

Adaptation in the urban environment: a story of process and outcome

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Adaptation to climate change is a relatively new focus for both research and policy communities. Drawing from state-of-the-art research activity, and recent policy developments, in three major European cities (London, Manchester, and Berlin) this chapter will reflect on different aspects of the adaptation agenda, namely: the assessment of climate-related risk in towns and cities, examples of adaptation best practice, and importantly, the role of institutional adaptive management in supporting adaptive activity. An analytical evaluation of this final aspect will seek to highlight the underlying conditions and processes that enable best practice to occur, to identify some of the key barriers that may hinder the translation of theory into practice, as well as the building of adaptive capacity in existing urban regimes. The research being carried out has been deliberately 'solutions-orientated', with an emphasis on new ways of working between the academic, policy, and wider stakeholder communities. Experience to date has shown that such forms of participatory activity and engagement can bring mutual benefits to all those involved, improving both the quality of science for assessing and responding to climate risks, as well as providing a valuable (arguably essential) perspective on both the determinants of adaptive capacity and the enabling mechanisms necessary for delivering adaptation on the ground. Interestingly, initial findings indicate that although many interesting things are being done in urban areas, in many cases these are not 'badged' as adaptation or disseminated as such.