



Coalition for Archaeological Synthesis

Request for Information

Participation in a CfAS/Amerind Museum Design Workshop on Urban Adaptation to Environmental Change

Precis: The [Coalition for Archaeological Synthesis](#) (CfAS) is requesting information from researchers in archaeology and allied disciplines interested in participating in a project focused on urban adaptation to environmental change. CfAS and the [Amerind Museum](#) are sponsoring this effort to connect research on urban adaptation to environmental change in the past with contemporary efforts at fostering climate resilient urban development.

Through a fall 2024 design workshop at the Amerind Museum, one or more collaborative synthetic working group projects and/or high-profile publications will be designed by a diverse group of 12-14 researchers. Selection of participants will give priority to those who control and are willing to share pertinent data or those who have demonstrated theoretical and/or methodological expertise in urban adaptation and resiliency. Participants are sought from relevant disciplines including, but not limited to: archaeology, environmental science, sustainability science, anthropology, demography, geography, history, economics, and sociology.

This Request for Information (RFI) is for the purpose of identifying participants for a six-day long workshop to design one or more collaborative synthetic projects. Implementation of the working groups is contingent upon receipt of external funding, either through a pending grant proposal to the National Science Foundation—the outcome of which will be known in advance of the workshop—or through additional proposals developed at the workshop.

Deadline for receipt of letters of interest: May 6, 2024

Participants to be selected: about 12, who will join project leaders Sarah Klassen and Jose Lobo.

Contact: Questions concerning this request for information should be sent to Sarah Klassen (sarah.e.klassen@gmail.com) and Jose Lobo (Jose.Lobo@asu.edu).

Background

The Synthetic Study of Urban Adaptation to Environmental Change

In response to the pressing global conversation on urban adaptation to climate change, this design workshop will facilitate a dialogue between urban archaeologists and non-archaeologists engaged in the design of adaptive solutions. According to the United Nations, “Climate Change is the defining issue of our time, and we are at a defining moment”. The IPCC 6th Assessment Report Synthesis states, “Integrated, inclusive planning and investment in everyday decision making about urban infrastructure can significantly increase the adaptive capacity of urban and rural settlements.” The 7th Assessment Report cycle will build on this thread and focus on questions related to urban adaptation to climate change. With the IPCC’s emphasis on integrated, inclusive planning for urban infrastructure, the proposed working group is strategically positioned to make a substantial and timely contribution, linking archaeological insights to contemporary challenges in the pursuit of sustainable urban development.

The *Summary for Urban Policymakers of the 6th IPCC Assessment Report* ([SUP – Summary for Urban Policymakers \(supforclimate.com\)](#)) highlights the connections between several IPCC’s reports and urban development. Many of these, in turn, connect with urban archaeology. First, the report emphasizes the need for a **localization methodology** to construct climate change information for cities: “policymakers need to understand the relationship between extreme conditions and climate change at the city scale. . . Long-term observational records are crucial to assess if the types of extreme events of interest have become more common or intense over time.” (p. 8). This suggests that effective interventions should focus on the city as the unit of analysis and should leverage the inherent time-depth of archaeological evidence.

Second, the report emphasizes **climate-resilient development**—the idea that urban adaptation to climate change must proceed in a context of continuing human development, especially in the global south: “Exposure to hazards can be reduced by altering the physical form of urban areas, managing population and infrastructure growth, and modifying physical hazards along coasts and rivers. Vulnerability can be reduced through efforts to promote inclusive development and to reduce inequality.” (p. 27). The concept of **adaptation limits** is also developed: “Both hard limits, or conditions beyond which it is impossible to adapt, and soft limits, conditions that can limit adaptation because solutions are not available to certain people based on assets or capacities, are shaped by differences in levels of development.” (p. 35).

The possible synergies between urban adaptation to climate change and sustainable urban development are highlighted in a report prepared by the UN’s Department of Economic and Social Affairs for the Sustainable Development Goals Summit held last September ([UN Climate SDG Synergies Report-091223B.pdf](#)). This report urges global efforts at identifying what synergies can facilitate climate-resilient urban development. Climate-resilient development involves trade-offs, in that higher levels of development may be associated with both greater inequality and less stringent limits to climate adaptation. What does the archaeological record have to say about development vs. inequality and long-term adaptation?

Urban archaeology has studied how properties of cities influenced their ability to adapt to environmental change, and what adaptation responses consisted of. The study of urban systems and their rural hinterlands, and of human adaptation to environmental change, are both enduring research topics in archaeology. Numerous studies have also examined long-term socio-environmental processes affecting regional population distribution, rural-urban migration, urban planning, social relations, economic specialization, political organization, and so forth. However, to connect with discussions by researchers and stakeholders on how to design effective and just solutions to climate change, research on how urban areas in the past responded to environmental change needs to be connected to contemporary challenges posed by climate change. It will be especially important to measure environmental change for past urban contexts and assess relationships among population size, level of development, inequality, urban morphology, and the degree to which adaptation was driven by civic institutions or distributed decision-making by individuals.

The design workshop will be led by Drs. Sarah Klassen (Center for Collaborative Synthesis in Archaeology, University of Colorado Boulder) and Jose Lobo (School of Sustainability, Arizona State University).

Coalition for Archaeological Synthesis

The Coalition for Archaeological Synthesis was established in 2017 with the mission of fostering synthesis in archaeology to expand knowledge and benefit society. The rationale behind the Coalition is articulated in two papers (Altschul et al. 2017, 2018) available on the [CfAS Website](#). As the

project(s) designed by the workshop are intended to put into practice the collaborative research model laid out in those papers, RFI applicants are strongly encouraged to consult them.

Projects to be developed by the working group will employ the *working group* model pioneered by the National Center for Ecological Analysis and Synthesis ([NCEAS](#)). The NCEAS working group model has been a powerful driver for advancing interdisciplinary scientific research in other fields (Carpenter et al. 2009; Hackett et al. 2008). Over 2-3 years, a working group is funded to meet 3 or 4 times for intensive research sessions of 5 working days. In between, team members continue to collaborate remotely. Working group projects can include analytical support but *do not involve* additional field or laboratory work.

A key feature of a working group is that it embodies considerable intellectual and disciplinary diversity. The working group will integrate multiple perspectives and multiple sources of data to generate explanatory insights that are impossible to achieve through the study of a single case or from a single perspective. Working groups are expected to employ a wide range of existing data resources, often including sources from cultural resources management (CRM) and heritage management fields, or other under-utilized sources. By the end of the working group effort, source and synthesized data products must be made available, open access, through a recognized digital repository. All published working group outcomes must be open access in some form (e.g., green open access).

Letters of interest submitted in response to this Request for Information will be used by CfAS to identify about 12 participants for a 6-day (4 working days plus arrival and departure days) *design workshop* to be held in fall 2024 at the beautiful grounds of the Amerind Museum in Dragoon, Arizona, USA. Specific dates will be determined by the Amerind Museum to, as much as possible, accommodate the selected participants' availability. Travel, lodging, and related meeting costs for all participants will be paid for by the Amerind Museum.

Although the design workshop will be held in the US, it will have strong international participation. That workshop will develop one or more *working group projects*, extending over 2-3 years, that will be supported by a pending NSF grant, the outcome of which will be known prior to the design workshop. If the proposal is not funded, the design workshop will produce material for additional grant submissions to support their work. While we expect that many of the design workshop participants will be involved in the working group itself, participation is not required, and other researchers may be substituted depending on participant availability and the specifics of the project(s) emerging from the design workshop.

This design workshop builds on the success of previous CfAS design workshops held at the Amerind Museum. Insights from one such workshop were published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* (Altschul et al. 2020). That workshop had half US and half international participants, with expertise ranging from the earliest human migrations out of Africa to modern Syrian refugees in Europe.

RFI Submission, Evaluation, and Award

RFI Submission

Applications must be submitted through this [form](#) by May 6, 2024, 5PM MST (GMT-7). Applications shall be submitted as PDF or Microsoft Word documents, with pages having 1" margins and at least an 11-point font size. Questions concerning the mechanics of the application process should be addressed to Scott Ortman (scor2010@colorado.edu) and Maria Fernanda Szentkiralyi (maen8578@colorado.edu) at the Center for Collaborative Synthesis in Archaeology, University of Colorado Boulder.

Who May Submit Letters of Interest:

Letters of Interest can be submitted by any researcher with experience, as described above. Letters of Interest are welcome from all researchers regardless of nationality. (Participants from some countries will need to be able to obtain a visa to enter the US.) CfAS is committed to diversity and professional development and strongly encourages letters of interest from junior, historically underrepresented researchers, from heritage management professionals as well as academics, and individuals from developing countries and Indigenous communities.

Application Sections

Each application must consist of a 2-page letter of interest and a 2-page curriculum vitae.

1. Letter of Interest

A 2-page letter of interest demonstrates the applicant's relevant expertise experience, describes their interest in the study of urban adaptation to environmental change and explains how they would contribute to the design workshop and subsequent working group efforts. The applicant will outline the data set(s) and/or methodological/theoretical approaches that they would contribute to the design workshop and synthesis working group efforts. Willingness and ability to engage in interdisciplinary research and to integrate diverse data sources should be emphasized.

2. Curriculum Vitae

A 2-page summary curriculum vitae is required. No other information will be considered (e.g., hyperlinks to outside material). The vitae should include your name and contact information, professional preparation (degrees, subjects, institutions, and years), current and past professional appointments, references to no more than 10 publications or other professional products, and a summary of service or other relevant information.

Review and Selection Process

A review panel will evaluate RFI responses on the extent to which they convey convincing arguments for contributing to this collaborative research effort. The panel will consider the applicant's experience relevant to the design workshop, their access and familiarity with any offered data sets, and their interest in designing professional and public products of scientific research. The success of the workshop depends on having diverse experience and expertise on the panel; as a result, not all highly qualified applicants will be selected. The review panel will propose a list of participants to the CfAS Executive Committee, which will make a final determination on the awards. Applications not satisfying the requirements stipulated in this announcement may be rejected without evaluation.

Award Information.

The award will pay directly for the conference facility, lodging, and meals during the design workshop. Participants, including international participants, will be reimbursed for reasonable travel expenses. This would include, for example, transportation to and from the origin airport, advance-purchase coach airfare, transportation from the destination airport to the conference facility, and meal expenses (at a standard US General Services Administration (GSA) rate) during travel. If required, it will also cover visa fees and provide letters of invitation. If reimbursement represents a problem, it may be possible to arrange an advance or purchase of plane tickets directly.

Effect of Submitting a Letter of Interest

By submitting a response to this RFI, the applicant acknowledges that RFI responses may be submitted by other applicants and that CfAS is under no legal obligation to select an applicant's letter

of interest. Applicants submitting RFI responses further acknowledge that CfAS' decision as to whom to grant an award is final, binding, and non-appealable.

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