Local governments are where people live. Urban areas in the world and in the United States are where a majority of the population lives. That is only going to increase.

They're also the primary sources of carbon emissions, and so we think about local governments… they're really a constellation of governments in any metropolitan area. They are complex systems, and they require active management to regulate. So, most of the activities that have to change, the behaviors that have to change in order to tackle something like climate change, have to take place in the cities.

Sustainability is a normative choice that cities have to make in terms of the services they want to sustain, the public goods they want to sustain the resources they want to try to sustain. So, it's really about choices and where cities decide to try to preserve those services.

I hope this book helps to develop both theory and practice in that it provides a roadmap that practitioners can follow, can identify with, can utilize. But it also will help us better understand or diagnose why cities are making progress or why cities are not making progress in their sustainability goals.

The book came about from a five-year National Science Foundation CAREER Award that I received in 2020 to study Indiana local government sustainability over a five year period. It involved doing case studies of several Indiana cities, in addition to survey work and other kinds of data analysis. So ultimately, it'll be a project that encompasses five years of progress, of mapping that progress across the state.

There are tons of obstacles. It is not a very easy thing to do. If you think about local governments, they're designed organizationally, to provide specific services: to pave the roads, to pick up the trash, to police the streets. They're not designed to tackle externalities like climate change. So, moving in that direction requires transitions. It requires a pretty fundamental transformation to these organizations.

That being said, it is happening. It is happening across the country. It's happening across the world. We're seeing cities adapt, and they're adapting their administrative processes, they're adapting their services, they're adapting their structures, their institutions.

So, cities are very good at planning. They produce lots of plans. Implementing those plans is a lot more difficult, and it's oftentimes where good ideas go to die. So, understanding how planning relates to implementation, and ultimately, performance management, we need to be able to understand how that works in a cyclical fashion and where it breaks down because it can break down in many places.