

COP26 INSIGHTS FROM THE INNOVATE4CITIES CONFERENCE 2021

STUDENT-LED
BRIEFING
REPORT

INNOVATE
CITIES



Melbourne Centre
for Cities



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Coordinating Editors: Ariana Dickey & Cathy Oke

Authors: Anupriya Aggarwal, Luis Felipe Álvarez Vega, Olutomiwa Binuyo, Joseph David Calara, Ishita Das, Taylah Emmanouel, Joseph Fenwick, Kate Field, Heesu Jeon, Abel Kiprono, Skye Li, Boyu Liu, Hope McGee, Yuan Meng, Padmapriya Muralidharan, Ilma Nafees, Zipporah Njenga, Samara Polwatta, Harry Quail, Martina Razzaboni, Asala Safwat, Edward Senkondo, Bryant M. Serre, Ellen Sharpe, Emma Su, Sadaf Taimur, Enrico Trevisi, Rachel Williams, Alemayehu Agizew Woldeamanuel, Xueting Yang, Amber Young, Rachaya Youngrod

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PREFACE

Hosted by UN-Habitat and the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy (GCoM), and co-sponsored by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the Innovate4Cities Conference 2021 brought together session hosts and participants from science, innovation, policy, and practice united by the common objective of enabling local governments to implement accelerated and more ambitious climate action, based on an understanding of the latest climate change science. Running virtually across all time zones around the world from October 11-15, the multidisciplinary conference welcomed 778 speakers and 6901 participants who attended 300 parallel and innovation sessions, 9 plenaries, and 6 mayoral receptions.

As part of the suite of conference proceedings outputs, Melbourne Centre for Cities at the University of Melbourne coordinated a Student Writing Team consisting of 32 university students, from the Bachelor to the Doctorate level, from 17 countries across all world regions. Members of the team attended a pre-conference induction meeting and post-conference writing workshop, documented all 300+ conference sessions, and led the production of two written outputs: a student-led conference report and this brief containing key messages from the conference to bring to the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (or 'COP26') in Glasgow, November 2021.

The briefing report, which the students authored, synthesises key insights from the conference sessions by the themes outlined in the Global Research and Action Agenda on Cities and Climate Change Science (GRAA), the key output from the inaugural Cities and Climate Change Science Conference held in Edmonton, Canada in 2018. In order to produce the briefing report, the students were divided into teams by GRAA themes and cross-cutting themes. They attended all the sessions in their themes and collaborated to produce a chapter per theme, bringing together key insights from the conference sessions they attended to feed into COP26.

On behalf of the Innovate4Cities Conference 2021 hosts and Knowledge Hub sponsors, Melbourne Centre for Cities, we thank the Student Writing Team for producing this important new knowledge contribution from the conference.

REPORT COORDINATING EDITORS:

Ariana Dickey

Research Fellow in Urban Sustainability, Melbourne Centre for Cities
Faculty of Architecture Building and Planning, University of Melbourne

Dr Cathy Oke

Associate Director (Enterprise and Impact), Melbourne Centre for Cities
Enterprise Principal Fellow in Informed Cities, Faculty of Architecture Building and Planning, University of Melbourne
Special Advisor, Innovate4Cities, Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy

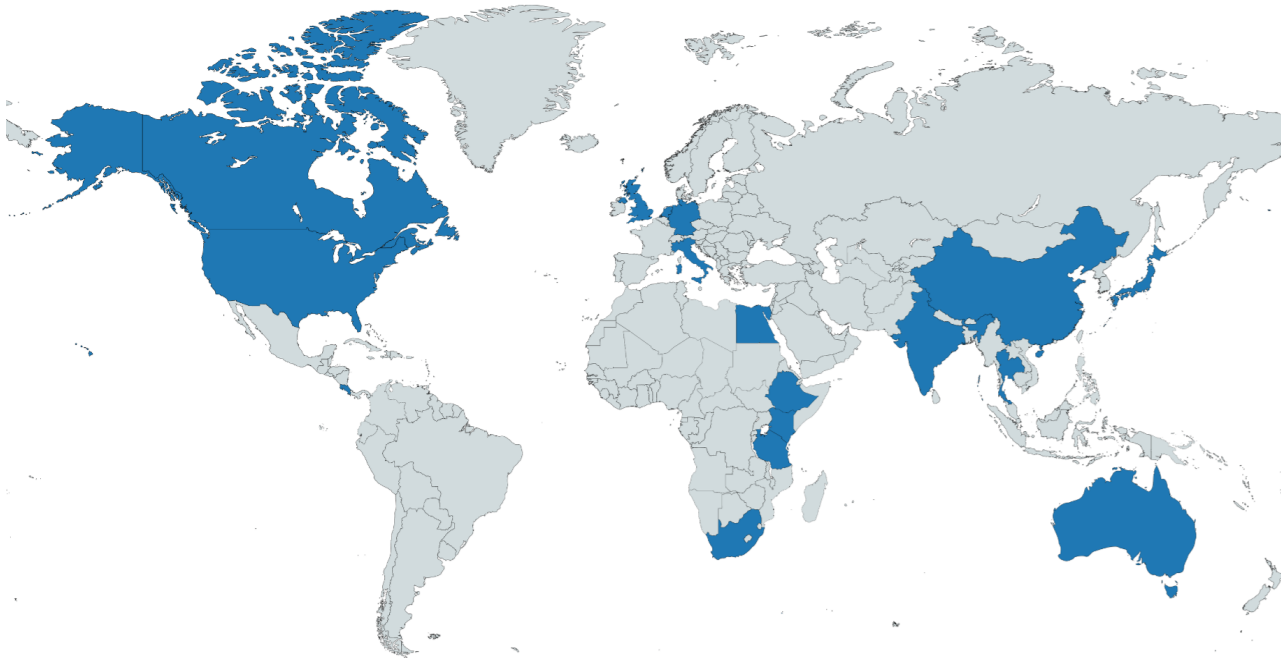


Figure 1. Members of the Student Writing Team live in 17 different countries across all world regions.

STUDENT WRITING TEAM MEMBERS

Anupriya Aggarwal | School of Planning and Architecture, New Delhi
Luis Felipe Álvarez Vega | Universidad de Costa Rica
Olutomiwa Binuyo | University of the Western Cape
Joseph David Calara | University of Melbourne
Ishita Das | Indian Institute of Science Education and Research Kolkata
Taylah Emmanouel | University of Melbourne
Joseph Fenwick | University College London
Kate Field | University of Melbourne
Heesu Jeon | University College London
Abel Kiprono | University of Nairobi
Skye Li | University of Melbourne
Boyu Liu | Auburn University
Hope McGee | University College London
Yuan Meng | University College London
Padmapriya Muralidharan | Australian National University
Ilma Nafees | Jamia Millia Islamia

Zipporah Njenga | Mount Kenya University
Samara Polwatta | University of Bonn
Harry Quail | University of Melbourne
Martina Razzaboni | Università degli Studi di Siena
Asala Safwat | University College London
Edward Senkondo | University College Dublin
Bryant M. Serre | McGill University
Ellen Sharpe | University of Melbourne
Emma Su | Columbia University
Sadaf Taimur | University of Tokyo
Enrico Trevisi | University College London
Rachel Williams | Wageningen University
Alemayehu Agizew Woldeamanuel | Addis Ababa University
Xueting Yang | University College London
Amber Young | University of Melbourne
Rachaya Youngrod | University of Melbourne

INTRODUCTION

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THIS BRIEFING REPORT SYNTHESISES KEY MESSAGES FROM THE INNOVATE4CITIES CONFERENCE 2021 ACCORDING TO THE THEMES SET OUT IN THE GLOBAL RESEARCH AND ACTION AGENDA ON CITIES AND CLIMATE CHANGE SCIENCE (GRAA), THE KEY OUTPUT FROM THE INAUGURAL CITIES AND CLIMATE CHANGE SCIENCE CONFERENCE HELD IN EDMONTON, CANADA IN 2018, AND THE FOUR GOALS OF THE 2021 UNITED NATIONS CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE (OR 'COP26').

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The Innovate4Cities Conference 2021 was centred the six core themes of the GRAA: built and blue/green infrastructure, sustainable consumption and production, finance, informality, uncertainty, and urban planning and design. Like the conference, this report is also structured around the GRAA themes. Each chapter of this briefing report addresses one of the themes and highlights key messages within the theme as they relate to the four goals of the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (or 'COP26').

The four goals of COP26 are:

1. Secure global net zero by mid-century and keep 1.5 degrees within reach
2. Adapt to protect communities and natural habitats
3. Mobilise finance
4. Work together to deliver

The chapters consist of key messages by COP26 goal and quotes

taken from the over 300 sessions attended by the report authors during the Innovate4Cities Conference October 11-15, 2021. The key messages outlined in each chapter were derived from the over and draw important linkages between the GRAA and COP26 goals. Report authors synthesised the information from the Innovate4Cities Conference to highlight city-level climate action priorities and to deliver a clear message to national governments why cities are important partners in climate action and where and how cities can be supported to achieve a more climate resilient future. This report therefore contributes a succinct and targeted set of recommendations for cities and urban actors to take action during this critical decade.

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BUILT AND BLUE-GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Abel Kiprono, Samara Polwatta, Bryant M. Serre, Olutomiwa Binuyo

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GOAL 1: Secure global net zero by mid-century and keep 1.5 degrees within reach

- Nature based solutions are placed in a special position to help deliver behavioral change geared towards climate mitigation through offsetting carbon emissions.
- Nature based solutions such as mangroves ,green roofing ,sea-grass and sponge cities play a key role in achieving Global net zero.It needs time and reflexivity.
- Time for incremental change has reached its peak and transformative change must be catalyzed.
- Technological innovation and digitalization will assist the movement.For instance, DirtStat has produced a methodology where weather parameters are measured using GIS and real time satellite knowledge to understand the effectiveness of green roofing.

“There is an urgent need to translate science language into positive emotion that moves people to change to lifestyles that are required to tackle the climate change issues.”

Elena Pita, Session 7J

GOAL 2: Adapt to protect communities and natural habitats

- Integration and expansion of green spaces within cities and centres enhances habitat protection, promotes biodiversity conservation while increasing the interconnectedness between people and nature.
- Co-production, co-monitoring and co-evaluation has the capacity to induce change.

“Inclusive efforts with people must have simple solutions while facilitating less impact on the environment with rather a focus on forward integration of natural system as solution.”

Dr Pradip Sarmokadam, Session 13K

GOAL 3: Mobilise finance

- Need to ensure financial resources are allocated for long-term engagement, investment in sustainable resources for building and focus on conversion of informal settlements to permanent settlements; i.e., it is hard to advocate and work towards climate change under precarious living situations.
- Finance from industry, governments, top-down and bottom up resources; engagement of all stakeholders nominally and financially to ensure investment in knowledge production.

“Public intervention is often required in terms of taxes and charges in order to capture part of the value generated by nature. Capture of the value is necessary in order to generate resources to maintain nature and even enhance nature.”

Edoardo Croci, Session 10G

GOAL 4: Work together to deliver

- Multidisciplinary action and collaboration at all scale and levels underpins the success of project implementation
- Story telling and use of art and creativity as a means of touch-base on memories which are connected with nature. This allows the community to embark on an eco-empathetic journey.
- Engage Indigenous communities to mobilise their knowledge for community health and wellbeing

“Lessons and proposals about mainstreaming NbS for urban climate resilience are also applicable as guides to pave the larger systematic change required.Local knowledge adoption,bridging disciplinary silos and co-produce to share knowledge globally”

Niki Frantzeskaki, Session 7X

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FINANCE

Zipporah Njenga and Joseph David Calara

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GOAL 1: Secure global net zero by mid-century and keep 1.5 degrees within reach

- Investment into climate resilient infrastructure is needed.
- Upskill the workforce to implement incoming technologies.

“We should look at how developing, low income and low tech countries are able to implement small scale eco-friendly designs and their best practices around applying circularity to meet requirements of their citizens.”

Nayaz Mohammed, Session 3.IX

GOAL 2: Adapt to protect communities and natural habitats

- Voluntary carbon markets and compliance markets must work together.
- It is important to note building energy usage during construction and how the building utilised throughout its lifespan.
- Ensuring that new and existing infrastructure can withstand the effects of climate change.

“Transformation does not equal incremental change and it is predominantly compliance-based rather than voluntary action, although there is room for voluntary measures if they are well-designed and avoid greenwashing”

Herald Heubaum, Session 2E

GOAL 3: Mobilise finance

- Economic stimulus packages should consider green projects
- That we should be looking to establish circular economies.
- We need to utilise digital finance services.

“Build resilience in a systematic way that provides consistent, clear format and technologies to close the funding gap between for sustainable projects.”

Alfredo Redondo, Session 7I

GOAL 4: Work together to deliver

- Communication and understanding of different cultures is key to delivering climate change messages.
- We cannot invest into climate change without providing co-benefits which are economic and social.

“We should go beyond sharing high level principles to provide clearly differentiated, achievable actions for practitioners of each lifecycle stage that are coordinated to be mutually reinforcing”

Savina Carluccio, Session 10K

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INFORMALITY

Anupriya Aggarwal, Heesu Jeon, Xueting Yang

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GOAL 1: Secure global net zero by mid-century and keep 1.5 degrees within reach

- We need a shift from conventional brown and grey urban housing to green housing solutions that are accessible to the inhabitants of informal settlements.
- The suggested principles of green housing solutions are; least water consumption, least waste stream, least energy usage (3L), zero cost, zero carbon and zero waste leading to zero poverty (3 Zero).
- While implementing green housing solutions, the use of technology, unskilled labour, and local resources should be encouraged to bring down carbon footprint.
- In addition, building common green space in urban slums would also help to reduce the city heat.

"A model of the future urban development will have to be found that combines the provision of universal basic services with access to new forms of work and dignified housing, in an era of digitally integrated technology, whilst remaining within the 1.5 threshold."

Edgar Pieterse

GOAL 2: Adapt to protect communities and natural habitats

- The residents of informal settlements are more vulnerable to the devastating effect of climate change as they lack climate-resilient infrastructure and access to basic services.
- The first step to protect the communities in slum areas would be engaging them to identify the climate risks and adopt their adaptive solutions from the ground.
- Use of technologies such as drones and satellite images can help to identify and map out the climate risks in slum areas more easily.
- Tackling the underlying problems of informal settlements such as tenure insecurity, malnutrition, lack of infrastructure would help them to withstand the climate risks.

- Lastly, the local authorities and national governments should incorporate informal settlements in their urban planning and climate adaptation/mitigation strategy.

"These people living in informal areas have their own ways of adapting to climate change in order to maintain their economic activities. The women, for example, travel in groups and have distinctive labour slogans when they finally reach the fields."

John Clemo, Session 2.VII

GOAL 3: Mobilise finance

- Mobilisation of climate finance can occur at national, city, and community levels.
- The first step is to recognise the relevant legitimate status of informality, such as the informal economy, the land tenure, the social relations, and the dynamic, interactive culture in these areas.
- The local government has limited budget and capacity in mobilising finance for climate resilient infrastructure, especially in informal settlements as they are not considered profitable or sustainable.
- Through multi-stakeholder cooperation, the local government can benefit from private financial institutions, community organisations, and international institutions in securing funds and implementing innovative solutions for undervalued groups such as residents of informal settlements.

"This remarkable woman, Christine Mallam, is a representative of the informal resident community. And she attends many meetings about finance, tourism and planning questions between local government, central government, NGOs, and regional organisations."

Begoña Peiro, Session 2J

GOAL 4: Work together to deliver

- In order to effectively tackle the climate crises, collaboration is required between various stakeholders at different levels: (a) between local communities living in informal settlements and urban local bodies, (b) between city-level actors and international partners, (c) among experts from various sectors.
- Forge partnerships that (a) go beyond mere consultation, (b) allow for local knowledge to be disseminated, multiplied, replicated, and financed, and are (c) long-term with 10, 20, 30 year time frames.
- It is important to pilot possible approaches in collaboration with the communities for them to experience the benefits of the initiatives and to gain their trust. Such effective horizontal partnerships will advance the mobilization of local leaders and community-based organisations.
- A deconstruction of the underlying politics of research is needed to accelerate the rights of the urban poor to partner with researchers and scientists to produce new adaptation techniques and scale-up local practices.

“The development sector is a bit behind other sectors in terms of adopting some of these technologies and putting them in the hands of communities and community partners. And that’s really the role that we should fill in.”

Anthony Piaskowy, Session 14B

SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

Alemayehu Agizew Woldeamanuel, Enrico Trevisi, Hope McGee

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GOAL 1: Secure global net zero by mid-century and keep 1.5 degrees within reach

- Inclusive Circular Economy actions that involve composting organics and converting residual waste to energy can contribute to reducing GHG emissions while providing further socio-environmental co-benefits like green jobs and enhanced public health.
- Regenerative urban agriculture can provide important ecosystem services such as purifying the air, sequestering carbon, increasing soil carbon, and contributing to carbon credits, connecting the built and natural environments.
- Carbon or GHG accounting that includes emissions from different sectors as well as natural carbon sinks like trees and forests is a strategic analysis tool that can help cities map pathways towards SDG goals.

“Local governments have great influence directly and indirectly in enabling residents and businesses to reduce GHG emissions and ecological footprint ... Consumption Based Emission Inventories (CBEI) are a powerful tool to help fully explore emissions contributions at the individual level.”

Cora Hallsworth, Session 11F

GOAL 2: Adapt to protect communities and natural habitats

- Urban agriculture can serve as a safety net in times of crisis, especially for vulnerable residents, by providing food security and dietary diversity, reducing urban heat island impacts, and managing run-off.
- Grassroots movements can solve the problems of the energy burden, while making sure there is equitable energy access for all.
- Localised circular practices at the urban/ neighbourhood scale provide important entry points for the transition towards sustainable, low-carbon, and resource efficient urbanisation.

“Urban agriculture can catalyse community cohesion. For example, the arrangement of urban farmers into cooperatives enables them to become resilient to shocks and benefit from knowledge exchange”

Victoria Delbridge, Session 4F

GOAL 3: Mobilise finance

- Subnational Development Banks (SDBs) are an important stakeholder in increasing the financial capacity of local governments to address SDGs, especially for intermediary cities in the Global South.
- The built environment is a capital intensive and risk-averse sector; without the involvement of governments to scale up, positive change incentives will keep investment locked into unsustainable material practices. With those holding long-term portfolios most likely to adopt circularity principles, governments are able to lead change through public procurement and zero-waste initiatives.
- With current appraisals not reflecting externalities, more relevant and complete data could mobilise finance by improving impact assessments that make environment/social benefits clearer. Data sharing also opens up the possibilities for operational improvements which can support profitable and sustainable practices, promoting investment by private corporations.

“What is not measured is not controlled, and what is not controlled is not improved... circularity if managed holistically can promote sustainable and profitable operations.”

Gonzalo Flores, Session 15F

GOAL 4: Work together to deliver

- Informal waste workers are crucial actors, especially in the Global South, where they provide important environmental, social, and economic benefits to their communities. Seeking to support their work, ensuring their safety, and including their perspectives is essential for sustainable urban planning.
- Collectivism and capacities promoted through tactical urban interventions demonstrates the role of circularity practices in promoting solidarity - a catalyst for future justice focused community initiatives.
- Knowledge co-production and sharing using a citizen science approach can drive action, demonstrating the power of data for creating solutions and bringing together diverse actors and scales under a common goal.

“Envisioning a just transition requires moving towards a new system, a new economy, a new way of thinking, and a new relationship with each other and money, but doing it in a way that doesn’t perpetuate some of the same things that got us here.”

Lindsay Harper, Session 18I

UNCERTAINTY

Ishita Das, Yuan Meng

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GOAL 1: Secure global net zero by mid-century and keep 1.5 degrees within reach

- Intelligent temperature analysis is encouraged in a distributed data monitoring approach. Same approach can be applied to help protect forests.
- As cities are major sources of energy consumption and emissions, research and prediction based on thermal data should narrow the focus into cities.

GOAL 2: Adapt to protect communities and natural habitats

- We have taken from nature for so many ages. Now is the time to fight to repay them back. An integral approach by looking at our flora and fauna too will help save for the cause.
- Now is the time to rethink structures and relationships with every aspect of nature.

GOAL 3: Mobilise finance

- Make sure the money goes to the poor urban areas that really need it.
- Some funds may be raised within cities. Transparent evaluation of new projects will facilitate new funding.

GOAL 4: Work together to deliver

- Power of traditional knowledge is important. A cultural perspective to climate change is required now to take quick action. This can be done by communicating and holding hands together for a common cause and throwing in all fuel to the fire of saving our planet from climate change.
- Every community, gender voice should be considered for the cause. Hence there can be a global resonance for stopping our planet from converting into cinders.

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URBAN PLANNING AND DESIGN

Emma Su, Rachaya Youngrod, Amber Young, Ellen Sharpe, Asala Safwat, Boyu Liu, Kate Field

GOAL 1: Secure global net zero by mid-century and keep 1.5 degrees within reach

- Holistic and integrated approaches to climate action require local-context specific analysis. Resolutions should incorporate community engagement and strengthen community resilience. Implementing quantifiable key point indicators facilitates measuring progress.
- Adaptation and mitigation strategies should be implemented equally and improve urban life. Worst case scenarios should be considered to future-proof cities.
- Incentivise new development to exceed current sustainability rating schemes, revitalize urban spaces and reduce emissions.
- Climate responses require action across different scales and industries.

“At the conceptual level, you should have sustainability in mind, not just to comply with assessment criteria at the end”

Mukta Deshpande, Session 2B

GOAL 2: Adapt to protect communities and natural habitats

- Plan for increasing urbanization and infrastructure growth to support equitable development. Decarbonize and improve the equitability of transportation, resource distribution and infrastructure.
- Utilize localized data mapping and community collaboration to inform specific problems, priority actions and strategic solutions.
- Improve the resilience of urban spaces through green infrastructure and nature-based solutions (e.g. cloud gardens, urban agriculture, urban forestry).

“The challenge was changing conventional planning, procurement and community consultation (which discourage innovation) to more sustainable and integrated processes by using the basic building blocks of sustainability (which reward innovation).”

Kim Fowler, Session 5D

GOAL 3: Mobilise finance

- Successful implementation of nature-based solutions requires strengthening financial systems and incentives to enable public and private investment.
- Increase financing of sustainable development and resilience now to reduce the future costs of climate change and limit path dependency, especially in developing nations.
- Develop circular economy projects and encourage research and innovation to reduce costs of green infrastructure and technology.

“We are stuck with the thought that innovation is private-sector led. However, the public sector is the one that can drive innovation at scale by putting policies in place and making sure it is properly understood so local governments are empowered to go down that road politically”

Filiep Decorte, Session 2.X

GOAL 4: Work together to deliver

- Collaboration between the community and multi-level governance will be key in developing community-led and context-specific climate action that is more inclusive, equitable and impactful.
- Planning for climate action is a dynamic process that requires constant reflexivity and the space for new processes to unfold.
- Improve global sharing of knowledge between communities and experts in different fields to ensure up-to-date data, encourage innovation and foster interdisciplinary action.

“We have been working in silos. Air pollution and atmospheric scientists on one side, climate change experts on the other one, sometimes competing for even resources and the spotlight, which is difficult. We have to do something better in communicating, particularly to the citizens.”

Beatriz Cardenas, Session 14A

CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

Taylah Emmanouel, Luis Felipe Alvarez Vega, Ilma Nafees, Martina Razzaboni, Sadaf Taimur, Rachel Williams, Padmapriya Muralidharan

GOAL 1: Secure global net zero by mid-century and keep 1.5 degrees within reach

- This goal can be achieved through mission platforms, climate-neutral city contracts, large scale pilots, learning frameworks, and effective city cooperation between countries and regions.
- Several Latin American cities are working to innovate their power grids, so that less energy is consumed, but sometimes there exist challenges from the central government.
- Data provided by systems like ARCLIM, InVEST can inform policy and help city planning and design take a direction that can help decrease the effects of climate change and global warming specifically.
- Educating people on climate change action and holding corporations accountable beyond what is mandatory are important steps.

“Education is key to improving the speed of awareness in all levels of sustainability.”

Pastora Martinez, Session 9D

GOAL 2: Adapt to protect communities and natural habitats

- Human rights approach can be used to build equitable and just responses to deal with the impacts of climate change in urban spaces.
- Capacitating local stakeholders to change their mindsets and provide them access to strategic tools to co-learn, co-design and innovate, keeping the local context in mind while framing national level policies.
- Encouraging local reviews as a policy tool to improve policies and make integrated policies at local level for climate resilience, and coproduction of equitable and just solutions to deal with the challenges related to climate change.
- Promoting alliance between cities and businesses to co-create emission reduction projects in a noncommercial space and hence drive accelerated climate action for climate resilience in cities.

“We need to make radical changes and move away from incremental changes”

Pourya Salehi, Session 9.III

GOAL 3: Mobilise finance

- Cities are looking for guidance from IPCC reports and want papers/research to move beyond the problem to create whole solutions with specific policy advice with financing guidance.
- Local governments need to diversify their funding. Make projects more localized to access funding. Regions risk funding limitations if they overly rely on Central government funds.
- Local leaders often lack the ability/capacity to access existing climate finance and need to learn to speak the language of financiers.
- An innovative approach to finance low carbon and resilient intermediary cities: bring new players to the table, including private capital, consider transformative financial innovations for systemic impacts.

“Local leaders need training on how to translate their challenges into the language of those with money. If we cannot engage, then we cannot move forward to a more resilient world.”

Manuel de Araujo, Session 14D

GOAL 4: Work together to deliver

- Innovative tools, like city AIs, must be developed involving all affected and interested actors. Citizens have to be included too while addressing climate change, to source their wide array of skills.
- The basic needs of citizens both from central and peripheral areas must be addressed before enhancing their capabilities and educating them for actions tackling climate change.
- International and intersectoral cooperation is crucial, but it must account for regional and cultural differences, starting from a scientific knowledge that is inclusive.
- Promoting city-business partnership to act for climate

resilience via a win-win relationship: this alliance leverages their collective leadership and expertise to build back better together.

- How do people relate to the government? How do people relate how much trust between academia, government policymakers and experts, business trust should be there in the ratio with day to day as we've seen business as usual services.

“Local governments are more and more important in tackling global climate challenges, cities have to learn from each other. All the stakeholders should start working together according to new models.”

Duane Elverum, Session 5.1

For more information visit
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