

BOOK REVIEWS

The City and the Coming Climate: Climate Change in the Places We Live

Brian Stone, Jr., Georgia Institute of Technology, Georgia, USA,
Cambridge University Press, 2012, 187 p.
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The book is a unique and pioneer contribution to the field of urban climatology. It has been intended by the author to describe and illustrate the ways in which cities are altering their own climates and to mull over what actions might put into a slowing of the swift warming by now underway in the urban environments. The requirement for cities to actively manage the growing menace of extreme heat within their jurisdictions has become additionally apparent during the period of the book's writing – an episode in which cities around the world had some of the most extreme climate related events that ever visited the human settlements. Yet, coupled with several urban environmental dilemma of unprecedented intensity in the past few years, it has been an almost complete breakdown for the developed international policy framework to manage the problem of climate change. In the wake of the obvious failure of the Copenhagen Climate Conference to establish a successor agreement to the Kyoto Protocol, a growing list of developed nations have announced their intent to withdraw from the global policy framework altogether by the close of the first commitment period in 2012. These recent events in concert – a growing incidence of extreme weather in the urban environments and a widening climate policy vacuum – require cities to move aggressively to protect their populations from climate-related threats in the present period. In this regard, the author hopes that this book can help to enlighten the development of urban

and metropolitan scale strategies to cope with climate change more unswervingly in the places most vulnerable to the effects of extreme heat. To this end, the book has been directed toward a few key purposes.

Out of the manifold climatic and environmental problems which our world is facing today, the increasing heat around the urbanized atmosphere is the most crucial. And the tendency for urbanized areas to amplify heat waves raises a critically important but seldom examined question: To what extent will urbanized areas amplify global warming? Specially, if the IPCC (2007) is projecting a 2 to 12°F increase in globally averaged temperatures by 2100, should the author expect a comparable increase at the scale of large cities or an even greater rise in temperature? The answer to this question reveals a surprising shortcoming in the global science community's approach to climate research. The main endeavour of this book is to explore the causes that are mostly responsible for the rapid change of climate, particularly in urban areas, and to indicate the possible necessary steps that can be taken to overcome this predicament. Due to the day by day increasing heat, the problems or effects that cities and the whole world are facing has also been indicted. Calamities like urban heat waves, droughts, extinction of some species, excessive flood storms, like tornadoes, are the outcome of such horrible climate change. In such critical situations when urban

environment is about to go to hell, we should take some immediate steps to protect the population from the climate related threats.

This book will help the urban and metropolitan scale strategies to control the rapid climate change which results in extreme heat around the earth atmospheric system. To make this purpose fruit full, the book has been directed towards a few key purposes. The first effort has been to vividly differentiate global from regional scale climate change processes. In the first chapter, the mechanism of the global greenhouse effect has been widely validated and it is generally accepted in the science community with the surety of a physical law.

Again, the world is to face the greenhouse effect that has now broadly come into existence. As a result, the unexpected rise of temperature is in the global surface for which the water level in the ocean is increasing day by day. If it continues like this, our planet will be under water in the future as already predicted by the meteorologist and other earth scientists. So to get rid of it and to save mankind, we have to be conscious of its origin.

In regard to protect our precious mankind and community from the cruel paws of rising temperature, we should not depend only upon the global institutions; we should build up some self-governing institutions, where some environmental approaches can be taken into action for future climate dilemma.

The second objective of this book is to show how land use is playing a great role in the climatic disorder, on the surface energy balance and also on atmospheric carbon, not only in the urban, but also in the rural environment with the arrays that are the direct outcome of it and the physical strategies which are effective in mitigating such problems. Many of the largest urban areas worldwide, including the most populous regions of North America, Europe, and Asia have been found in recent decades to be warming at more than twice the rate of the planet as whole. The clear conclusion to be derived from these studies is that, in the most populous regions of the

planet, land use change is often playing a greater role in ongoing warming trends than the emission of greenhouse gases.

The third objective of the book has been to reveal how the global policy framework for climate management has been a hindrance to detect the principal drivers which are taking the cities into the valley of excessive heat; how the recent climate change narrative formed by the framework convention and its associated protocols ignore the land-based causes, which are not less powerful drivers of climate change than the global greenhouse effect; and how instead of scaling back the emission-control efforts in cities, heat management strategies can be reformed more powerfully and robust in order to diminish this problem.

Moreover, this book has been associated with the resilience of cities. If our modern postindustrial city continues to walk on the path that is walking now, the time will come in the future when our forthcoming generation will be devoid from both limitless energy as well as stable and fresh environment; and therefore, it is the time for us to bring the necessary changes to the surface composition and spatial organization of the landscape.

The author has suggested some of the physical changes which are very essential for the urban population and cities to diminish the rapidly rising temperature as far as possible. These changes may be categorized as three general categories of urban climate change management, of which the first gives emphasis on the sun screening strategies such as land-based management: vegetative cover, building envelope, expansion of urban tree canopies, use of reflective materials in building and road resurfaces which are very effective, and immediate to reflect or dissipate heat energy in urban environments; the second stresses upon green belting strategies which can be actualized by restoring the ecological integrity of metropolitan hinterlands, and by protecting and cultivating the moisture

efficient species of vegetation in the arid region.

The final category of urban climate management focuses upon the energy conservation and the efforts to minimize the production of waste heat in cities. This can slow the pace warming by limiting the magnitude of fossil fuel combustion for transportation, industry and building climate control. Besides, carbon cooling strategies produce a direct linkage between regional and global scale climate management, by limiting both thermal and green house emission associated with fossil energy.

At the conclusion of the discussion and analysis, the one thing that the author reminds us is that the remedy of this crucial problem is not possible only by institutions, global policy framework or technological capacity but it depends upon the seriousness and recognition on the part of urban governmental sufficiency. Above all, it is the rate at which climate is changing in cities that most clearly illuminates the lessons of the urbanized areas heat wave for urban governments and residents. Where such an event remains a statistical improbability, cities could be forgiven for prioritizing other critical needs above preparations for combating climate change. The author focuses

on this question following the heat wave which would show that, in the absence of the influence of human induced warming, an event approaching the intensity and heat wave would indeed remain quite rare, occurring on average once every thousands years. Yet, assuming that global temperatures continue to rise at the rate of recent decades, the frequency of such a heat wave increases substantially – so much so that, by the year 2040, such heat waves may be expected to occur every year. Such a world seems hardly imaginable: temperatures of sufficient intensity and duration to physically warp the steel of railroad tracks and melt the asphalt of streets every year. To this end, what is most important to provide a bright, fresh and soothing environment and climate to our coming generation, is that we must be more active, sincere and serious of the confronted danger: to what extent will cities desire to cope with their own climate fate or destiny?

Reference

IPCC (2007), *Climate Change 2007: Mitigation of Climate Change*, in: Metz B., Davidson O. R., Bosch P. R., Dave, R., Meyer L. A. (eds.), Contribution of Working Group III to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

**Atlasul Electoral al României / Atlas Electoral de la Roumanie /
Electoral Atlas Of Romania (1990 - 2009)**

Corneliu Iașu (coordinator), Ionel Boamfă, Ciprian Alupului, Sebastian Năstuță, Silviu Petru Grecu, Romeo Asiminei, Raluca Ioana Horea-Șerban, Voicu Bodocan, Aurelian Giugăl, Cătălin Timofciuc, Trilingual Edition, Editura Universității Alexandru Ioan Cuza din Iași, 2013, 754 p. ISBN 978-973-703-629-2

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The book represents an academic premiere both for the multidisciplinary ensemble of the political sciences and for the sphere of human geography, particularly the political one. Through the magnitude of the research and mapping of the post December Romanian electoral phenomenon, the *Electoral Atlas of Romania*, published in three languages, stands as a „Gordian knot” for the revival of the electoral geography, as a border field between political sciences and geographical studies. The research team is an interdisciplinary one, made up of experienced researchers in the field of electoral sociology, studies of electoral behaviour, political sciences and human geography. Therefore, the academic effort of drafting such a „work” is a huge one, both in respect of the analysed historical period and of the structuring of the research by elements related to electoral marketing analysis, political behaviour or vote sociology. All these elements make the *Electoral Atlas of Romania* an unprecedented work within the Romanian academic and political space, and also a valid instrument useful to get a radiography of the local electoral process.

As regards the structure of the paper, we can identify two research plans. The first plan is undoubtedly a pragmatic one, destined to policy makers, collective political actors, specialists in public opinion polls or those within the electoral marketing space. This plan provides the reader a fairly comprehensive image of the evolution of the Romanian post

December elections at the level of the main electoral cycles. The amplitude of this work resides in the fact that the authors of the *Atlas* managed to capture the Romanian electoral dynamics for a period of two decades (1990-2009) for all types of elections (local, parliamentary, presidential and Euro parliamentary). The electoral results are presented in an attractive manner, by means of some well-structured cartograms along with a brief statistical analysis based on centrality and variability indicators. The research data are comparatively placed by electoral cycles, so that the reader or specialist outside the electoral geography sphere may grasp the nuances and mutations occurring within the electoral basin from one ballot to another. Both electoral fluctuations and legislative-administrative changes are well captured by the researchers in the field, especially for the first investigated period: 1992-2002. Besides this imagistic dimension, the work manages to depict the internal evolution of the Romanian democracy, from the beginning phase, passing through the stage of building the rule of law, to the phase of political consolidation and integration in a transnational structure. This political evolution occurs synchronously with the evolution of social psychology, with the Romanian electors’ mentalities, with their political hopes and disappointments. That is why the work still retains a profound sociological substrate, reiterating the thesis of the two-speed development of the Romanian society.

In this respect, in the preface of the paper, academician Alexandru Ungureanu states the following: "one of the most striking features of the Romanian electoral geography is represented by **the profound regional differentiations** that are typical of present-day Romania, almost to the same degree as in the past. Whoever consults a large part of the atlas maps cannot but be struck by the concreteness with which two contrasting Romanians get shaped – a central-western Romania, mainly Carpathian, with a higher living standard, better marked civilization features, a more compact and better maintained transport network, generally voting in favour of centre parties and a continental Romania, in the east and south, covering hill and plain areas, with deep reminiscences of feudalism and collectivism, marked by a great civilizational backward stage and systematically voting in favour of the left wing" (p. 12).

The image of the two Romanias perfectly overlaps both the classical urban-rural cleavage and the East-West geographical one. This image of the Romanian democracy and society is, probably, the most representative contribution of the authors to the description and explanation of the local collective mental system. From the cartographical point of view, the present electoral maps act as maps of a strongly fractured collective mental system, at the level of which civic activism mixes, in a variable geometry, with the passivity and obedience typical of authoritarian regimes. We consider that this is the absolute advantage of this work: that of nuanced depicting, cartographically and imagistically, the evolution of the Romanian post December society. This evolution may perfectly overlap the pre-war dynamics of Romania, a fact which can be inferred from the historical – electoral analysis at the beginning of the atlas. By means of the interdisciplinary character of the book, the authors certainly managed to overcome the classical grid of drawing up a geographical atlas. This places us in front of a monograph of political sociology, sensitive to all the mutations the fragile Romanian democracy has experienced.

The usefulness of such an approach resides in the comparative working methodology, the whole historical evolution of the Romanian political parties, of the electoral legislation and of the administrative-territorial cuttings having the year 1990 as a reference point. That is why we consider that we can speak of an almost experimental research, at the level of which the image of the Romanian electoral system from 1830 to 1989 can be compared to the cartographical and explanatory approach suggested by the authors for the post December election cycles.

From this point of view, the atlas has a fairly substantial chapter dedicated to the history of the Romanian electoral system, a synopsis of the main electoral events of the 19th and 20th centuries, as well as a politological analysis of the driving forces that led to the construction of the Romanian modern state. Without such a historical-politological image of the local election mechanisms, the present work would have probably remained only a cartographical reference element for geographers, not being able to express anything of the intellectual consistency of the becoming of a democratic society. That is why the present atlas, drafted in a sociological manner, stands as the first consistent benchmark for the history of the mental collective system and of the electoral attitudes and behaviours.

The second plan of the work, less detectable than the socio-politological one, is the epistemological and methodological plan of the research. In respect of its methodological grid of making a radiography and analysis of the post December electoral dynamics, the atlas stands out through the variety of documentation sources and data processing means. Thus, from the methodological point of view, the authors managed to make a synthesis between the statistical and mathematical processing and analysis of the information and the cartographical plan, specific to geographical studies. Each map in the atlas observes the rules of statistical inference, the authors inserting in the electoral analyses a series of statistical centrality, consistency and validity indicators. In this

respect, the atlas represents a rich source of quantitative data and scientific milestones for anyone who is interested in the dynamics of the Romanian elections.

The epistemological dimensions of the atlas derive from the good operationalization of the research concepts, from the attempt at providing a guiding framework for future research of electoral marketing or electoral geography, as well as from the convergence between inferential validity and fidelity of the

research instruments. In this respect, the work, a premiere in the Romanian academic space, remains a reference element for the researcher in the field of political science, political sociology, electoral geography or political psychology. The entire intellectual labour of the authors could rather be integrated within an interdisciplinary effort of drawing up a treaty of political sociology, political history or analysis of the psychosocial features of the Romanian electorate and of a still fragile democratic process.