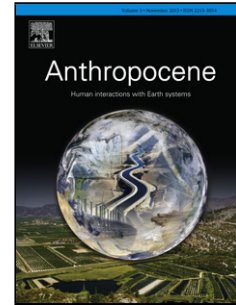


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# Cities in the Age of the Anthropocene: Climate Change Agents and the Potential for Mitigation

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## Abstract

Cities are human creations where many of the emissions causing climate change originate. Every aspect of daily life in cities, which spans buildings, transit, food, energy, and water, relies on fossil fuels that materially contribute to climate change. This paper explores the need for research to better uncover the processes driving urbanization in order to develop novel ways to mitigate climate impacts on Earth. Areas of fruitful research include better quantification of teleconnections between cities and their hinterlands and coupling those to the socio-economic drivers and organization of those relationships; the financialization of much urban policy; understanding where cities fit in the global economic order and their role in generating economic growth, and the ways in which they are also seen as leaders of sustainability and climate actions, but constrained in so-doing by the nested and tiered layers of institutions they operate within. This paper concludes by outlining ways for cities to transition toward nurturing human well-being and reducing their impacts on planetary processes resulting in the proposed new Earth epoch - the Anthropocene.

Keywords: Anthropocene, cities, globalization, fossil fuels, well-being, Ethics

## 1. Introduction: the hallmarks of the ‘Anthropocene’

The relationship between urbanization and global environmental change is now well established, along with recognition of a nexus among carbon based fuels, global environmental change, climate impacts and the emergence of industrial cities. These interactions have, in the late twentieth century, become the motors of global economic growth (Newbold et al 2016, Seto et al 2015, Gurney et al 2015, McDonald et al 2015, Kennedy et al 2009 b). This paper places current urbanization and climate impacts and their relationship to the ‘Anthropocene’ in a larger context by discussing the rise of cities as the prevailing home for humans in the twenty-first century.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Anthropocene* as a new geologic era remains a contested concept. The author acknowledges the debate regarding its starting point and/or its legitimacy. Ruddiman, 2007, for example, posited that anthropogenic effects on greenhouse gases and global climate countered ‘natural’

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