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Framing as social uncertainty in building urban climate resilience

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Background

Building urban resilience to climate change and other challenges will be essential for maintaining thriving cities into the future. However, people have different interpretations of what 'urban resilience' and 'adaptation' mean (cf. ,2): what resilience-building contributes to, and what trade-offs, side-effects and other normative choices are acceptable. These different ways of 'framing' climate resilience are hidden in the positive, but sometimes fairly vague, language used to promote it.

Approach

Based on the current urban resilience literature, I described divergent ways of framing resilient urban climate adaptation and will explore their implications. They entail different visions on the urban future, leading to different potential realisations of climate change adaptation. The frames used by scientists, policymakers, and stakeholders reflect social uncertainties in climate adaptation, related to values, preferences, and goals.

Conclusions

Different framings of resilience can lead to very different approaches to climate adaptation, and different valuations of choices made (cf. 1,2,3). Urban decision-makers and stakeholders will need to investigate and develop a clear vision on what they – and other stakeholders – mean by 'urban resilience'. Explicit exploration of the current and potential frames will help to cultivate meaningful discussion on the choices and trade-offs to be made in developing climate-resilient urban futures.

Framing focus:	Short term	Long term
Urban system	Urban shock-proofing *E.g.: disaster engineering; urban economic resilience*	Resilience planning *E.g.: transformative, flexible planning & design; adaptive management*
Community	Community disaster resilience *E.g.: self-sufficiency; social aspects of disaster planning*	Community development *E.g.: human(itarian) development approaches; social innovations*

Different framing leads to different views on appropriate adaptation actions. E.g.:

Framing:	System resilience	Community resilience
What's the:		
Problem	Threat to functioning of urban system	Threat to urban life & social cohesion
Causes	Disruption of resource flows and activities	Societal disruption, hampering daily life
Moral judgements	Prioritise subsystems & infrastructures according to city goals	Social equity, public participation, vulnerable groups
Remedies	Engineer ways to deal with this, enhance buffers	Improve social support networks, skills & education

Research line "*Resilience & climate change adaptation under uncertainty*"
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