




The Nexus Between Urban Land Governance and Climate Adaptation

A Webinar Report



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Informal settlements in areas that are already disaster prone are an increasing problem. Climate adaptation is also often used as an excuse for evictions to redevelop sites in a more climate-proof manner in what is often referred to as 'climate gentrification'. Nature-based solutions to climate change, such as increasing green spaces, may increase home values, but the question of who benefits from these initiatives arises. How can the side effects of climate interventions that can lead to inequality, such as increase in value, be avoided? This webinar addressed transparency and accountability in these processes. It explored the alignment of policy processes with climate adaptation plans that can easily create conflict, looking at inclusivity and equity in processes and in outcomes.

The webinar was co-hosted by the Faculty of Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation (ITC) of the University of Twente LANDac, the Land Portal Foundation and Utrecht University as part of the **LANDac Online Encounter 2020**.

Moderator: Prof dr. Richard Sliuzas, Professor of Urban Planning for Disaster Risk Reduction, University of Twente

Panelists:

- Dr. Kei Otsuki, Associate Professor, University of Utrecht
- Shuaib Lwasa, Associate Professor, Makerere University
- Diana Reckien, Associate Professor, Faculty of Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation (ITC)
- Prof dr Jaap Zevenbergen, Full Professor, Department of Urban and Regional Planning and Geo-Information Management, University of Twente

A complete recording of the webinar is available on YouTube:
<https://youtu.be/Rdf9UDBE0uo>



Key Takeaways

- Climate adaptation efforts, such as developing green infrastructure, have numerous benefits, but if not planned carefully may lead to gentrification and marginalization of the urban poor.
- Cities often target flood-prone areas for resettlement, which has a greater impact on those who live in informal settlements. Alternatives such as upstream greening and water retention should be considered.
- The development of large-scale infrastructure projects to counter extreme weather impact poor people the hardest, and governments and investors should make commitments to be transparent and accountable to share the benefits of infrastructure development with those most in need.
- The rights of people living in informal settlements are often ignored, while the rights of formal property owners are often exaggerated, often leading to compensation of the elite in the case of natural disasters, with the poor, especially women and minorities, bearing the burden of climate change consequences.

Webinar Summary

1) WHAT ARE THE MAIN INSTRUMENTS OR MEASURES FOR CLIMATE ADAPTATION RELATED TO LAND IN CITIES?

- Cities across the world invest in nature-based solutions, and green and blue infrastructure, such as planting street trees, regreening courtyards, establishing green roofs and facades, etc. In that connection we also see a lot of de-sealing of surfaces. These are strategies with multiple benefits for the urban environment and urban residents, such as reducing run-off in case of heavy rains, reducing the heat burden and the heat island effect, contributing to clear air and less air pollution, as well as lowering costs. However, as these efforts influence the visual appearance of a neighborhood, rent and housing prices increase. Cities are thus advised to implement nature-based solutions in a way that these do not unduly impact the urban poor or lower income classes by complementing them with regulatory measures, such as rent caps or similar measures.. (Diana Reckien)

2) ARE THERE REGIONAL DIFFERENCES IN FOCUS AND WHAT IS THE CURRENT STATUS OF CLIMATE ADAPTATION AND MITIGATION PLANNING, GLOBALLY?

- There are many differences across the world and the continents. In Europe as well as in South America, cities usually start with mitigation actions trying to reduce their carbon and greenhouse gas emissions. About 2/3 of the cities in Europe currently have local mitigation plans in place. About 1/2 of the European cities are already engaged in adaptation planning. In Europe, this is mainly supported by national governments providing guidelines and frameworks to help cities adapt and mitigate.

- In Australia, for instance, this mitigation - adaptation distribution is different. There, jurisdictions more often invest in adaptation, while fewer engage in mitigation. This is driven by the perception that adaptation is more of a local act, having mostly local benefits, which municipalities are happy to invest in. Mitigation is seen as conveying friction with the dominant coal industry and therefore much more difficult to implement.
- In cities in the United States, we see substantial efforts of municipalities to plan for mitigation and adaptation, but this is much more locally driven than in Europe.
- Because of much lower carbon and greenhouse gas emissions of cities in Africa as well as the local benefits, African cities engage more frequently in adaptation measures, although the overall percentage of cities investing in local climate planning in African cities is still low. (Diana Reckien)

3) IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA, LAND TENURE IS OFTEN QUITE COMPLEX AND IT IS COMMON THAT MULTIPLE INTERESTS MAY BE HELD IN ANY ONE PIECE OF LAND. HOW DOES THIS INFLUENCE THE NATURE OF RESPONSES TO CLIMATE CHANGE ISSUES?

- Multiple interests influence climate change policies in several ways and depend on the actor with immediate interest. At the household level, while individuals implement measures within their reach to address climate change, depending on the risk, these individuals may not be able to respond to phenomena such as flash floods, which could involve sandbags, readjustment of houses and reroofing, which can involve significant costs. At the city level on the other hand, city authorities view flash floods as a logical reason to relocate and resettle residents in flood prone areas. Other measures may include constructing and enlarging the primary drainage system, but this comes with increasing flash flood vulnerability. (Shuaib Lwasa)

4) HOW CAN THE NEEDS OF RESIDENTS OF INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN CLIMATE ADAPTATION MEASURES? DO YOU HAVE EXAMPLES OF SUCCESSFUL CLIMATE ADAPTATION PROCESSES IN UGANDAN CITIES OR SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA IN GENERAL?

- Large land improvements associated with large-scale infrastructure don't always have to involve resettlement and or relocation, but can be co-designed to ensure that informal settlements dwellers are part of the solution. This is not always the case due to the regulatory-heavy responses to climate-induced risks such as flooding.
- Some pilot activities are underway, but success is limited as efficacy is time dependent. The application of the 'sponge city' notion to increase lag period for storm runoff through measures like upstream greening, urban and peri-urban agriculture, and water retention infrastructure are underway in some cities like Kampala, Kigali and Addis Ababa.(Shuaib Lwasa)

5) EVICTIONS AND DISPLACEMENTS HAVE BEEN A RECURRING ISSUE IN MANY COUNTRIES. IS THIS INCREASING AS A RESULT OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND CLIMATE ADAPTATION AND WHAT IMPLICATIONS WILL THIS HAVE FOR THE URBAN POOR?

- There are two trends that should be discussed separately. There are increasing incidents of extreme weather events that can be attributed to climate change. As informal settlements are more likely to be built in precarious places, they are likely to be hit hard especially in cases of floods, landslides, or also droughts, thereby leading to displacement. At the same time, in order to build resilient infrastructure to counter the effects of climate change, many governments and private investors are implementing large-scale infrastructure projects around the world. Infrastructure is considered part of the 'green new deal'. This can lead to new waves of eviction of informal settlements or formal settlements but in poorer neighbourhoods or coastal areas. In both cases, implications for urban poor are significant. (Kei Otsuki)

6) IS PRO-POOR DISPLACEMENT AND RESETTLEMENT POSSIBLE? HOW CAN EQUITABLE RESETTLEMENT BE ACHIEVED AND SCALED UP?

- 'Pro-poor displacement' is a strange term since displacement is never 'pro' something. It forces people to leave their place, so this cannot be good for anyone. However, pro-poor resettlement of displaced people could be possible yes. Especially in the second case of infrastructure-induced displacement. Investors and government have a responsibility to engage in addressing the importance of fair benefit sharing. In the case of extreme weather hitting poor people hard, governments and international relief organizations and donors do have a responsibility to avoid further impoverishment and health risks for displaced people.
- Either way, it is important to have transparency and accountability about the commitments of governments and investors when it comes to relocation or displacement of people. Much of the focus is currently placed on consultations and inclusivity, but most importantly how to continue monitoring and supporting the poor people's relocation experience needs to be discussed. In relation to this, there is a lack of planning resettlement in the larger spatial/urban planning and sustainability concerns. Relocation of one group of people doesn't mean moving people from one place to another. It means that new people are embedded in the new natural and built environments whose sustainability should be understood at the level of the landscape. (Kei Otsuki)

7) WHAT LAND GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES ARE EMERGING AS A RESULT OF CLIMATE ADAPTATION PLANNING AND ACTIONS?

- One land governance challenge is about equality in access to land in the broadest sense, for people to live on, to construct their livelihood on, and to get (often indirectly) their food from. Unfortunately, there is a lot of inequality in practice, partly caused by laws and administrative practices. Many people have found their own solutions, especially in and around cities and settled informally, often in places less safe and often under direct threat of climate effects. In informal settlements (sometimes called slums) people are normally considered to feel insecure in their land tenure/rights. This means they are less likely to invest in both climate mitigation and adaptation measures. And when adaptation plans are made they risk being ignored, underplayed, relocated without proper safety nets or even being just evicted as “they were there illegally”.
- Although it is agreed that land holders do not only have rights, but also restrictions and responsibilities (e.g. Dutch needing to keep the ditches open near their fields), in practice the rights are overstressed for the formal owners. Sometimes the laws give too many rights, and not enough restrictions and responsibilities, but often it is the way the legal-administrative sector is used to overstress those, as they are closely linked to the elite that benefits most from the formal systems. So this may lead to any effect on them going to be compensated. Luckily, e.g. Austria the last years has put a large part of the financial burden of homeowners in flood plains with the owners, and not made it all the government’s problem. Otherwise it will create a stream of government/taxpayer money to those who are already well off, instead of helping the poorer and less connected people, with minorities and women overrepresented. (Jaap Zevenbergen)

8) TODAY, IT IS COMMON TO SPEAK OF FIT-FOR-PURPOSE LAND ADMINISTRATION SYSTEMS BUT, WHEN DEALING WITH CLIMATE CHANGE, ARE CURRENT LAND LAWS FIT FOR PURPOSE?

- Laws could be improved in making restrictions and responsibilities more explicit, but the first step is a renewed, less vested interest and biased interpretation of existing laws. One possible way out can be land readjustment, which allows to move land rights around; the total value is guaranteed, but not the size and location. But this also requires institutional strength to do right for all; see **Participatory and inclusive land readjustment (PILaR)** from GLTN/UNHABITAT. (Jaap Zevenbergen)

Notable Quotes from the Panelists



“CLIMATE ADAPTATION MAY BE USED AS AN EXCUSE FOR EVICTIONS TO REDEVELOP SITES IN A MORE CLIMATE-PROOF MANNER, LEADING TO ‘CLIMATE GENTRIFICATION’ AND DISPLACEMENT OF THE POOR.”

- PROF DR. RICHARD SLIUZAS, PROFESSOR OF URBAN PLANNING FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION, UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE



“CITIES ARE ADVISED TO IMPLEMENT NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS IN A WAY THAT THESE DO NOT UNDULY IMPACT THE URBAN POOR OR LOWER INCOME CLASSES BY COMPLIMENTING THEM WITH REGULATORY MEASURES, SUCH AS RENT CAPS OR SIMILAR MEASURES..”

- DIANA RECKIEN, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, FACULTY OF GEO-INFORMATION SCIENCE AND EARTH OBSERVATION (ITC)



“LARGE LAND IMPROVEMENTS ASSOCIATED WITH LARGE-SCALE INFRASTRUCTURE DON’T ALWAYS HAVE TO INVOLVE RESETTLEMENT AND OR RELOCATION, BUT CAN BE CO-DESIGNED TO ENSURE THAT INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS DWELLERS ARE PART OF THE SOLUTION. ”

- SHUAIB LWASA, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, MAKERERE UNIVERSITY



“GOVERNMENTS AND INTERNATIONAL RELIEF ORGANIZATIONS AND DONORS DO HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO AVOID FURTHER IMPOVERISHMENT AND HEALTH RISKS FOR DISPLACED PEOPLE.”

- DR. KEI OTSUKI, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, UNIVERSITY OF UTRECHT



“ALTHOUGH IT IS AGREED THAT LAND HOLDERS DO NOT ONLY HAVE RIGHTS, BUT ALSO RESTRICTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES, IN PRACTICE THE RIGHTS ARE OVERSTRESSED FOR THE FORMAL OWNERS.”

- PROF DR JAAP ZEVENBERGEN, FULL PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF URBAN AND REGIONAL PLANNING AND GEO-INFORMATION MANAGEMENT, UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE



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