

**IHDP Open Meeting '08  
16-19 October 2008, New Dehli, India**

**Proposed Session Organized by**

**UGEC**

**Session Title:  
*Urban Responses to Climate Change***

*Deadline for Expression of Interest: December 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2007*

The Urbanization and Global Environmental Change project (UGEC) ([www.ugec.org](http://www.ugec.org)), a core project from the International Human Dimensions Program ([www.ihdp.org](http://www.ihdp.org)), is currently engaged in an effort to expand our knowledge and understanding the interrelations of urban areas and global environmental change and specifically the responses of urban systems to global environmental change. UGEC believes that opportunities for urban sustainability in the 21<sup>st</sup> century need multidimensional approaches, looking beyond the local scale and integrating a dynamic perspective of the interactions between local, regional and global biophysical and social processes generated by and affecting urban areas. This session will provide a forum to explore how urban areas could better respond to the challenges created by climate change by adapting current institutions and perceptions.

Now that more than half of the world's population lives in cities, responses to climate change within urban areas are increasingly more important. It is clear that the development of urban areas holds the key to many of the challenges we face in the interactions with cities and the environment. Proper planning, decision making, and policy choices pave the way to a sustainable future. Understanding the relationships between formal and informal institutions of urban societies, researchers and citizens around sustainable practices and communities is vital.

The present and future of societies are intrinsically associated with the growth of their cities. Urbanization has a strong link with environmental management and, in particular, with adapting to and mitigating climate impacts and stresses. Human society has undergone several climate adaptation phases, as evidenced by the structure and organization of settlements and urban space. Technological advances have gradually transformed the capacity for adaptation to adverse climate conditions in urban areas. Changes have been particularly dramatic in the last century, where the adoption of mechanical means has facilitated the prioritization of aesthetic aspects over functional aspects in urban design and adaptation to climate. Concerns about the well-being of current and future urban inhabitants have promoted approaches to balance both the promise and threat that urban growth presents to development of sustainable societies. These relationships would enhance the transfer of information and resources to effectively transition into more sustainable practices.

This session springs out from a past UGEC workshop that addressed action at the local level that. The session targets advances in knowledge of urban responses; while collaborative international efforts have already been initiated, there still exists a need to expand the knowledge that has been created.

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**Session Title:**

Urban Responses to Climate Change

**Session Abstract:**

This session will explore how cities respond, fail to respond, or could better respond to climate change. Cities are considered the locus of action in responding to the challenges of climate change. An increasing number of cities around the world have begun to respond to climate change through mitigation actions but fewer cities have created comprehensive responses through climate change adaptation initiative and combined (mitigation and adaptation) action.

The session will focus on the institutional drivers of current responses to climate change; the role of different actors and institutions (in public, private, social, informal sectors, and international organizations), their role and relationships in the responses to climate change in urban areas; the deficiencies and resistance of institutions to respond to climate change; the windows of opportunities to overcome them and; how cooperation/collaboration between actors could effectively establish better measures, solutions, and responses to climate change.

Critical questions that the session seeks to address include: What are the strengths and weaknesses of current institutions to respond to climate change? How can we adapt local institutions to the challenge of climate change? What institutions can take a leading role in those responses and at which administrative levels? How can mitigation and adaptation be best a part of local strategies in response to climate change? What is the level of compatibility and coherence of mitigation and adaptation actions with the local urban development agenda? What steps need to be taken to foster urban sustainability through responses to climate change?

**Key Words:**

Urbanization, Policy, Climate Change, Adaptation, Mitigation, Collaboration, Institutions

**Participation:**

Interested researchers are asked to submit a 250 word abstract of their proposed contribution. The abstract should indicate the theme in which the contribution is submitted. It should outline the methodology, data sources (if applicable) and state what the author(s) assert to be the contribution to the body of literature on the subject. The submission should be accompanied by a CV of each author/co-author. Abstracts and CVs should be submitted by email to [fragkias@asu.edu](mailto:fragkias@asu.edu).

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