

Roadmap towards justice in urban climate adaptation research

Shi, Linda; Chu, Eric; Anguelovski, Isabelle; Aylett, Alexander; Debats, Jessica; Goh, Kian; Schenk, Todd; Seto, Karen C.; Dodman, David; Roberts, Debra; Roberts, J. Timmons; Van Deveer, Stacy D.

DOI:
[10.1038/nclimate2841](https://doi.org/10.1038/nclimate2841)

License:
None: All rights reserved

Document Version
Early version, also known as pre-print

Citation for published version (Harvard):
Shi, L, Chu, E, Anguelovski, I, Aylett, A, Debats, J, Goh, K, Schenk, T, Seto, KC, Dodman, D, Roberts, D, Roberts, JT & Van Deveer, SD 2016, 'Roadmap towards justice in urban climate adaptation research', *Nature Climate Change*, vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 131-137. <https://doi.org/10.1038/nclimate2841>

[Link to publication on Research at Birmingham portal](#)

General rights

Unless a licence is specified above, all rights (including copyright and moral rights) in this document are retained by the authors and/or the copyright holders. The express permission of the copyright holder must be obtained for any use of this material other than for purposes permitted by law.

- Users may freely distribute the URL that is used to identify this publication.
- Users may download and/or print one copy of the publication from the University of Birmingham research portal for the purpose of private study or non-commercial research.
- User may use extracts from the document in line with the concept of 'fair dealing' under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (?)
- Users may not further distribute the material nor use it for the purposes of commercial gain.

Where a licence is displayed above, please note the terms and conditions of the licence govern your use of this document.

When citing, please reference the published version.

Take down policy

While the University of Birmingham exercises care and attention in making items available there are rare occasions when an item has been uploaded in error or has been deemed to be commercially or otherwise sensitive.

If you believe that this is the case for this document, please contact UBIRA@lists.bham.ac.uk providing details and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate.

PERSPECTIVES

Roadmap towards Justice in Urban Climate Adaptation Research

Linda Shi^{1*}, Eric Chu², Isabelle Anguelovski³, Alexander Aylett⁴, Jessica Debats¹, Kian Goh⁵, Todd Schenk⁶, Karen C. Seto⁷, David Dodman⁸, Debra Roberts⁹, J. Timmons Roberts¹⁰, Stacy VanDeveer¹¹

1. Department of Urban Studies and Planning, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 77 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 20139, United States
2. Department of Geography, Planning, and International Development Studies, University of Amsterdam, Nieuwe Achtergracht 127, 1018 WS Amsterdam, Netherlands
3. Institute for Environmental Science and Technology, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 08193 Bellaterra, Cerdanyola del Vallès, Barcelona, Spain
4. Centre Urbanisation Culture Société, Institut National de la Recherche Scientifique, 385 Rue Sherbrooke Est, Montréal, Québec H2X 1E3, Canada
5. School of Architecture, Northeastern University, 360 Huntington Avenue, Boston, MA 02115, United States
6. School of Public and International Affairs (0113), Architecture Annex/UAP, Virginia Tech, 140 Otey Street NW, Blacksburg, VA 24061, United States
7. Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, 195 Prospect Street, New Haven, CT 06511, United States
8. Human Settlements Group, International Institute for Environment and Development, 80-86 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8NH, United Kingdom
9. Environmental Planning and Climate Protection Department, eThekweni Municipality, P.O. Box 680, Durban 4000, South Africa
10. Institute at Brown for Environment and Society, Brown University, 85 Waterman Street, Providence, RI 02912, United States
11. Department of Political Science, University of New Hampshire, 322 Horton Social Science Center, Durham, NH 03824, United States

* Email: lindashi@mit.edu

Author Contributions

L.S. led the organization of the event at which this paper was initiated, the development of the paper, and together with E.C. drafted the introduction, third roadmap section, and conclusion; I.A., J.D., and T.S. drafted the literature review; A.A. drafted the first roadmap section; K.C.S. drafted the second; K.G. drafted the fourth; all authors, especially D.D., D.R., J.T.R., and S.V., reviewed and edited the paper.

Abstract

Climate change unjustly impacts the poorest and most marginalized groups of society who have contributed minimally to global emissions, but are among the most affected. Few studies have documented the barriers to redressing the drivers of social vulnerability as part of urban local climate change adaptation efforts, or evaluated how emerging adaptation plans impact marginalized groups. In this paper, we present a roadmap to reorient research on the social dimensions of urban climate adaptation around four issues of equity and justice: (1) broadening participation in adaptation planning; (2) expanding adaptation to rapidly growing cities and those with low financial or institutional capacity; (3) adopting a multilevel and multi-scalar approach to adaptation planning; and (4) integrating justice into infrastructure and urban design processes. Responding to these empirical and theoretical research needs is a first step towards identifying pathways to more transformative adaptation policies.

Introduction

Climate change unjustly impacts the poorest and most marginalized groups of society who have contributed minimally to global emissions, but are among the most affected^{1,2}. Early research and policies on this issue in urban areas sought to catalyze adaptation action by identifying the conditions enabling cities to undertake risk and vulnerability assessments, draft adaptation plans, and evaluate implementation options^{3,4}. Many initiatives came to recognize the importance of promoting procedural justice by including residents, nongovernmental organizations, and other civil society actors in adaptation planning processes⁵. As more cities begin to plan for climate change adaptation, the outcomes of these interventions need to enhance marginalized communities' access to the services, infrastructure, and livelihoods required to sustain their wellbeing and potential for improvement, rather than exacerbating their vulnerability.

Researchers and decision-makers supporting these objectives have opportunities to more critically assess how the unevenness of existing development affects urban adaptation plans and projects, and how these in turn shape the socio-spatial distribution of risks, vulnerabilities, and adaptive capacity. To date, efforts to promote urban adaptation planning have focused on the municipal level⁶. However, placing the burden of responsibility on local governments without strengthening their financial and technical capacity accentuates the differences between cities' ability to adapt⁷. This can disadvantage many poorer and less capacitated cities around the world unable to launch adaptation planning, much less engage their disadvantaged communities in this process. Focusing on the municipal scale also hinders the systematic evaluation of how variations in socio-economic conditions, political voice, and governance capacity across cities affect the cumulative adaptation of urban regions. In addition, it obscures needs for complementary actions across multiple levels of government and sectors to redress inequities in responses to climate change⁷.

In response to such challenges, this paper proposes a roadmap for research focused on four interrelated opportunities to advance equitable socio-spatial adaptation:

- (1) Broadening participation in adaptation planning across municipal and civil society actors;
- (2) Expanding adaptation support to rapidly growing cities and to those with low financial or institutional capacity;
- (3) Adopting multilevel and multi-scalar approaches to plan, fund, and implement adaptation actions; and
- (4) Integrating justice criteria into infrastructure and urban design processes to catalyze equitable adaptation on the ground.

This roadmap builds on the scholarship of JoAnn Carmin (1957-2014), Associate Professor in the Department of Urban Studies and Planning at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and pioneering scholar of environmental and civil society movements and

urban climate governance. We distill these themes from contributions of participants at the Carmin Memorial Symposium on Urban Climate Adaptation, hosted at MIT in December 2014, as well as a review of current research, theory, and practice in urban adaptation. Researchers from diverse disciplines can carry on Professor Carmin's legacy by examining how urban adaptation planning redresses, creates, or exacerbates socio-spatial inequality.

Theories of Justice in Urban Climate Adaptation

Theories of justice in urban climate adaptation build on existing understandings of justice as the fair distribution of social and material advantages among people over time and space⁸. However, ideas of what is fair or just are deeply contested and context dependent^{9–12}. For example, scholars of race and class argue that Rawls' classic definition of justice – that of allocating resources so that they provide the greatest benefits to the most disadvantaged⁶ – does not go far enough. Rather, the pursuit of justice requires first acknowledging that societal institutions disproportionately benefit some while denying rights and resources to others, and that the cumulative history of institutionalized oppression creates a highly uneven playing field¹⁰. Justice therefore entails not only the fair distribution of goods, but also recognizing people's cultural differences and removing procedural obstacles that prevent marginalized groups from meaningfully participating in decisions that affect their property, well-being, and risk^{13–15}. More recently, scholars further argue that all people have the right to a minimum level of capabilities and opportunities in order to accomplish the goals they set for themselves^{16,17}.

Adaptation to climate change is intrinsically spatial. Ideas of spatial justice posit that socially valued resources, such as jobs, income, political voice and power, cultural acceptance, social services, and environmental goods, as well as the opportunities to make use of these resources, should be equitably allocated across space^{18,19}. While the goal is to achieve justice, most spatial justice scholars investigate the ways geographic determinants and differences shape diverse forms of spatial inequality. Neo-Marxist theorists argue that unequal distribution

of urban assets, such as land, infrastructure, and housing, is an inherent feature of contemporary modes of global economic production, which concentrate resources among urban elites and reproduce social structures that perpetuate uneven development^{18,20,21}. Research on urban environmental justice supports these claims by documenting how prevailing practices in development locate undesirable, polluting, or hazardous facilities in poor, minority neighborhoods, or relegate disadvantaged residents to low-quality areas where land is cheap²².

Existing patterns of uneven development have profound effects on the vulnerability to climate change experienced by different communities. Many low-income residents have no choice but to live in informal settlements, public housing, or hazardous and high-risk locations; suffer from pre-existing health conditions²³; and have few resources to prepare for, cope with, and recover from stresses and shocks²⁴. These conditions of poverty can compound individual characteristics, such as age, gender, and disability, as well as forms of social marginalization, such as ethnic and racial exclusion, and cultural, religious, and linguistic isolation, to make disadvantaged residents especially susceptible to climate change impacts²⁵. Distributive impacts of climate change can also exacerbate procedural injustices when they lead to political marginalization^{26,27}. For instance, following disasters, marginalized communities – whether in New Orleans or Manila – are more likely to be displaced, which can lead to the loss of social and political networks, and a voice in decisions about where and how to rebuild²⁸.

Cities increasingly recognize the need to reduce social vulnerability by improving access to infrastructure, public services, and awareness of climate impacts among these groups^{24,25}. In particular, some early adopter cities made a concerted effort to develop representational and participatory processes with nongovernmental organizations and urban residents that place justice and equity at the center of local adaptation efforts^{29,30}. Such consultative and collaborative learning processes raise local awareness of climate risks, identify community needs, help residents develop priority response options, and integrate community feedback into planning processes and program implementation^{31,32}. Innovations in participatory tools, such as

using games, scenarios, and community dialogues to facilitate anticipatory learning, help stakeholders assess their vulnerabilities while building trust and mutual understanding^{33–34}. These inclusive planning processes can improve immediate climate equity outcomes and enhance the long-term stability of adaptation programs by conveying relevant and culturally-accessible climate information to socially and environmentally vulnerable groups, respecting existing cultural knowledge and values, and engaging communities from the beginning⁵. Nevertheless, participatory processes in the absence of broader reforms are not a panacea, as individuals tend to privilege short-term interests over long-term processes with uncertain outcomes, and may advocate for measures that reinforce inequalities³⁵.

Beyond participatory planning processes, efforts to adapt should, at a minimum, avoid maladaptive strategies that worsen existing social, racial, class, gender, or ethnic inequalities³⁶. Scholars increasingly argue that adaptation should promote more transformative social contracts that challenge or redress underlying drivers of inequality and vulnerability^{37,38}, and prioritize the improvement of social services and protective infrastructure for marginalized groups³⁹. To this end, they have developed asset-based frameworks to help practitioners identify the most socially vulnerable populations and raise the capacity of households and communities to reduce and respond to extreme climate impacts²⁴. They also apply the capability framework^{16,17} to highlight the varying capabilities of different social groups to continue to thrive economically and culturally under climate change⁴⁰.

To date, very little research has examined the actual distributive outcomes of ongoing and proposed adaptation interventions on the ground^{29,41}. Adaptation projects can, for instance, entrench unequal power distribution by taking advantage of disasters to relocate marginalized populations from urban centers or investing scarce public resources in areas of high economic value without giving commensurate attention to historically neglected neighborhoods³⁹. Furthermore, despite the increasing popularity of the “resilience” concept in theory and practice, scholars of climate justice critique the concept for sidestepping politically difficult choices around

the redistribution of risks, resources, and power^{42,43}. Rather than advocating resiliency planning projects that purport to be politically neutral and universally beneficial, policymakers must pay more explicit attention to distributive and procedural justice implications of adaptation outcomes on the ground. In addition, they must advocate transformative approaches that redress structural risks and vulnerabilities experienced by marginalized communities.

With these challenges in mind, we present a roadmap to reorient urban climate adaptation research and practice around four interrelated research needs. These lines of research seek to empirically assess whether, when, and how adaptation actions preserve the interests of urban elites or demonstrate a potential to address long-standing development needs of marginalized communities, prevent maladaptive responses, and tackle the drivers of socio-economic vulnerability^{44,45}. Future research on how scalar and spatial dimensions of adaptation planning entrench or redress social inequality is a first step toward identifying pathways to more transformative adaptation policies.

Broadening Participation in Urban Adaptation Planning

Climate adaptation is a crosscutting challenge requiring multi-sector and multi-stakeholder participation and commitment. However, the dominant actors in urban adaptation planning at present remain “confined to the environmental wing of local authorities and disjointed from other areas of policy making”^{46,47}. A 2014 survey of early adopters worldwide found that a majority of cities identify only two sectors – departments of environment and land-use planning – as actively engaged in adaptation planning and implementation. Agencies responsible for water, wastewater, and solid waste management are actively engaged in only a minority of cities, while those responsible for economic development and health are far less engaged^{48,49}.

Similarly, municipal adaptation often does not engage community or social justice advocacy groups, or takes place in isolation from community-based adaptation planning

processes^{30,50}. A 2012 survey found that only in Canada and several countries in Asia and Latin America did more than 20% of cities planning for adaptation report working with nongovernmental organizations, most of which are likely to be environmental rather than community groups⁵¹. While some cities make meaningful efforts to work with community groups^{29,30}, too often adaptation planners engage community groups only on joint fact-finding for vulnerability assessments and education about climate risks, not the framing and identification of adaptation strategies³⁵.

This uneven participation by municipal departments and civil society limits the potential for adaptation to be systematically mainstreamed into local development and management policies, and stifles attention to the particular needs of disadvantaged groups. Roads, energy networks, and waste management systems that function under unpredictable and extreme conditions can benefit rich and poor communities alike, and mainstreaming adaptation into land use planning and infrastructure departments can complement socially equitable adaptation. However, vulnerable and marginalized groups and individuals often need specific kinds of additional support, such as evacuation assistance during disasters, livelihood protection, management of chronic health risks, and help addressing the compound effects of multiple vulnerabilities. The lack of meaningful participation by key actors responsible for health and advancing the economic status of the marginalized suggests that adaptation plans may not adequately account for these needs.

Scholars and policy makers argue that adaptation planning needs to shift from sectoral plans to more integrated management, and from purely technical changes to more social and institutional approaches^{52,53}. Accordingly, effective and equitable adaptation must engage diverse actors to institutionalize the agenda within local governance⁴⁷. However, existing studies have yet to investigate how the procedural justice of adaptation planning processes shapes distributive implications of adaptation outcomes. As such, empirical research is needed on the following questions:

- What policies have local municipal agencies developed that specifically benefit disadvantaged communities, and under what conditions do they develop and implement these proposals?
- To what extent do adaptation plans advanced by environmental and land use planning departments prioritize redressing social vulnerability? How has participation of a broader set of municipal agencies and community groups early in adaptation planning affected adaptation planning strategies and outcomes, especially for socially vulnerable groups?
- When and how have community groups and social and environmental justice advocates contributed to coalitions that successfully overcame political resistance to or lack of concern for climate adaptation? What are the tradeoffs between building broader coalitions and needing to achieve consensus on shared adaptation goals?

This research would help illuminate the strategies cities have developed to benefit disadvantaged groups, the agencies likely to advance these proposals, and the conditions under which these policies gain currency. Such work would help identify opportunities for nontraditional partnerships with stronger coalitions and strategies more likely to benefit marginalized groups⁵⁴.

Catalyzing Adaptation Planning across Cities

Many early leaders in urban climate adaptation are national capitals, global centers of finance, or have progressive political leaders and past engagement with environmental sustainability and carbon mitigation⁵⁵. Research has focused on these cities' experiences, finding proactive adaptation champions in local departments, political leadership and vision⁴⁷, institutional capacity, and greater financial resources allowed them to engage in adaptation planning and implementation⁵⁶. However, it is equally important to assess which cities are not adapting. For most of the three million municipalities worldwide, the complexity of risk and

vulnerability assessments, the demands for data and technical expertise, and the costs of implementation exceed their existing capacities⁴. Furthermore, small and medium municipalities – most with fewer than one million residents – have less political autonomy than tier one cities. The global urban population is expected to increase by 2.5 billion people over the next 35 years, with most growth taking place in smaller, less resourced cities in the Global South. Adaptation will need to be a priority area for many of these cities, given that climate impacts are estimated to cost cities in the Global South as much as \$109 billion annually in infrastructure investments alone^{57,58}.

To help overcome these challenges, local governments and foundations, among others, have established networks such as the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group, 100 Resilient Cities, World Mayor's Council on Climate Change, and the Durban Adaptation Charter. These global forums provide opportunities for peer-to-peer learning, technical expertise, and platforms for policy development and transfer^{59–62}. Nevertheless, research finds these networks limited because most cities lack the resources to join and participate in them^{30,55,63}. As a result, global adaptation networks may contribute to, rather than reduce, the inequitable distribution of adaptive capacities and resources across cities and nations.

The lack of adaptation by cities with fewer resources represents a fundamental form of spatial injustice, since future resilience to climate impacts will exacerbate existing developmental gaps between large, wealthy cities and “the rest.” These gaps point to the important – often structural – local barriers to adaptation, such as funding for implementation, competition with other cities for investments and development, political incentives for action, and organizational capacity and authority^{49,51,64,65}. While financial, institutional, and human resources are in short supply among wealthier cities and can slow their progress, such constraints are magnified in cities with lower staff and resource capacities, preventing them from initiating adaptation action⁵¹.

Identifying ways to expand adaptation to most of the world's municipalities is sorely needed, including by reconsidering the scale and level at which adaptation planning is conducted and leveraging new transnational networks to facilitate institution building and capacity diffusion among cities of all sizes⁶⁶.

- What tools (such as big data, open data, and crowd-sourcing), planning scales (such as communities, regions, states), or modes of engagement (such as transnational municipal networks reflecting the diversity of cities and urban conditions) enable a broader range of municipalities worldwide to take steps to adapt to climate impacts?
- What lessons learned from climate adaptation advances of early adopters are relevant to small and medium cities that are rapidly growing or have limited financial and institutional capacity, given that climate impacts, vulnerability, and adaptive capacity are contextually specific?

These questions help reorient the literature around bridging capacity gaps across cities of different sizes and levels of development as a prerequisite to institutionalizing synergistic, effective, and equitable urban adaptation policies. This is particularly important for poorly resourced cities trying to emulate early adopters, as many are weakly positioned to operationalize broad social justice objectives in their adaptation plans in the absence of dedicated financial resources, internal capacities for agenda coordination, and supportive intergovernmental policy mandates⁶¹.

Scaling Adaptation Justice through Multilevel and Multi-scalar Governance

Academic literature, policies, guidance documents, and networks often argue that “all adaptation is local” due to the geographic specificity of climate impacts and vulnerabilities, and local government’s control over land use planning and development^{7, 67}. A recent review found nearly 130 academic and grey documents adopting this heuristic, with 59% endorsing the concept and only 8% critiquing it⁶. However, this local framing overlooks the multilevel and

multi-scalar context in which local adaptation planning takes place, and neglects emerging examples of regional or metropolitan adaptation initiatives worldwide, such as the Regional Adaptation Collaboratives in Canada, regional climate adaptation planning (KLIMZUG) in Germany, the Southeast Florida Climate Change Compact, and the United Nations Environmental Programme's Territorial Approaches to Climate Adaptation.

Recent scholarship on multilevel governance, primarily from Europe, Canada, and Australia, highlights how local climate adaptation is embedded within a complex set of tensions between local and national governments over regulatory authority and revenue assignment^{7,46,68}. Despite these advances, scholarship has yet to examine how the effects of policymaking at multiple levels of government influence the social equity of adaptation plans and implementation. Local governments in many countries lack control over key areas central to urban adaptation, including transportation, energy, and water infrastructure systems, as well as social services such as public housing, welfare, risk insurance, and building codes. Long-term infrastructure upgrades and policies with potential to enhance social equity often require national or state leadership, funding, and coordination.⁶⁹ As a result, municipal adaptation planning tends to focus more on short-term activities that strengthen disaster risk preparedness systems, build neighborhoods' adaptive and coping capacities, and integrate climate considerations into land use plans^{7,70,71}. In theory, this last element has potential to transform long-term developmental trajectories, but in practice is often overtaken by local economic development priorities⁷².

In addition, few studies examine the multi-scalar impacts of adaptation interventions across metropolitan regions, or the cumulative justice implications of disconnected adaptation plans. Unevenly distributed municipal adaptive capacity across cities can result in pockets of higher exposure or areas of relative protection⁷³. Adaptation interventions can produce negative spillover effects across municipal boundaries in a metropolitan region, or transfer risks from one locale to another^{67,74,75}. For example, upstream river embankment and flood retention areas can

exacerbate downstream flooding, shoreline armoring in one community can increase erosion elsewhere, and the resettlement of poor residents from central waterways to similarly vulnerable urban peripheries may weaken the adaptive capacity of already disadvantaged groups. Decision makers' choices about the appropriate scale of adaptation and of evaluating the impacts of specific interventions influence perceived justice of outcomes. These choices of scale are socially and politically constructed, and reflect political rationalities often at the root of larger patterns of urban injustice^{18,76}.

Evaluation of how the scale of adaptation planning influences the ability of policymakers to address drivers of unequal vulnerability is needed, as is increased understanding of how interventions at multiple levels of government and across different administrative jurisdictions can facilitate or constrain equitable adaptation outcomes⁷⁷. Future research can help identify ways to support adaptation at multiple scales and levels by attending to these key questions⁷⁸:

- How does the reliance of low-income groups on natural resources for their livelihoods make them particularly vulnerable to climate impacts at the bioregional scale?
- What are the most effective policy and planning tools for rectifying spatial and socio-economic spillover effects of particular adaptation interventions? To what extent do emerging regional or metropolitan initiatives to plan for climate adaptation redress social vulnerability and equity challenges?
- What are the scales and metrics by which to evaluate justice and equity outcomes within dynamic multilevel and multi-scalar adaptation governance systems?
- How do values that prioritize adaptation and vulnerability reduction for marginalized communities diffuse between levels of government to become institutionalized?

Such empirical research would shed light on the policies at different levels of government that can promote equitable adaptation to climate change. It would broaden the

theoretical basis for multi-scalar adaptation from socio-ecological systems and resilience,^{44,45} connecting it to existing literatures on spatial justice and regional planning^{18,79}.

Designing for Spatial Justice

A final limitation in efforts to advance equitable outcomes is the division between physical-infrastructure and social-institutional approaches to adaptation research, planning, and implementation. Governments, designers, and funders have focused on reinforcing or retrofitting infrastructure, buildings, and open space as practical ways to protect cities from worsening climate disasters. Meanwhile, researchers, critical theorists, and activists argue that these responses overemphasize physical and infrastructural solutions at the expense of social, economic, and political reforms^{80,81}, are expensive and inflexible, and are often inappropriate given the uncertainties of climate change projections⁴.

This division appears to be shifting as researchers develop new frameworks for adaptation that aspire to be comprehensive and based on urban systems^{82,83}, and as cities, national governments, and nongovernmental entities worldwide propose increasingly large-scale projects. Examples of such interventions include raised sea walls and demountable barriers in New York and New Orleans, floating districts to protect cities from rising sea levels in Rotterdam and Hamburg, retention ponds and “floodable” zones to deal with stronger and more unpredictable storms in Rotterdam, and entirely new sections of cities designed to address multiple climate threats in Lagos and Jakarta. These projects are not simply engineering moves to “climate proof” particular pieces of infrastructure. They reflect efforts to systemically alter the development trajectories of urban environments.

As cities envision and build more large-scale infrastructure projects, there is a need to understand who is conceiving, developing, and implementing these solutions and to what effect. Cities often undertake climate change-oriented projects as strategic decisions to protect existing centers of global investment, economic growth, and infrastructure expansion, and not towards

broader environmental or social justice goals. Such interventions for “urban ecological security” may result in “ecological enclaves” that are touted as climate-safe zones but exclude and displace marginalized populations⁷³. This is particularly concerning because large-scale projects (for adaptation or otherwise) historically have problematic impacts on and limited social and economic benefits for urban poor communities^{84,85}. In the absence of major state funding for adaptation, public-private partnerships are financing and governing these projects⁸⁶, some of which now bundle or “splinter” previously common-good infrastructure so that only paying customers benefit.⁸⁷ These adaptation mechanisms need to be closely examined for transparency, accountability, and equity impacts⁸⁷.

Adaptation projects will not confront issues of justice and equality, nor address the needs of the most socially vulnerable groups, if there is little interaction between adaptation researchers engaged in theorizing the spatial injustice of climate vulnerabilities and designers and engineers involved in implementing physical adaptation interventions. Ecological urban designers, concerned with integrating ecological systems and urban form^{88,89} or hybridizing natural and engineered infrastructural systems^{89,90}, are well positioned to address urban environmental change. The following questions help integrate justice into this work investigating the relationships between the design of physical and ecological infrastructure and social outcomes of climate change adaptation:

- To what extent are urban and infrastructural design decisions for climate adaptation creating new waves of displacement or other forms of maladaptation? Conversely, under what conditions do infrastructure projects for climate adaptation prioritize or complement efforts to address the needs of the disadvantaged?
- What criteria for social justice would be appropriate in ecosystems and urban services valuation, given the growing push to monetize and commercialize these services?

- What are the responsibilities, barriers, and opportunities for urban, landscape, and infrastructural designers to facilitate equitable adaptation planning and outcomes?
- Is the traditional model of large-scale master planning adequate for tackling urban climate adaptation, especially given the concentrated risks and exposures in mega-cities of the Global South? What are the alternatives?

These questions call for empirical research examining how urban design, landscape, and engineering professionals translate goals of municipal and private clients and feedback from community meetings into buildable visions for the urban environment. Bridging the divide between adaptation theory and professional planning and design practice represents a step toward envisioning a new kind of comprehensive planning that is simultaneously big enough to deal with the scale of climate impacts and small enough to respond to on-the-ground struggles of the disadvantaged.

Towards a Research Agenda for Just Adaptation

The magnitude of projected climate impacts necessitates radical and systemic changes to the design and function of cities, and relationships between environment and society^{37,91}. Paradoxically, the need for cities to adapt is taking place in an era of austerity, decentralization, and opposition to major urban interventions that can fundamentally undercut the capacity of states to carry out these changes. In this paper, we identify four ways that adaptation planning approaches can exacerbate existing urban inequality and injustice: the absence of key participants in adaptation planning processes to advocate for the interests of disadvantaged communities; the lack of adaptation planning capacities in many cities that most need it; the lack of intergovernmental frameworks that support adaptation planning at the regional and metropolitan scales; and the divide between theorizing justice in academia and implementing adaptation interventions across physical designs and infrastructure systems on the ground. The

table below summarizes these unjust planning practices and research questions associated with each of these areas.

[Table here]

As a first step, this research agenda calls for empirically measuring and assessing outcomes related to justice and equity of recent and ongoing adaptation planning efforts. This involves identifying cases where adaptation planning results in maladaptive and inequitable outcomes for marginalized groups and those cases where planners and designers overcome existing structural limitations to advance equitable adaptation. This research will contribute to the development of a set of guiding principles, processes, models, and tools for local and other governance entities to adopt in their climate adaptation policies.

In addition, this road map points to opportunities to reconceive procedural justice as more than consultation with affected communities. Systemically changing key institutions shaping public health and economic wellbeing requires related state organizations to be at the table in adaptation planning. Framing adaptation as a social justice issue can also initiate dialogue between nontraditional partners – such as environment and planning departments, low-income and ethnic minority communities, and social and environmental justice advocacy groups – that can result in new coalitions promoting equitable adaptation. Similarly, opportunities exist to foster dialogue between these groups, critical theorists, and urban designers to transform the way people talk about and design equitable adaptation.

Finally, this research agenda highlights the importance of evaluating the roles of different levels of government in advancing adaptation planning, and whether just adaptation approaches require rescaling state institutions and government-society relationships to cope with and manage the climate transition⁹². Past approaches to adaptation often privileged local scales of intervention based upon motivated leaders, voluntary networks, and nongovernmental or global

support frameworks. Moving forward, planners, policymakers, and researchers must evaluate the justice implications of adaptation at all different scales. A critical understanding of cities' roles within intergovernmental governance systems, metropolitan and ecological regions, and global market dynamics are prerequisites for just adaptation actions.

Central to Professor Carmin's legacy is dedication to environmental justice and the pursuit of empirically rigorous research to guide policy development and theorization in the fields of urban climate adaptation and environmental governance. Informed by her work and that of others, communities, cities, and metropolitan regions around the world are increasingly integrating climate considerations into development and land use plans, and engaging low-income and other marginalized communities in prioritizing and operationalizing adaptation interventions^{25,48}. It is time to evaluate the impacts of these efforts in transforming social vulnerability to climate impacts³⁸, and to identify pathways facilitating more just adaptation actions across types of cities and actors, geographies, and governance scales⁹³.

Acknowledgments

This paper is dedicated to JoAnn Carmin (1957-2014), Associate Professor of Environmental Policy and Planning at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). We are grateful to the MIT Department of Urban Studies and Planning for hosting the Carmin Memorial Symposium on Urban Climate Adaptation (December 2014), and to the many scholars, practitioners, and students who participated in the symposium and contributed their insights.

The authors declare no competing financial interests.

Research Roadmap	Key Characteristics of Unjust Adaptation Planning	Proposed Research Questions
Broadening Participation in Urban Adaptation Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adaptation planning is not involving sectors key to reducing social vulnerability Social justice advocacy and community groups are often not involved or involved upfront in shaping adaptation planning strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Under what conditions do cities prioritize the needs of marginalized populations in climate adaptation plans and projects? When and how have community groups and social and environmental justice advocates contributed to coalitions that successfully overcame political resistance to or lack of concern for climate adaptation? What are the tradeoffs between building broader coalitions and needing to achieve consensus on shared adaptation goals?
Catalyzing Adaptation Planning across Cities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of financial and human resources in rapidly growing and poorer municipalities Support of networks limited to larger and wealthier cities Uneven uptake of adaptation may exacerbate the developmental gap between cities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What tools, planning scales, or modes of engagement enable a broader range of municipalities worldwide to adapt to climate impacts in ways that reduce the vulnerability of the disadvantaged? What lessons learned from early adopters can be relevant to small cities or those with limited capacity? How can adaptation planning at other scales of governance facilitate more widespread adaptation across all cities?
Scaling Adaptation Justice through Multilevel and Multi-scalar Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local framing of adaptation limits potential to address justice and equity Spillover effects of adaptation interventions across scales and jurisdictions Scalar mismatches between adaptation needs and existing regulations and financial schemes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the most effective policy and planning tools for rectifying spatial and socio-economic spillover effects of particular adaptation interventions? What are the scales and metrics by which to evaluate justice and equity outcomes within dynamic multilevel and multi-scalar adaptation governance systems? How do values that prioritize equitable adaptation and vulnerability reduction diffuse between levels of government to become institutionalized?
Designing for Spatial Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Division between physical-infrastructural and social-institutional approaches to adaptation planning and implementation Limitations of large-scale urban master plans Adaptation priorities that exacerbate existing socio-spatial inequality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent are urban and infrastructural design decisions for climate adaptation creating new waves of displacement or other forms of maladaptation? What are the responsibilities, barriers, and opportunities for urban, landscape, and infrastructural designers to facilitate equitable adaptation planning and outcomes? Is the traditional model of large-scale master planning adequate for tackling urban climate adaptation, especially given the concentrated risks and exposures in mega-cities of the Global South? What are the alternatives?

Table: Summary of four major research needs on urban adaptation justice, and the characteristics of unjust planning practices and key questions in each area.

References

1. Dodman, D. & Satterthwaite, D. Institutional Capacity, Climate Change Adaptation and the Urban Poor. *IDS Bull.* **39**, 67–74 (2009).
2. Roberts, J. T. The International Dimension of Climate Justice and the Need for International Adaptation Funding. *Environ. Justice* **2**, 185–190 (2009).
3. Anguelovski, I., Chu, E. & Carmin, J. Variations in approaches to urban climate adaptation: Experiences and experimentation from the global South. *Glob. Environ. Chang.* **27**, 156–167 (2014).
4. Carmin, J., Dodman, D. & Chu, E. *Urban Climate Adaptation and Leadership: From Conceptual to Practical Understanding*. (OECD, 2013).
5. Chu, E., Anguelovski, I. & Carmin, J. Inclusive approaches to urban climate adaptation planning and implementation in the Global South. *Clim. Policy* 1–21 (2015).
6. Preston, B. L., Mustelin, J. & Maloney, M. C. Climate adaptation heuristics and the science/policy divide. *Mitig. Adapt. Strateg. Glob. Chang.* **20**, 467–497 (2015).
7. Nalau, J., Preston, B. L. & Maloney, M. C. Is adaptation a local responsibility? *Environ. Sci. Policy* **48**, 89–98 (2015).
8. Rawls, J. *A Theory of Justice*. (Harvard University Press, 1971).
9. Walzer, M. *Spheres of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality*. (Basic Books, 1983).
10. Young, I. M. *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. (Princeton University Press, 1990).
11. Honneth, A. Integrity and Disrespect: Principles of a Conception of Morality Based on the Theory of Recognition. *Polit. Theory* **20**, 187–201 (1992).
12. Stone, D. *Policy Paradox: The Art of Political Decision Making*. (W. W. Norton, 1997).
13. Freudenberg, N., Pastor, M. & Israel, B. Strengthening Community Capacity to Participate in Making Decisions to Reduce Disproportionate Environmental Exposures. *Am. J. Public Health* **101**, S123–S130 (2011).
14. Shrader-Frechette, K. *Environmental Justice: Creating Equality, Reclaiming Democracy*. (Oxford University Press, 2002).
15. Schlosberg, D. *Defining Environmental Justice: Theories, Movement, and Nature*. *Defining Environmental Justice: Theories, Movements, and Nature* (Oxford University Press, 2007).
16. Sen, A. *Development as Freedom*. (Anchor Press, 1999).

17. Nussbaum, M. C. *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach*. (Belknap Press, 2011).
18. Soja, E. *Seeking Spatial Justice*. (University Of Minnesota Press, 2010).
19. Marcuse, P. *et al. Searching for the Just City: Debates in Urban Theory and Practice*. (Routledge, 2009).
20. Gould, K. A., Pellow, D. N. & Schnaiberg, A. *The Treadmill of Production: Injustice and Unsustainability in the Global Economy*. (Paradigm Publishers, 2008).
21. Lefebvre, H. *The Production of Space*. (Wiley-Blackwell, 1991).
22. Mohai, P., Pellow, D. N. & Roberts, J. T. Environmental Justice. *Annu. Rev. Environ. Resour.* **34**, 405–430 (2009).
23. Watts, N. *et al.* Health and climate change: policy responses to protect public health. *Lancet* (2015).
24. Moser, C. & Satterthwaite, D. in *Social Dimensions of Climate Change: Equity and Vulnerability in a Warming World* (eds. Mearns, R. & Norton, A.) 231–258 (The World Bank, 2010).
25. IPCC. *Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*. (Cambridge University Press, 2014).
26. Carmin, J. & Agyeman, J. *Environmental Inequalities Beyond Borders: Local Perspectives on Global Injustices*. (MIT Press, 2011).
27. Pellow, D. N. D. N. Environmental Inequality Formation: Toward a Theory of Environmental Injustice. *Am. Behav. Sci.* **43**, 581–601 (2000).
28. Reale, A. & Handmer, J. Land tenure, disasters and vulnerability. *Disasters* **35**, 160–182 (2011).
29. Archer, D. *et al.* Moving towards inclusive urban adaptation: approaches to integrating community-based adaptation to climate change at city and national scale. *Clim. Dev.* **6**, 345–356 (2014).
30. Bulkeley, H., Carmin, J., Castán Broto, V., Edwards, G. A. S. & Fuller, S. Climate justice and global cities: Mapping the emerging discourses. *Glob. Environ. Chang.* **23**, 914–925 (2013).
31. Dodman, D. & Mitlin, D. Challenges for Community-Based Adaptation: Discovering the Potential for Transformation. *J. Int. Dev.* **25**, 640–659 (2011).
32. Ayers, J. & Forsyth, T. Community-Based Adaptation to Climate Change. *Environment: Science and Policy for Sustainable Development* **51**, 22–31 (2009).

33. Nay, J. J., Abkowitz, M., Chu, E., Gallagher, D. & Wright, H. A review of decision-support models for adaptation to climate change in the context of development. *Clim. Dev.* **6**, 357–367 (2014).
34. Tschakert, P. & Dietrich, K. A. Anticipatory Learning for Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience. *Ecol. Soc.* **15**, 11–34 (2010).
35. Few, R., Brown, K. & Tompkins, E. L. Public participation and climate change adaptation: avoiding the illusion of inclusion. *Clim. Policy* **7**, 46–59 (2007).
36. Barnett, J. & O'Neill, S. Maladaptation. *Glob. Environ. Chang.* **20**, 211–213 (2010).
37. Kates, R. W., Travis, W. R. & Wilbanks, T. J. Transformational adaptation when incremental adaptations to climate change are insufficient. *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci.* **109**, 7156–61 (2012).
38. Pelling, M., O'Brien, K. & Matyas, D. Adaptation and transformation. *Clim. Change* (2014).
39. Pelling, M. & Dill, K. Disaster politics: tipping points for change in the adaptation of sociopolitical regimes. *Prog. Hum. Geogr.* **34**, 21–37 (2009).
40. Schlosberg, D. Climate Justice and Capabilities: A Framework for Adaptation Policy. *Ethics Int. Aff.* **26**, 445–461 (2012).
41. Klinsky, S. & Dowlatabadi, H. Conceptualizations of justice in climate policy. *Clim. Policy* **9**, 88–108 (2009).
42. Wilkinson, C. Social-ecological resilience: Insights and issues for planning theory. *Plan. Theory* **11**, 148–169 (2011).
43. Brown, K. Global environmental change I: A social turn for resilience? *Prog. Hum. Geogr.* **38**, 107–117 (2014).
44. Hughes, S. Justice in Urban Climate Change Adaptation: Criteria and Application to Delhi. *Ecol. Soc.* **18**, 48 (2013).
45. Bulkeley, H., Edwards, G. A. S. & Fuller, S. Contesting climate justice in the city: Examining politics and practice in urban climate change experiments. *Glob. Environ. Chang.* **25**, 31–40 (2014).
46. Bulkeley, H. Cities and the Governing of Climate Change. *Annu. Rev. Environ. Resour.* **35**, 229–253 (2010).
47. Carmin, J., Anguelovski, I. & Roberts, D. Urban Climate Adaptation in the Global South: Planning in an Emerging Policy Domain. *J. Plan. Educ. Res.* **32**, 18–32 (2012).
48. Aylett, A. *Progress and Challenges in the Urban Governance of Climate Change: Results of a Global Survey.* (2014).

49. Aylett, A. Institutionalizing the urban governance of climate change adaptation: Results of an international survey. *Urban Clim.* (2015).
50. Forsyth, T. Community-based adaptation: A review of past and future challenges. *Wiley Interdiscip. Rev. Clim. Chang.* **4**, 439–446 (2013).
51. Carmin, J., Nadkarni, N. & Rhie, C. *Progress and Challenges in Urban Climate Adaptation Planning: Results of a Global Survey*. (DUSP, MIT, 2012).
52. Jonsson, A. C. *et al.* Cities' capacity to manage climate vulnerability: experiences from participatory vulnerability assessments in the lower Göta Älv Catchment, Sweden. *Local Environ.* **17**, 735–750 (2012).
53. Carmin, J. *et al.* in *Climate Change and Society: Sociological Perspectives* (eds. Dunlap, R. E. & Brulle, R. J.) 164–198 (Oxford University Press, 2015).
54. Morello-Frosch, R., Pastor, M., Sadd, J. & Shonkoff, S. *The Climate Gap: Inequalities in How Climate Change Hurts Americans & How to Close the Gap*. (2009).
55. Westerhoff, L., Keskitalo, E. C. H. & Juhola, S. Capacities across scales : local to national adaptation policy in four European countries. *Clim. Policy* **11**, 1071–1085 (2011).
56. Shi, L., Chu, E. & Debats, J. Explaining Progress in Climate Adaptation Planning Across 156 U.S. Municipalities. *J. Am. Plan. Assoc.* 1–12 (2015).
57. Ciplet, D., Roberts, J. T. & Khan, M. The Politics of International Climate Adaptation Funding: Justice and Divisions in the Greenhouse. *Glob. Environ. Polit.* **13**, 49–68 (2013).
58. Bulkeley, H. *et al.* *Cities and climate change: the role of institutions, governance and urban planning*. (2008).
59. Fünfgeld, H. Facilitating local climate change adaptation through transnational municipal networks. *Curr. Opin. Environ. Sustain.* **12**, 67–73 (2015).
60. Giest, S. & Howlett, M. Comparative climate change governance: Lessons from european transnational municipal network management efforts. *Environ. Policy Gov.* **23**, 341–353 (2013).
61. Kern, K. & Bulkeley, H. Cities, Europeanization and Multi-level Governance: Governing Climate Change through Transnational Municipal Networks. *JCMS J. Common Mark. Stud.* **47**, 309–332 (2009).
62. Bulkeley, H., Andonova, L.B., Betsill, M.M., Compagnon, D., Hale, T., Hoffman, M.J., Newell, P., Paterson, M., Roger, C., & VanDeveer, S.D. *Transnational Climate Change Governance*. (Cambridge University Press, 2014).
63. Lee, T. Global Cities and Transnational Climate Change Networks. *Glob. Environ. Polit.* **13**, 108–128 (2013).

64. Hamin, E. M., Gurrán, N. & Emlinger, A. M. Barriers to Municipal Climate Adaptation: Examples From Coastal Massachusetts' Smaller Cities and Towns. *J. Am. Plan. Assoc.* **80**, 110–122 (2014).
65. Measham, T. G. *et al.* Adapting to climate change through local municipal planning: barriers and challenges. *Mitig. Adapt. Strateg. Glob. Chang.* **16**, 889–909 (2011).
66. Bulkeley, H., Castán Broto, V. & Edwards, G. A. S. *An Urban Politics of Climate Change: Experimentation and the Governing of Socio-Technical Transitions*. (Routledge, 2015).
67. Vogel, B. & Henstra, D. Studying local climate adaptation: A heuristic research framework for comparative policy analysis. *Glob. Environ. Chang.* **31**, 110–120 (2015).
68. Mukheibir, P., Kuruppu, N., Gero, A. & Herriman, J. Overcoming Cross-Scale Challenges to Climate Change Adaptation for Local Government: A Focus on Australia. *Clim. Change* **121**, 271–283 (2013).
69. Bauer, A., & Steurer, R. Multi-level governance of climate change adaptation through regional partnerships in Canada and England. *Geoforum* **51**, 121–29 (2014).
70. Hallegatte, S. & Corfee-Morlot, J. Understanding climate change impacts, vulnerability and adaptation at city scale: an introduction. *Clim. Change* **104**, 1–12 (2010).
71. Reid, H. & Huq, S. Mainstreaming community-based adaptation into national and local planning. *Clim. Dev.* **6**, 291–292 (2014).
72. Bulkeley, H. & Betsill, M. M. Revisiting the urban politics of climate change. *Env. Polit.* **22**, 136–154 (2013).
73. Hodson, M. & Marvin, S. *World Cities and Climate Change: Producing Urban Ecological Security*. (Open University Press, 2010).
74. Corfee-Morlot, J., Cochran, I., Hallegatte, S. & Teasdale, P.-J. Multilevel risk governance and urban adaptation policy. *Clim. Change* **104**, 169–197 (2010).
75. Tanner, T., Mitchell, T., Polack, E. & Guenther, B. *Urban Governance for Adaptation: Assessing Climate Change Resilience in Ten Asian Cities. IDS Working Papers* (2009).
76. Padt, F., Opdam, P., Polman, N. & Termeer, C. *Scale-sensitive Governance of the Environment*. (Wiley-Blackwell, 2014). doi:9781118567159
77. Termeer, C. *et al.* The regional governance of climate adaptation: A framework for developing legitimate, effective, and resilient governance arrangements. *Clim. Law* **2**, 159–179 (2011).
78. Wilbanks, T. J. & Kates, R. W. Beyond Adapting to Climate Change: Embedding Adaptation in Responses to Multiple Threats and Stresses. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* **100**, 719–728 (2010).

79. Harvey, D. *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1996.
80. Birkmann, J., Garschagen, M., Kraas, F. & Quang, N. Adaptive urban governance: new challenges for the second generation of urban adaptation strategies to climate change. *Sustain. Sci.* **5**, 185–206 (2010).
81. Garschagen, M. & Kraas, F. in *Resilient Cities: Cities and Adaptation to Climate Change Proceedings of the Global Forum 2010* (ed. Otto-Zimmermann, K.) 131–139 (Springer Netherlands, 2011).
82. ARUP. *City Resilience Framework: City Resilience Index*. (2014).
83. Tyler, S. & Moench, M. A framework for urban climate resilience. *Clim. Dev.* **4**, 311–326 (2012).
84. Altshuler, A. & Luberhoff, D. *Mega-projects: The Changing Politics of Urban Public Investment*. (Brookings Institution Press, 2003).
85. Flyvberg, B., Bruzelius, N. & Rothengatter, W. *Megaprojects and Risk: An Anatomy of Ambition*. (Cambridge University Press, 2003).
86. Harman, B. P., Taylor, B. M. & Lane, M. B. Urban partnerships and climate adaptation: challenges and opportunities. *Curr. Opin. Environ. Sustain.* **12**, 74–79 (2015).
87. Graham, S. & Marvin, S. *Splintering urbanism: networked infrastructures, technological mobilities and the urban condition*. (Routledge, 2001).
88. Pickett, S. T. A., Cadenasso, M. L. & McGrath, B. *Resilience in ecology and urban design linking theory and practice for sustainable cities*. (Springer, 2013).
89. Steiner, F. Landscape ecological urbanism: Origins and trajectories. *Landsc. Urban Plan.* **100**, 333–337 (2011).
90. Bélanger, P. Landscape As Infrastructure. *Landsc. J.* **28**, 79–95 (2009).
91. Parks, B. C. & Roberts, J. T. Globalization, Vulnerability to Climate Change, and Perceived Injustice. *Soc. Nat. Resour.* **19**, 337–355 (2006).
92. Matyas, D. & Pelling, M. Positioning resilience for 2015: the role of resistance, incremental adjustment and transformation in disaster risk management policy. *Disasters* **39**, s1–s18 (2015).
93. Barrett, S. The necessity of a multiscalar analysis of climate justice. *Prog. Hum. Geogr.* **37**, 215–233 (2012).