SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND CLIMATE CHANGE

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Cities and the new ‘sustainability’

Environment
Economy
Society
The urban climate change challenge

- **Vulnerability/Resilience**
  - Urban experience of climate risk – cities places in which vulnerability to climate change is significant
  - Potential hazards include: coastal flooding; heat waves; potential water supply problems; disease

- **Emissions/Mitigation**
  - Urban production of climate risk - cities a key site within which greenhouse gases are produced
  - An ‘urban world’ – concentration of people, industry, energy consumption in cities
Climate change and urban sustainability

- Responding to climate change is essential for urban sustainability, but is not the only issue in town.
- Climate change actions have multiple possible ‘co-benefits’ – urban response has often focused on these issues rather than directly on climate change.
- Urban climate change agenda started in 1992, increasingly complex, diverse agenda with many 1000s cities involved.
- Forms of municipal voluntarism dominate urban responses – small scale, voluntary, limited mandate.
- Increasingly climate change is a matter of strategic urbanism – global cities and those with specific vulnerabilities – integrated economic & social development.
What is driving urban responses?

**Multilevel Governance**

Vertical: international and national arenas mandate, resources and political support

Horizontal: transnational networks and agencies provide learning, resources, cooperation and competition

**Thane, India:** ICLEI have played a key role in promoting the city’s low carbon energy approach
What is driving urban responses?

Intermediaries and Partnerships

Multiple interests engaged in urban infrastructure networks and service provision

Neither private nor public actors can govern alone; intermediary organisations and partnerships create

London, UK: Community Draught Busters, part of the Low Carbon Zone a partnership between the GLA, Lambeth Borough Council and Transition Town Brixton
What is driving urban responses?

**New Climate Economies**

Climate finance – voluntary and compliance carbon markets

Climate risks – potential costs of disaster vs. DRR

Green Economy – new areas of economic growth attract new actors

*Cape Town, South Africa*: renewable energy projects funded by CDM in Kuyasa
What is driving urban responses?

Experimentation

Municipalities, private and civil society actors seek to demonstrate, experience, learn and challenge what it might mean to respond to climate change through a multiplicity of interventions, projects and schemes - these are not one off schemes, but a way of governing complex systems.

**Thane, India, Philadelphia, US, Melbourne, Australia, and Hong Kong:** multiple innovations with climate change response
What are the challenges?

- Lack of comparable data and evidence of improved resilience – draws attention to the need for knowledge, but limited evidence this is key barrier

- Barriers – capacity, resources, politics (interests vested in continued vulnerability and high carbon society) and ‘lock in’ of socio-technical systems

- Potential – increasingly strategic issue, public and private actors committed to action, innovation potential, rapid urban development and infrastructure provision
Need to move from a focus on *institutional* change (good governance, planning, municipal goals) to *urban* change (in the fabric, infrastructure and politics of the city).
New imperatives for policy intervention

Urban Infrastructure
- Systems and services
- Investment
- Governance
- Access
- Innovation

Climate Justice
- Common but differentiated responsibilities
- Recognition of inequalities as starting point for meeting climate rights
- Participation in determining climate changed urban futures
Key Lessons for Policy

- Climate change has been a strong mobilising force for cities to act on the broad agenda of sustainability.
- Specific urban networks, goals and approaches have been required to realise this potential – in an enabling multilevel governance context.
- Institutional change is not sufficient – political and infrastructural change is needed.
- This requires strategic intervention, intermediation & experimentation by multiple urban actors together.
- Ensuring climate justice must be at the heart of any response.
An Urban SDG

- These findings tend to support the view that there should be a specific Urban SDG
  - Urban responses do not cascade down: they have their own momentum that needs to be realised
  - Urban responses require co-operation within/between cities and by multiple actors – avoid fragmentation
  - Ensuring urban potential for innovation and experimentation is harnessed
  - Supporting resilience and low carbon transition requires working across different infrastructure systems and services – this co-ordination could be lost
Climate change in an Urban SDG

- Any Urban SDG should have responding to climate change as a key part of its goals
  - Current proposals focus on reducing vulnerability, enhancing resilience, enhancing renewable energy provision and promoting energy efficiency – each has merit, but also risks fragmenting the agenda
  - Development of these proposals could specifically task governments to ensure that cities put in place plans to address climate change in line with their ‘common but differentiated’ responsibilities
  - Further, they could require cities to ensure that climate justice is adequately taken into account in the development of new urban developments, infrastructure and services
Thank You

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References

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