

## **Decentering urban climate finance**

### **Relational comparison in theory and practice**

Convenors: **the UrbanCliFi network; @urbanclifi**

Deadline for abstract submission: **May 7th 2021**

Financial institutions seeking to join the 'global fight against climate change' increasingly turn to cities, urban re/development projects, and infrastructure as ideal candidates for 'green' and 'climate smart' investment, or to defend existing spaces and logics of accumulation from climate disruption and devaluation. We now see a proliferation of finance-driven resilience, retrofitting and decarbonisation projects emerging around the world. To date, research documenting the relationships between financial practices and urban transformations under climate change remains primarily concerned with cities in which consolidated financial markets are already the norm, or with case studies that conceptualise 'climate finance' in relatively narrow terms (e.g. financial instruments created for the purposes of 'greening' capital markets). Crucial lines of questioning remain underdeveloped: for example, how are established and emerging climate-financial centers constitutively shaped by far broader geographies of extraction and experimentation, how are under-examined urban regions shaped by climate-relevant financial flows and how do the heterogenous practices that constitute 'ordinary' or 'everyday' climate finance work across diverse cities and urban spaces?

As a network of scholars researching urban finance and climate action from a variety of perspectives [www.urbanclifi.com], we are interested in expanding this research agenda theoretically and empirically. With this workshop series funded by the Urban Studies Foundation, we aim to foster structured dialogue and relational comparison across places, practices, markets and beyond. This collective thinking and writing process will centrally feature a linked pair of writing workshops geared toward a special issue publication on these broadened geographies of urban climate finance. The workshops also aim to build the collective network and further collaboration opportunities. Throughout, we aim to promote discussion that usefully provincialises dominant imagined geographies of climate finance, draws out generative connections and interdependencies, and expands and decenters notions of the 'financial' to bring in a greater range of scholars, lenses and articulations of climate justice. Accordingly, this call for participants invites scholars working within a variety of theoretical perspectives and urban contexts. This includes scholars working to bring climate response into existing theorizations of urban finance; for example, political and cultural economy-informed thinking on the financialization of un/built environments (e.g. Knuth 2019, Bigger and Millington 2020, Hilbrandt and Grubbauer 2020, Taylor 2020). However, we also strongly encourage participants who engage relevant urban processes through more expansive lenses; including, but not limited to racial capitalism (Ranganathan and Bratman 2020; Ponder 2021), postcolonial studies of (low-carbon) infrastructure change (Lawhon et al. 2018), climate and environmental justice (Pulido and De Lara 2018), development finance (Mawdsley 2017, Bigger and Webber 2020), popular and diverse economies (Gago 2017), and beyond. We are particularly eager to hear from scholars who pursue fieldwork beyond well-researched urban sites and/or who are based at institutions beyond the most visible centers of academic knowledge production.

#### About the workshops and process

Participants selected will meet for two workshops in Durham (UK) in October 2021 and Zurich (Switzerland) in May 2022. The paired workshops and collective writing process will produce a special issue in an urban studies journal, focused on exploring and furthering these broadened geographies of climate finance. The workshops will also promote longer-term networking and

collaboration opportunities for participants (e.g. cross-promotion of research through the UrbanCliFi network website; work toward larger research bids).

- The workshops aim to advance relational comparison (broadly conceived) and expanded analyses practically as well as theoretically, through fostering new collaborations and prioritizing co-written papers. The Durham workshop will provide a forum for participants to introduce their research and initial paper ideas, collectively draw out generative connections between projects (and engage in comparative theory-building), find collaborators and solidify proposed contributions to the journal special issue.
- The Zurich workshop will reconvene authors to advance papers for the special issue, get feedback on writing in progress and identify opportunities to further build the UrbanCliFi network (e.g. through targeted grant writing). It will also engage a local audience (including finance industry practitioners) in a public-facing conversation about urban climate finance.

*Note: while we are eager to hold in-person workshops and value face-to-face interactions, we also understand that the current situation remains uncertain and will impact participants differently based on various factors. We understand that these and other considerations (e.g. caring responsibilities, climate-related flight preferences) may prevent participants' travel to the UK and Switzerland. We are committed to ensuring that scholars get the same opportunities to participate in these workshops regardless of their nationality, place of residence, health or other personal circumstances and preferences, and will make provisions to enable digital participation when necessary.*

#### Application process and financial support

Please send us a paper abstract (up to 500 words) by Friday, May 7th 2021. For advance planning purposes only, please also indicate if you know that you will require digital rather than face-to-face participation for one or both workshops. We will notify selected participants and send further information by May 26th, 2021. If you have any questions, you can contact us at [urbanclifi@gmail.com](mailto:urbanclifi@gmail.com).

Travel bursaries (including international air travel, local transportation and accommodation) are available to support participants who do not have access to financial support from their institution. As funding is limited, priority will be given to early career researchers, researchers on fixed-term contracts and researchers based at institutions in the Global South. When submitting your abstract, please indicate whether you would like to be considered for a bursary.

#### About the broader network and workshop series

This workshop series is funded with support from the [Urban Studies Foundation](#) (Seminar Series Award grant number: USF-SSA-210206) and is convened by an international network of researchers. You can find more information about the UrbanCliFi network and how to get involved at the network website, [www.urbanclifi.com](http://www.urbanclifi.com). Questions can be directed to [urbanclifi@gmail.com](mailto:urbanclifi@gmail.com).

Alongside the workshops and writing process outlined here, we will be convening a series of online masterclasses for doctoral students and other early career scholars. More information about these other opportunities will be posted on the UrbanCliFi network website in May 2021. You can sign up to receive updates on our activities [here](#).

#### List of references