



**The School of Geography and Development and Center for Climate
Adaptation Science and Solutions Present:**

***Making the invisible, visible: Decision-making,
politics and the process of sustainable adaptation***

Dr. Hallie Eakin

Professor, School of Sustainability, Arizona State University



Adaptation is fundamentally about decision-making under significant uncertainty, not only about the outcomes of any adaptation, but also about the drivers of vulnerability and the factors that influence particular choices of action. There are increasing calls to ensure that adaptation is undertaken in ways that reflect the social, economic and ecological ideals of sustainable development. Sustainable adaptation requires more than ensuring that decisions address the needs of the most vulnerable; it demands that we grapple with the messy reality of the adaptation process, and challenge the politics, social relationships and institutional contexts that reproduce vulnerabilities. In this talk, I will argue that sustainable adaptation in part rests on making visible system dynamics that often are unacknowledged, yet can play determinant roles in vulnerability dynamics. Three issues require particular attention: 1) how our vulnerability and willingness to adapt is shaped by when and how private and public decisions are made, by whom, and for whom; 2) how different conceptualizations of what and who is vulnerable, and why, can perpetuate vulnerability injustices and inequitable burdens in adaptation and 3) how such conceptualizations become embedded in the physical infrastructure that mediates social-ecological interactions, further perpetuating vulnerability on the landscape. Through the case of vulnerability and adaptation to water-related risk in Mexico City, I argue that making these issues visible can open up new pathways to sustainable adaptation.

Friday, April 12, 11:30 AM – 12:30 PM

ENR2 Building, Room S223