

***The Urban Climate Challenge: Rethinking the Role of Cities in the Global Climate Regime* edited by Craig Johnson, Noah Toly and Heike Schroeder, Abingdon, Routledge, 2015, 258 pp., £110 (hardback), £37.99 (paperback), £27.99 (eBook), ISBN 9781138066571, 9781138776883, 9781315772981.**

The key role that cities and subnational governments need to play in addressing climate change has helped to foster something of a renaissance in urban political studies in recent years. Political scientists came to the party a bit later than geographers, and Johnson, Toly and Schroeder's book does an admirable job of trying to bring these perspectives together. Contributors come from both of these disciplines, as well as environmental studies, law and sociology, which ensures a broad range of views on how cities are responding to climate challenges. The hardback version was first published in March 2015, and since then various scholars have undertaken studies in line with some of the book's recommendations for further research. Now that the paperback edition is finally available, this in itself is testament to how quickly the field of urban climate governance research is evolving. Indeed, those familiar with more recent studies may be surprised that the book's title suggests that it will 'rethink' the role of cities in the global climate regime, since many of its points about the importance of urban areas in addressing this challenge have since been covered elsewhere.

Nonetheless, the book does have two main strengths: firstly, and most notably, it brings together analyses of cities in developed countries (such as Canada and the US), with those in the Global South (India, Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, Chile, Uganda and Tanzania). This gives the reader a rich understanding of how various municipal governments and local actors across the world perceive the challenge of climate change and are attempting to address it. These case studies, which comprise the majority of the book, highlight how very different cities often face a range of common difficulties and have adopted similar strategies to address them – or, indeed, sought to develop innovative approaches that are specific to their local context. The field has lacked such a comprehensive cross-national empirical analysis of urban climate policy, and it is extremely welcome. A second strength is the extent of practical policy detail that these case studies cover: several chapters highlight a range of initiatives and approaches that municipalities have adopted as part of their climate strategies. This ensures that the book should appeal to practitioners who might be looking for ideas, as well as academics who have research interests in climate change, urban studies, policy transfer or policy analysis.

Perhaps inevitably, these strengths mean that the book has an overwhelmingly empirical focus, with many chapters dedicated to telling the story of how specific cities are seeking to address climate-related issues. This is often very interesting, but it does not do a great deal to help us understand local climate governance in a broader sense. In fact, given the extent of this detail and the common nature of the challenge for many different urban areas, it was somewhat disappointing that the book did not attempt to develop a more comprehensive theoretical approach to understanding how cities address climate problems. Of course, this is a common issue with edited books in which different contributors bring their own perspectives and tools to analyse different datasets, and cross-disciplinary works of this nature may be particularly vulnerable to such a risk. Nonetheless, it leaves the reader unsure about the wider implications of their research and slightly frustrated at the lack of a consistent argument. The conclusion does attempt to bring the earlier findings together and present a more coherent picture, but the preceding chapters would have benefited from clearer

signposting and cross-referencing to clarify how they relate to each other and the book's overall message.

However, such criticisms are not particularly important if we consider the book as a source of information on how large cities in various different countries are seeking to address the climate challenge. Each chapter is easily digestible on its own, which means that the volume is a useful reference for postgraduate students, scholars and practitioners who wish to know more about urban climate governance across the globe.

Peter Eckersley

Environment Department, University of York