

Call for papers: Environment and Urbanization special issue: urban nature at the margins — climate adaptation governance in informal contexts

- Proposed publication: April 2027
- Expressions of interest welcome until 1 July 2026
- Deadline for full submissions: 19 July 2026

This special issue examines how urban nature — its governance, transformation and everyday experience — is contested and remade in urban informal and marginal spaces across diverse geographic and income contexts.

It brings together empirically grounded and theoretically innovative contributions that collectively argue the governance of urban nature at the margins is shaped by fragmented institutional arrangements, competing socio-environmental imaginaries and community-led forms of knowledge and infrastructural practice (Le Galès 2017).

At its core, the issue asks how urban nature is differentially produced, accessed and governed in contexts where formal planning frameworks are contested or differentially understood.

In informal and marginal settings, nature is neither a backdrop to urban life nor a resource to be optimally managed: it is a terrain of political struggle — at once a source of risk, a basis for livelihood and an object of competing claims over social and ecological futures.

Urban informality is often cast as the 'gap' or 'outside' of formal environmental governance. Yet this framing obscures a more fundamental point: the processes that unevenly produce and distribute urban nature are the same ones that produce informal settlements as risk environments.

These operate along locational lines, as land markets systematically confine low-income populations to flood plains, steep slopes, and coastal margins (Zoomers et al. 2017; Sikarwar and Chattopadhyay 2020); infrastructural lines, as the chronic absence of drainage, sewerage, and flood mitigation reflects selective political investment rather than technical gaps (Morrissey and Taylor 2006); tenurial lines, as the lack of formal title exposes residents to state-led displacement in disaster's aftermath (Ferreira 2024; Issar 2022); and governmental lines, as legal non-recognition excludes residents from

adaptation planning and disaster risk reduction, so that invisibility in governance translates into invisibility in protection (Fourchard 2021; Bekker and Fourchard 2013).

Taken together, these pathways reveal that the unequal production of urban nature is structurally embedded in the political economy of informal urbanisation.

Yet informal settlements and precarious communities are not only sites of heightened vulnerability; they are also important arenas in which urban nature and climate adaptation are actively shaped through negotiation, improvisation and contested political authority, constituting sites of community-led knowledge, local expertise and practiced environmental stewardship (Silver 2014; Anantharaman 2025; Ferlicca et al. 2025).

Drawing on comparative cases, the issue foregrounds three interconnected themes:

- The competing and uneven framings of urban nature that shape political claims, interventions and forms of belonging
- Fragmented and discontinuous adaptation governance, where overlapping jurisdictions, policy misalignment and hybrid authority structure everyday encounters with climate risk, and
- Environmental justice and counter-expertise, attending to how marginalised residents mobilise knowledge, action repertoires, and collective action (Tucker and Anantharaman 2020) to challenge institutional inaction and reconfigure the meaning of adaptation.

Rather than constituting a new political terrain, 'urbanised nature' and 'climate risk' intensify and recompose long-standing struggles rooted in histories of inequality, colonial legacies and contested urban development (Feltran 2010; Samaha 2025).

The collection aligns with Environment and Urbanization's long-standing agenda by offering a comparative and theoretically informed analysis of informality, governance, inequality, and the politics of environmental transformation, responding to calls for greater integration between urban political ecology, comparative urbanism, and adaptation justice scholarship.

Guiding questions

We invite submissions that engage with one or more of the following:

- How are urban nature and climate risk conceptualised differently by residents, municipal authorities, developers and NGOs in informal and marginal urban settings — and with what political and distributional consequences?
- How does institutional fragmentation — overlapping jurisdictions, policy vacuums and hybrid governance arrangements — shape the production and distribution of climate adaptation in informal contexts?

- What forms of counter-expertise, community knowledge and collective organisation emerge in response to institutional inaction or inadequate formal adaptation governance?
- How do adaptation interventions, including nature-based solutions and urban greening programmes, interact with existing patterns of land tenure insecurity, displacement risk and socio-spatial inequality?
- In what ways do colonial legacies and racialised histories of urban development shape current vulnerabilities and the possibilities for just adaptation in cities of both lower- and higher-income countries?

Format and submissions

The core of the issue will consist of full-length, peer-reviewed research articles that advance theory and engage critically with scholarship on urban nature, informality and adaptation governance.

In keeping with Environment and Urbanization's commitment to practitioner engagement and policy relevance, we also welcome a smaller number of complementary contributions that extend the empirical, methodological and conceptual range of the issue. This includes:

- Co-authored pieces involving non-academic collaborators (community organisations, NGOs, municipal practitioners);
- Interviews or edited dialogues with practitioners, activists or social movement representatives
- Methodological reflections on participatory, visual or mapping-based approaches, and
- Short conceptual pieces engaging emerging debates in urban political ecology, adaptation governance, or comparative urbanism.

Across all formats, we are particularly interested in contributions that reflect critically on positionality and research practice in marginalised urban contexts.

Contact and deadlines

Please contact the guest editors with expressions of interest or queries by 1 July 2026. The deadline for full paper submissions is 19 July 2026.

Expressions of interest — including a provisional title and 300-word abstract — are strongly encouraged before the deadline.

Contact: Francesca Ferlicca — francesca.ferlicca@sciencespo.fr

Guest editors

Francesca Ferlicca: (Rachel L. Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow, Sciences Po — Centre for International Research (CERI), Urban School) is an urban scholar working at the intersection of informality, climate risk, and socio-ecological transformation. Her doctoral thesis from IUAV Venice — awarded the Best Thesis on Sustainable Urban Development in Latin America and the Caribbean 2021–2022 by CEDEUS and REDEUS_LAC — examined integral regularisation policies in Buenos Aires' informal settlements through a relational lens. Her scholarship appears in *IJURR* and *Equilibri*, alongside contributions to Routledge and Palgrave Macmillan volumes. She has consulted for the Buenos Aires Provincial and City Governments, CIPPEC, and the Inter-American Development Bank. She is Guest Editor of the collection *Grounding Nature-Based Solutions: Local Adaptations for Climate Resilience and Equitable Urban Futures* in *npj Urban Sustainability*. Her current postdoctoral project, *Nature in the City*, funded by the Gerard B. Lambert Foundation, investigates climate adaptation across informal settlements in Latin American cities, tracing how community agency, flood risk, and speculative land markets shape contested urban ecologies.

Manisha Anantharaman: (Assistant Professor, Sciences Po — Centre for the Sociology of Organisations (CSO), Urban School) is Assistant Professor of Sociology at Sciences Po's Center for the Sociology of Organisations (CNRS). Her research sits at the intersection of economic and cultural sociology, political ecology, and environmental governance, using ethnographic methods to examine how ecological transitions are shaped by inequality, identity, and institutions. She is the author of *Recycling Class: The Contradictions of Inclusion in Urban Sustainability* (MIT Press, 2024), which received honorable mentions from the American Sociological Association and the International Studies Association, and co-editor of *The Circular Economy and the Global South* (Routledge, 2019). Her work appears in leading journals including *Urban Studies*, *Journal of Consumer Culture*, and *Social and Cultural Geography*. She serves as Associate Editor at *Consumption and Society* and has contributed to special issues on sustainability and consumption politics. Her research has been supported by the US National Science Foundation and other international funding bodies.

Tommaso Vitale: (Full Professor, Sciences Po — Centre for European Studies and Comparative Politics (CEE), Urban School) is Full Professor of Sociology at Sciences Po Paris, affiliated with the Centre for European Studies and Comparative Politics (CEE–CNRS UMR 8239). He serves as Dean of the Sciences Po Urban School and is scientific director of *Cities Are Back in Town*, the permanent interdisciplinary research seminar in comparative urban studies. Vitale holds an MA in Political Science (1999, University of Milan), a PhD in Sociology (2003, University of Milan), a Certificate of Advanced Study in Comparative Institutional Analysis and Design (2004, Indiana University, Bloomington — under Nobel Laureate Elinor Ostrom), and a Habilitation (HDR) in Sociology (2023,

Sciences Po). His training integrates Weberian urban sociology, comparative urban political economy, contentious politics, and analytical sociology across micro-, meso-, and macro-levels of analysis, shaping a research programme that moves across structural analysis, policy instruments, conflict-resolution mechanisms, and the politics of social change in European cities. His peer-reviewed articles appear in the *Journal of Urban Affairs*, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *Habitat International*, *Social Movement Studies*, *Journal of European Public Policy*, *Sociologie*, and other leading journals. He has edited 14 books and 8 special issues in English, French, and Italian.

Anna Taylor: (Senior Research Officer, University of Cape Town — African Climate and Development Initiative, African Centre for Cities) is a senior researcher at the University of Cape Town (UCT) in South Africa, affiliated with the African Climate and Development Initiative and the African Centre for Cities. Trained in human geography and environmental science, her socially engaged scholarship is positioned at the nexus of climate change, cities, and water, focusing on processes of adapting to climate risks, especially in African urban contexts. Her current research explores how to track and assess adaptation progress at the urban scale, urban groundwater governance and stewardship arrangements, and relational agency and adaptive pathways. Recent publications include Atkins and Taylor (2025) on urban water metabolism and groundwater governance in two South African cities (*Urban Science* 9(12)); Taylor (2024) on climate-resilient development pathways in South Africa (*South African Journal of Science* 120(11/12)); and Pasquini et al. (2024) on pathways to transformative adaptation in Harare and Durban (*Environmental Science & Policy* 158, 103784).

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