

## **The Climate Crisis: Making Cities Resilient Conference**

**Conference organisers:** Betsy Donald, Meric Gertler, Amy Glasmeier, Michael Kitson, Siqu Zheng

### **Conference Overview**

Scientific evidence that human activity is the principal cause of global climate warming is unequivocal (IPCC, 2023). No matter the evidence examined, the data are compelling – global temperature rise, warming oceans, or shrinking ice sheets. Climate scientists sounded the alarm as early as the 1950s. However, politicians at all levels and world leaders have only recently resolved to address the climate crisis. Cities worldwide are experiencing the devastating effects of climate-induced crises such as wildfires, flooding, sea level rise, hurricanes, drought, or prolonged and frequent bouts of extreme weather. These events affect all classes, societies, and places, but some have argued that they disproportionately impact marginalized and vulnerable communities and physical environments (Leichenko & O’Brien, 2008; Leichenko & O’Brien, 2019).

Climate risk is location-specific, so the regional and urban angle is critical. However, scholars working from an urban and regional perspective were largely absent from the climate conversation, at least until the late 1990s, with the emergence of work on green economies, industrial ecology, and the circular economy (Easterling, 1997; Bulkeley & Betsill, 2005; Kythreotis et al., 2020; Avoyan et al., 2023; Coenen et al., 2021). While regional and urban scholars have called for new models to address the growing climate crisis, there is a need to move beyond the suggestions of ‘another world is possible’ (Donald & Gray, 2019). More recently, the literature on energy transitions has embraced an explicitly spatial focus (Coenen et al., 2012; Hansen and Coenen, 2015; Boschma et al., 2017; Coenen, et al., 2021), examining the role of place-specific assets, prior industrial structures, local public policies, and other forces in shaping the emergence of the low-carbon economy. In doing so, this work opens new terrain as we seek to understand both the impact of the climate crisis on particular places and the geographically uneven and injustice process by which local, regional, national and international actors respond to this existential challenge (Bulkeley et al., 2014).

At a time when collaboration between nation-states, mediated by global institutions such as the UN COP process, seems to be faltering, the need for local and regional action to fill the vacuum is especially acute. Institutions like C40 Cities – a global network of mayors united in action to confront the climate crisis – may help. Moreover, solutions to the crisis require more than just technological innovations. Indeed, the most important rate-limiting factors may have more to do with barriers to changing human behaviour. This implies that institutional innovations, including innovative financial models, will be pivotal in helping accelerate investment in carbon emission-mitigating and climate adaptation infrastructure (Colenbrander et al., 2018). This implicates the role of central banks, state infrastructure



banks, or other institutional actors capable of enhancing access to capital or shaping incentive structures to accelerate climate-positive decisions by private sector actors.

The conference committee for the Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy, and Society conference would like to invite contributions that address fundamental questions about the role and experiences of regions, cities and their governments in the face of the global climate crisis, including:

- How can an urban/regional lens inform our understanding of the origins, impact, and – particularly – responses to the climate crisis?
- What novel initiatives and policy approaches have emerged at the urban level to combat climate change? To what extent are these led by city governments versus other public and private sector actors?
- How do these local initiatives impact prosperity, employment opportunities, and economic renewal? And how do they address climate justice, ensuring that damages from the crisis as well as solutions to the crisis do not unfairly burden the poor?
- How to balance place-based adaptation and migration-oriented adaptation incentives?
- Will climate crisis and local fiscal crisis re-enforce each other and exacerbate regional inequality?
- How easily can locally successful models be transferred to other cities and regions?
- How are urban and regional green transitions shaped and constrained by larger (national and supranational) institutional frameworks?
- How do responses to the climate crisis reshape our understanding of the role of cities, regions, and their governments in shaping social and economic change?

### **Submissions for the Conference**

Those interested in presenting a paper at the conference should submit an abstract of no more than **400 words** to the conference committee by email to: [event@cpes.org.uk](mailto:event@cpes.org.uk), by **1 February 2025**.

It is not necessary to give a paper to attend the conference, those wishing to attend can book a place at the conference at: <https://cpes.org.uk/events/cjres2025>

If you wish to submit a paper to the journal issue on these themes then go to: <https://academic.oup.com/cjres/pages/call-for-papers-cities-climate-crisis>