

Study highlights differences between cities planning efforts for global warming

1 March 2016, by Bob Yirka



The Manhattan skyline at night. Credit: Michael Mase

A small team of researchers with University College London and kMatrix Ltd, Greetham House has conducted a study of urban preparedness efforts by ten major cities around the world in an effort to learn more about how resources are being allocated to deal with changes coming due to global warming. The group has published the results of their efforts as a LETTER article in the journal *Nature Climate Change*.

As the planet warms, cities are beginning to feel the pressure of protecting the people that live in them and the assets that keep them running. But to date, the authors note, little research has been done to find out just how much effort is being taken by city planners, as measured in money spent on mitigation projects or how much difference there is between [major cities](#). The authors sought to partially remedy that situation by combing through documents that detail city planning, expenditures and other measures taken by 10 mega-cities across the globe, during the years 2009 to 2015, to deal with environmental problems likely to be caused by [global warming](#), e.g. flooding, water scarcity, increased rates of disease.

In looking at the data and analyzing the results, the team was able to generate numbers that

represented how much was being spent by different cities along with percentages of GDP for those cities on mitigation efforts, which allowed them to compare and contrast the different efforts between the cities under study, which included New York, Mumbai, London, Addis Ababa, Paris, Beijing, Sao Paul, Mexico City, Jakarta and Lagos.

The team reports that it was no surprise to learn that cities in more developed countries have been spending more on such efforts than those in developing countries—the surprise was how huge the differences between them was. They found for example, that New York City spent approximately a hundred times as much as Addis Ababa last year. There were also differences in the amount spent compared to population size—Paris for example, spent approximately 397 Euros per person, whereas Addis Ababa spent just 4.7.

The team also reports that though it is difficult to measure, there appears to be a bias towards protecting capital assets over the people that live in the cities and not enough effort is being put into research to determine which threats individual cities face so that funds for mitigation efforts can be allocated more wisely. On an optimistic note, they found that all of the cities in the study were spending more each year on mitigation efforts.

More information: Lucien Georgeson et al. Adaptation responses to climate change differ between global megacities, *Nature Climate Change* (2016). [DOI: 10.1038/nclimate2944](https://doi.org/10.1038/nclimate2944)

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