

**Tyndall Centre for Climate Change and Sustainable Consumption Institute PhD  
conference**

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**Year of Study:** III

**Summary of PhD topic :** *Reinterpreting Sub-Saharan cities through the concept of “adaptive capacity”*

My research addresses the interactions between urban development and global environmental change, recognizing that a better understanding of them is essential for the reduction of climate change (CC) impacts in Sub-Saharan fast growing cities.

In particular, it is focused on peri-urban areas whose vulnerability to CC is seen as a key issue by scholars engaged in the search for effective strategies and measures to enhance the adaptive capacity in the cities of the Least Developed Countries. Peri-urban areas in those countries contain mainly informal settlements and are home to a substantial and growing proportion of the world's urban population. Peri-urban livelihoods depend partly on natural resources such as land, water and space for living (Brook and Davila, 2000). It is assumed that this is also what makes them vulnerable to environmental changes and thus a priority area for improvements in adaptation and consequently in sustainability.

It is widely argued that improved urban planning and provision of public services and infrastructure, (betterment of housing conditions, water supply and sanitation, etc) are crucial for both development and the promotion of resilient cities (Stern, 2007). The research discusses these dominant approaches investigating the drivers of adaptive capacity in peri-urban areas of sub-Saharan African cities.

Given the crucial role of peri-urban areas in settlement processes, it is hypothesized that adaptive capacity in peri-urban areas depends on four main factors:

- Type and magnitude of local environmental impacts of climate change;
- Rural-urban dynamics, land-use patterns and urban fabric;
- Local capacity to cope with climate change effects;
- Institutional capacity in environmental management and urban development planning.

The research aims to verify this hypothesis through a fieldwork carried out in Dar es Salaam, which analyzes the livelihood strategies, autonomous adaptation and environmental management practices in peri-urban areas.

It emerges that rural-urban interactions are crucial for livelihood maintenance in a changing environment, due to their economic, social and environmental relevance.

Households rely, for their livelihoods, on those interactions, which prove to be essential to cope with environmental threats. It ensues that rural-urban interactions should be regarded as a major issue in the planning of sustainable adaptation for peri-urban areas in Sub-Saharan Africa. Unfortunately, dominant approaches still neglect to consider them while preferring to separate the urban from the rural.