Carbon Capture Integration in Urban Systems

Dr. Alex Thompson
Department of Urban Sustainability, City University of New York, New York, USA

* Corresponding Author: **Dr. Alex Thompson**

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Abstract
Carbon capture integration in urban systems represents a critical strategy for mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and achieving sustainable city development. Urban areas are responsible for a significant proportion of global carbon dioxide emissions due to energy consumption, transportation, and industrial activities. This paper examines the incorporation of carbon capture technologies into urban infrastructure, including building materials, energy systems, and transportation networks. Key approaches include direct air capture units in urban centers, carbon-sequestering construction materials, and integration with renewable energy sources for energy-efficient carbon capture operations. By linking carbon capture with smart city technologies, such as Internet of Things (IoT) monitoring and real-time data analytics, cities can optimize capture efficiency, track emissions, and support climate action plans. Multi-stakeholder engagement, encompassing policymakers, urban planners, researchers, and industry, is essential to ensure feasibility, scalability, and social acceptance. Case studies from pilot urban carbon capture projects demonstrate technical viability, economic considerations, and potential environmental co-benefits, including improved air quality and reduced urban heat effects. The findings highlight that integrating carbon capture into urban systems not only reduces emissions but also contributes to circular economy principles by enabling the reuse of captured carbon in construction, energy, and industrial applications. Future research should focus on cost reduction, technological innovation, regulatory frameworks, and community involvement to maximize adoption.

Keywords: Carbon Capture, Urban Systems, Greenhouse Gas Mitigation, Direct Air Capture, Sustainable Cities, Smart Infrastructure, Renewable Energy Integration, Circular Economy, Urban Planning, Climate Action

Introduction

Urban areas account for over 70% of global CO2 emissions, driven by energy consumption in buildings, transport, and waste management [1, 2]. As cities grow, integrating carbon capture technologies becomes essential to meet Paris Agreement targets and achieve carbon neutrality [3]. Carbon capture involves capturing CO2 at point sources or from ambient air, followed by storage (CCS) or utilization (CCU) in products like fuels or building materials [4, 5].

This integration requires cross-disciplinary efforts: engineering for technology deployment, urban planning for spatial optimization, and policy for incentives [6]. Benefits include reduced emissions, enhanced air quality, and economic opportunities through carbon markets [7]. However, barriers like infrastructure limitations and public acceptance must be addressed [8, 9].

This article explores challenges, technologies, solutions, case studies, and future directions for carbon capture in urban systems, supported by 50 references in Vancouver style.

Challenges in Carbon Capture Integration

Urban carbon capture faces technical, economic, and social hurdles. High energy requirements for capture processes, such as solvent-based absorption, can increase operational costs by 30-50% [10, 11].

Scalability is limited in space-constrained cities, where retrofitting buildings or installing DAC units demands significant infrastructure [12].

Economic challenges include high capital investments; for instance, DAC costs range from $250-600 per ton of CO2 captured [13, 14]. Storage sites may be distant from urban centers, raising transportation risks and costs [15]. Public skepticism arises from perceived safety issues, like CO2 leakage, and concerns over greenwashing by industries [16, 17].

Environmental trade-offs, such as increased water use in some capture methods, and integration with intermittent renewables complicate deployment [18, 19]. Policy gaps, including inconsistent regulations and subsidies, hinder widespread adoption [20].

Technologies and Methodologies

Key technologies include post-combustion capture for power plants, DAC for ambient air, and bio-CCS using biomass [21, 22]. In urban settings, building-integrated DAC leverages HVAC systems to capture CO2 from ventilation air [23].

Methodologies involve life cycle assessments (LCA) to evaluate emissions reductions and costs [24, 25]. Modeling tools like urban metabolism networks analyze carbon flows across sectors [26]. Optimization frameworks integrate CCS with renewable energy, using AI for efficient operation [27, 28].

Interdisciplinary approaches combine GIS for site selection with economic modeling for viability [29]. Community-scale systems, such as district heating with CCS, distribute capture across neighborhoods [30, 31].

Innovative Solutions

Innovations address challenges through modular designs and hybrid systems. Flexible CCU converts captured CO2 into concrete or fuels, creating revenue streams [32, 33]. Urban greening enhances natural sequestration; biochar from waste sequesters carbon while improving soil [34].

Policy solutions include carbon pricing and incentives like tax credits under the U.S. Inflation Reduction Act [35]. Public-private partnerships fund pilots, as in building-integrated capture [36, 37].

Technological advances, such as membrane-based capture, reduce energy needs by 20% [38]. Digital twins simulate urban integration, optimizing placement and operations [39, 40].

Case Studies

Stockholm's Biochar Project turns garden waste into biochar, sequestering 700 tons of CO2 annually while providing district heating (41). This urban sink demonstrates waste-to-resource CCU (42).

In New York, CarbonQuest integrates DAC with building HVAC, capturing CO2 from exhaust and storing it onsite, reducing emissions by 90% in pilot buildings [43, 44]. Hawassa, Ethiopia, uses green spaces for sequestration, with trees storing significant carbon, highlighting low-cost nature-based solutions in developing cities [44, 45].

Helsinki's urban parks LCA shows net CO2 removals through vegetation management, balancing maintenance emissions [47, 48]. These cases illustrate scalable, context-specific integration achieving emission reductions and co-benefits like improved biodiversity.

Future Directions and Conclusion

Future efforts should focus on cost reduction through R&D in sorbents and integration with smart grids [49, 50]. International collaboration can standardize urban CCS frameworks, addressing transboundary storage [51, 52].

Policy recommendations include urban carbon plans mandating capture in new developments [53]. Education and engagement will build public support [54].

In conclusion, integrating carbon capture in urban systems is crucial for sustainable cities. By overcoming challenges through innovation and collaboration, cities can lead in global decarbonization, fostering resilient, low-carbon futures [55, 60].

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