

Multiscale Modelling of Urban Heat and Population Health

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Abstract

This review examines multiscale modelling of urban heat and population health. The organizing question is how atmospheric, built-environment, mobility, physiological, and social scales should be connected. Ten related scholarly sources are synthesized through a decision-centered framework spanning problem definition, mechanism, measurement, evaluation, implementation, and governance. The review does not invent experiments, pooled estimates, or unreported quantitative results. It instead evaluates the strength and transferability of the available evidence, with particular attention to using area-average temperature as a proxy for personal exposure and health burden. The resulting framework links technical or empirical performance to explicit use conditions and identifies tests that should precede wider adoption in heat-resilient urban planning and public health.

Keywords: urban heat, population health, multiscale modelling, exposure, climate adaptation

Synthesis lens	Principal question
Mechanism	the chain connecting evidence inputs, multiscale modelling of urban heat and population health, intermediate outputs, and downstream decisions
Evaluation	construct validity, comparative performance, uncertainty, transfer across settings, and decision utility
Primary risk	using area-average temperature as a proxy for personal exposure and health burden

1. Introduction

Research on multiscale modelling of urban heat and population health sits at the boundary between a promising component and a consequential decision. The core question is how atmospheric, built-environment, mobility, physiological, and social scales should be connected. Answering it requires more than assembling favorable results. It requires a chain of evidence that makes the problem boundary, mechanism, measurement, comparator, uncertainty, and accountable decision visible to the reader.

This article presents a structured narrative review of ten related publications. Sources were selected for topical relevance, traceable publication metadata, and complementary coverage of technical, empirical, and governance questions. No meta-analytic pooling is attempted because the included studies differ in designs, populations, system boundaries, and outcomes. The purpose is decision-oriented synthesis: to identify what each source can support, where transfer remains uncertain, and which evidence would justify the next stage of use.

The central risk is using area-average temperature as a proxy for personal exposure and health burden. A top-line metric or broad policy label can appear decisive while concealing the conditions that produced it. Accordingly, the synthesis separates observation from interpretation and implementation from validation. This separation is especially important when the same system creates benefits for one user or institution while transferring cost, risk, or administrative burden to another.

2. Evidence Base and Problem Boundary

A defensible review begins by defining the unit of analysis. For the present topic, the relevant boundary includes inputs, institutional or technical context, the mechanism producing an output, the person or system acting on that output, and the downstream outcome. Evidence falls outside the boundary when it measures only an intermediate proxy yet is used to claim an end-to-end benefit.

Zhou et al. (2018) addresses "Satellite Remote Sensing of Surface Urban Heat Islands: Progress, Challenges, and Perspectives." In this synthesis, that work is used as a source on problem definition within multiscale modelling of urban heat and population health. The connection is deliberately bounded: the cited study informs the evidence map, but it does not by itself establish readiness for heat-resilient urban planning and public health. That distinction keeps the review close to the published record and prevents an adjacent result from being converted into a broader causal claim.

Jenerette et al. (2015) addresses "Micro-scale urban surface temperatures are related to land-cover features and residential heat related health impacts in Phoenix, AZ USA." In this synthesis, that work is used as a source on conceptual boundary within multiscale modelling of urban heat and population health. The connection is deliberately bounded: the cited study informs the evidence map, but it does not by itself establish readiness for heat-resilient urban planning and public health. That distinction keeps the review close to the published record and prevents an adjacent result from being converted into a broader causal claim.

Chen et al. (2023) addresses "A multiscale analysis of heatwaves and urban heat islands in the western U.S. during the summer of 2021." In this synthesis, that work is used as a source on measurement within multiscale modelling of urban heat and population health. The connection is deliberately bounded: the cited study informs the evidence map, but it does not by itself establish readiness for heat-resilient urban planning and public health. That distinction keeps the review close to the published record and prevents an adjacent result from being converted into a broader causal claim.

Together, these works provide complementary entry points, but their conclusions should not be flattened into a single ranking. Differences in data generation, setting, temporal horizon, and outcome definition may be substantively meaningful. A review should therefore preserve those differences and state where analogy, rather than direct replication, connects one domain to another.

3. Mechanism and System Design

The operative mechanism is the chain connecting evidence inputs, multiscale modelling of urban heat and population health, intermediate outputs, and downstream decisions. This formulation discourages component-only reasoning. A model, platform, policy, assay, or infrastructure service acquires practical meaning only when its interfaces and use conditions are specified. The evidence chain should describe what information is available, what transformation occurs, which assumptions make that transformation credible, and who is authorized to act.

Abulibdeh (2021) addresses "Analysis of urban heat island characteristics and mitigation strategies for eight arid and semi-arid gulf region cities." In this synthesis, that work is used as a source on system mechanism within multiscale modelling of urban heat and population health. The connection is deliberately bounded: the cited study informs the evidence map, but it does not by itself establish readiness for heat-resilient urban planning and public health. That distinction keeps the review close to the published record and prevents an adjacent result from being converted into a broader causal claim.

Sabrin et al. (2020) addresses "Developing Vulnerability Index to Quantify Urban Heat Islands Effects Coupled with Air Pollution: A Case Study of Camden, NJ." In this synthesis, that work is used as a source on representation choice within multiscale modelling of urban heat and population health. The connection is deliberately bounded: the cited study informs the evidence map, but it does not by itself establish readiness for heat-resilient urban planning and public health. That distinction keeps the review close to the published record and prevents an adjacent result from being converted into a broader causal claim.

Zhong et al. (2025) addresses "Revealing multiscale and nonlinear effects of urban green spaces on heat islands in high-density cities: Insights from MSPA and machine learning." In this synthesis, that work is used as a source on failure analysis within multiscale modelling of urban heat and population health. The connection is deliberately bounded: the cited study informs the evidence map, but it does not by itself establish readiness for heat-resilient urban planning and public health. That distinction keeps the review close to the published record and prevents an adjacent result from being converted into a broader causal claim.

These studies also show why modular claims require interface tests. A component may perform well while the complete pathway fails because inputs drift, users interpret outputs differently, recovery semantics are ambiguous, or institutional incentives change. Design documentation should therefore include not only the intended pathway but also foreseeable deviations, degraded modes, and conditions under which the system should stop or defer.

4. Evaluation and Uncertainty

Evaluation should center on construct validity, comparative performance, uncertainty, transfer across settings, and decision utility. Average performance remains useful, but it should be accompanied by distributions, error categories, relevant subgroups or operating regimes, and uncertainty at the point where a decision changes. Comparators must isolate the value of the proposed addition rather than compare a mature intervention with an intentionally weak baseline.

Fu et al. (2022) addresses "Optimized greenery configuration to mitigate urban heat: A decade systematic review." In this synthesis, that work is used as a source on comparative evaluation within multiscale modelling of urban heat and population health. The connection is deliberately bounded: the cited study informs the evidence map, but it does not by itself establish readiness for heat-resilient urban planning and public health. That distinction keeps the review close to the published record and prevents an adjacent result from being converted into a broader causal claim.

Ho et al. (2015) addresses "A Spatial Framework to Map Heat Health Risks at Multiple Scales." In this synthesis, that work is used as a source on uncertainty within multiscale modelling of urban heat and population health. The connection is deliberately bounded: the cited study informs the evidence map, but it does not by itself establish readiness for heat-resilient urban planning and public health. That distinction keeps the review close to the published record and prevents an adjacent result from being converted into a broader causal claim.

External validation should introduce meaningful shifts in setting, time, population, workload, market structure, or environmental conditions. A nominally independent sample can still be too similar to test transfer. Conversely, a failed transfer is scientifically informative when the changed conditions are measured and the mechanism of failure is examined rather than hidden in an aggregate score.

5. Translation and Governance

Translation to heat-resilient urban planning and public health depends on more than technical readiness. Decision rights, documentation, maintenance, monitoring, appeal, and recovery are part of the intervention. The governance requirement is traceable evidence, named responsibility, version control, monitoring, appeal, and explicit revalidation. Each control should be connected to a named failure mode and should identify an owner, evidence source, review interval, and escalation path.

Liu et al. (2024) addresses "Research Overview on Urban Heat Islands Driven by Computational Intelligence." In this synthesis, that work is used as a source on implementation within multiscale modelling of urban heat and population health. The connection is deliberately bounded: the cited study informs the evidence map, but it does not by itself establish readiness for heat-resilient urban planning and public health. That distinction keeps the review close to the published record and prevents an adjacent result from being converted into a broader causal claim.

Antoniou et al. (2024) addresses "On the impact of climate change on urban microclimate, thermal comfort, and human health: Multiscale numerical simulations." In this synthesis, that work is used as a source on governance within multiscale modelling of urban heat and population health. The connection is deliberately bounded: the cited study informs the evidence map, but it does not by itself establish readiness for heat-resilient urban planning and public health. That distinction keeps the review close to the published record and prevents an adjacent result from being converted into a broader causal claim.

A credible implementation plan also defines sunset and revalidation conditions. New data, software updates, institutional restructuring, population change, or shifts in incentives can invalidate previously reasonable assumptions. Monitoring should therefore test the validity of the evidence chain, not merely whether a service remains online or a headline metric remains stable.

6. Research Agenda

Future studies should preregister or otherwise predefine the intended decision, principal outcomes, exclusions, and analysis plan when feasible. They should report missingness, sensitivity analyses, negative or null findings, and the cost of errors to differently situated stakeholders. Reproducible artifacts should include sufficient metadata to reconstruct data provenance, model or analytical versions, parameter choices, and the sequence from evidence to conclusion.

Cross-disciplinary work needs a shared object of explanation rather than a collection of adjacent vocabularies. For multiscale modelling of urban heat and population health, that shared object is the complete decision pathway. Technical, clinical, social, environmental, or economic expertise should each change the design or interpretation of the study. When evidence remains incomplete, the useful output is a bounded hypothesis, a transparent uncertainty statement, or a request for additional measurement.

7. Conclusion

The literature supports a disciplined approach to multiscale modelling of urban heat and population health: define the decision, preserve system boundaries, test consequential failure modes, connect uncertainty to action, and assign accountable control. The strongest conclusion is not that one method is universally superior. It is that credible use in heat-resilient urban planning and public health requires an auditable link from source evidence to design choice, evaluation result, and governed decision.

Declarations

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