town of Roskilde, including the national heritage Viking Ship Museum was under the threat of being flooded.

The authorities aimed at rapidly establishing improvised dykes built of water tubes and sandbags and thereby creating a collective mitigation measure as opposed to securing each building individually. This called for the establishment of several kilometres of improvised dyke within a timeframe of 48-72 hours. The work includes handling heavy equipment, filling, and moving large amounts of sandbags for the dykes, much of it by hand, particularly so as parts of the dyke in Jyllinge was established on meadowland. The emergency management organisation drew on its own resources as well as other relevant authorities.

However, as a new and emerging practice in the Danish context the municipality also put great effort into mobilising citizens to participate in the work, this included public information meetings, information on the municipality website and a very active use of social media in order to mobilise and direct the efforts of the citizens. For instance, the mayor of Roskilde participated in the public meetings and used her personal Facebook profile to relay information of where and when hands were needed for what tasks. Volunteer citizens also contributed to this mobilisation effort using social media to share information of the needs and tasks in Jyllinge. The efforts were successful in that the improvised dykes were raised in time, massive flooding was avoided, and fortunately, the height of the storm surge was a bit lower than expected. Some flooding did occur though, since a section of the water tube dyke in Jyllinge burst.

In the face of climate change and the expectation of stronger and more frequent storms, it is a real possibility that events like these will reiterate. This calls for an analysis of the involvement of citizens as spontaneous emergency management volunteers in the case of the storm "Urd" pertaining to prior planning and training of citizen mobilisation, communication between authorities and citizens, challenges experienced and lessons learned as well as the particular role of politicians as popular leaders in the event.

The event is seen as a result of the particular combination of time, place and actors.

- *Time*: being the course of the events themselves, including the warning time and the fact that the event took place during holidays.
- *Place*: being the particular history of the area, with its only recent experience of extreme storm surges, making the population very aware of the stakes at risk.
- *Actors*: include the political leadership, the leaders of the EMO and the affected population. The experience of the actors from like events is expected to be a central element of understanding the factors that added up to the particular course of events.

Field work for the research will be carried out during May and June 2017, key interviews are already scheduled.