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# England's National Adaptation Programme: regression or progression?

Suraje Dessai, **Marta Bruno Soares**, Susanne Lorenz,  
Jouni Paavola, James Porter, Paola Sakai, Andrea  
Taylor and Geoff Whitman

Sustainability Research Institute and ESRC Centre for Climate Change  
Economics and Policy, School of Earth and Environment

Centre for Decision Research, Leeds University Business School

University of Leeds, UK

# Leaders in adaptation policy?



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- “As a result of its prolonged government interest in adaptation, the United Kingdom is one of the more advanced OECD countries in terms of climate research and progress in designing and implementing adaptation policies” (Mullan et al. 2013).
- Massey and Huitema (2013) claim that adaptation in England can be considered a policy field given multiple, clear examples of substantive authority, institutional order, and substantive expertise relating to adaptation.
- UK Climate Impact Programme (UKCIP) established in 1997 to help stakeholders understand the impacts of climate change, later becoming a stakeholder-led “boundary organisation” (McKenzie Hedger 2006, Lorenzoni et al. 2007).

# The adaptation landscape in the UK since 2008



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- Climate Change Act 2008
  - Adaptation Sub-Committee
  - Adaptation Reporting Power
  - UK Climate Projections 2009
  - Climate Change Risk Assessment 2012
  - National Adaptation Programme (2013)
- 
- Devolved adaptation – Scotland, Wales, and NI
  - From UKCIP to the Environment Agency
  - Government's growth agenda and austerity

# The National Adaptation Programme (NAP)



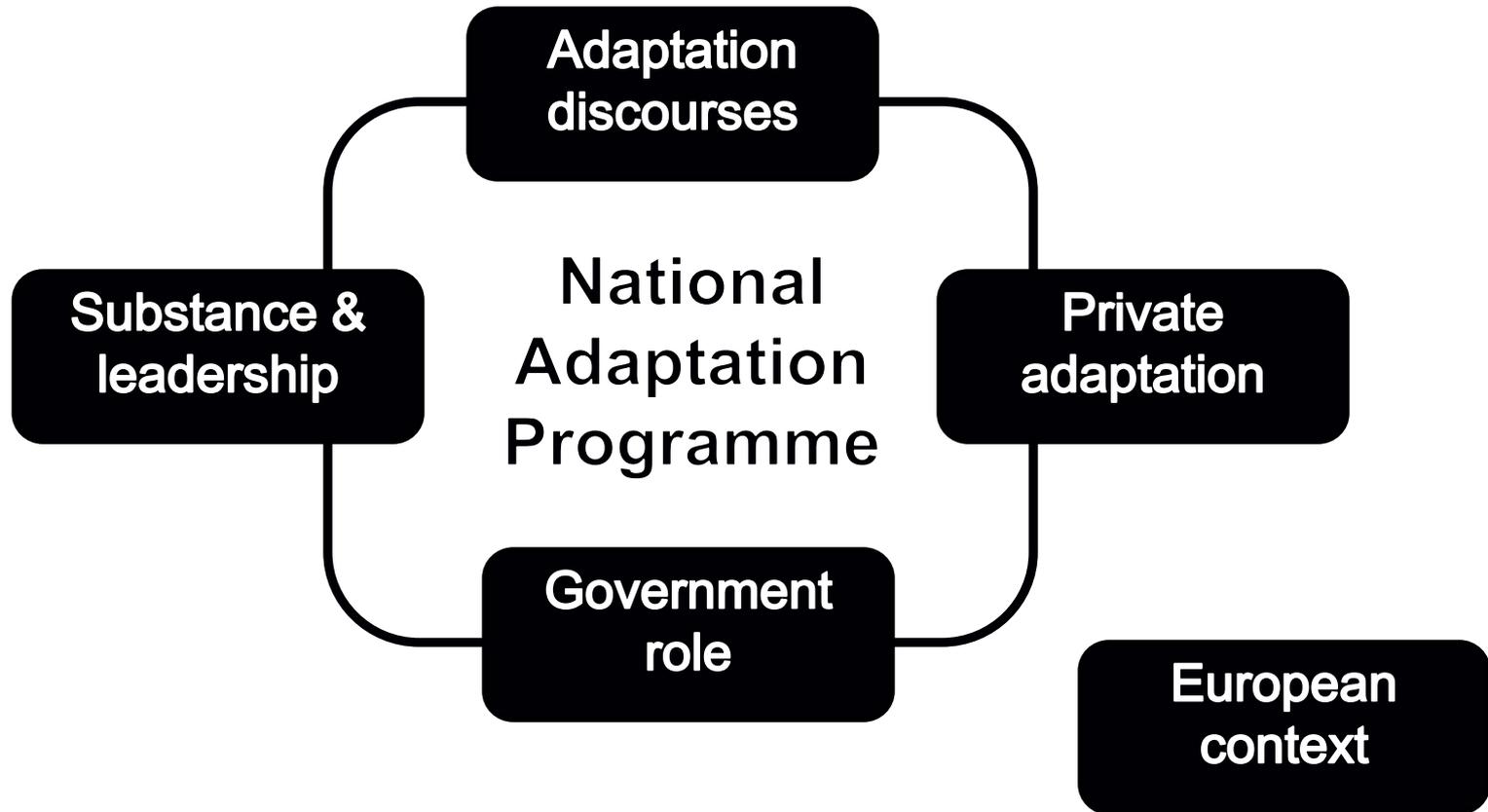
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- Vision: “*a society which makes timely, far-sighted and well-informed decisions to address the risks and opportunities posed by a changing climate*” (NAP, p. 4);
- Drawn up by the government, industry, and other non government organisations working together;
- Mix of policies and actions to help us to adapt successfully to future weather conditions; sectorial focus (e.g. built environment, health, natural environment, business);
- If adapting to climate change is in the private interests of an individual/organisations then it should occur naturally and without the government’s intervention (see Economics of the NAP Annex).

# The National Adaptation Programme (NAP)



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# Changes in the adaptation discourse?



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- **From adaptation to resilience:** Resilience as the ability of system to absorb disturbances while retaining its ways of functioning and “(...) *a capacity to adapt to stress and change*” (NAP, p.111);
  - Lacks detail on what resilience implies for adaptation beyond assuming that they are linked (Annex, p.10).
- **Adaptation is big business:** Global leader in the adaptation industry and “*expertise in weather forecasting, flood modelling, infrastructure & insurance*” (NAP, p. 1);
  - A growth agenda for the UK - £2.1billion contribution to the UK economy and forecast to grow 5% year-on-year; international market for adaptation valued at £66 billion (k-Matrix 2012);
  - Economic opportunities - saving money by managing climate risks; potential to export expertise on adaptation (specialist consultancies).

# Pursuing private adaptation?



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- Market forces and self-interest of actors will lead to appropriate adaptation; “[i]n the absence of factors which may lead a market to function inefficiently, a household or organisation will choose to adapt if the benefit of doing so exceeds the cost” (Annex, p. 2);
- Large body of literature (e.g., behavioural economics) suggests that actors frequently fail to behave rationally and in their self-interest because of factors such as perceived unfairness (de Quervain et al. 2004), framing effects (Tversky and Kahneman 1981), and ambiguity aversion (Ellsberg 1961).
- Adaptation framed around efficiency and too little on effectiveness, equity, and legitimacy (cf. Adger et al. 2005).

# What role for government in adaptation?



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- Emphasis on a collaborative approach through partnerships among a range of actors which are expected to have a role in the delivery of adaptation, as “the government cannot act alone” (NAP, p. 1);
- The collaborative approach, the belief that adaptation will occur ‘autonomously’, and the removal of mandatory adaptation reporting powers by the Secretary of State, suggest a weaker commitment and willingness to exercise governmental powers to ensure effective adaptation;
- For example, the abolishment of NI188 could be considered as evidence of regression or policy dismantling in the area of adaptation (c.f. Jordan et al, 2013).

# Lack of substance and leadership?



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- Many of the NAP actions listed as aspirations rather than concrete actions, e.g. “*Communities and civil society groups to take action to build resilience to extreme weather events and impacts of climate change*” (NAP, p. 148);
- Where does the responsibility and accountability for delivering adaptation lie and how is the evaluation and monitoring of the NAP to be done?
- Virtually no media coverage and government fanfare surrounding the launch of the NAP (no press release; SoS abroad at the time);
- Climate sceptic SoS; de-prioritisation of adaptation at Defra (significant reduction of staff working on adaptation post NAP launch).

# The English NAP in a European context



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- Similarities with the underlying ethos of the Danish NAP:
  - Focus on collaboration, growth, ‘localism’ of adaptation and consequently the drive for individuals and business to take the lead on adaptation;
  - Government as an enabler rather than a direct actor and leader;
- Too vague compared with NAPs from Austria, France, Germany and Finland;
- German and French NAPs: clear emphasis on the role of government and legislative/legal that ensure the implementation of adaptive measures; *‘All activities under the Action Plan will be funded [...] from the budgets of the respective governments’ departments [...]* (BMU, 2011, p. 7).

- Efforts building an adaptation landscape – NAP as a missed opportunity to reassert the UK as a leader in adaptation policy?
- Too much faith put on private autonomous adaptation; should government do more to enable others to take action (policies, funding mechanisms, incentives)?
- Unclear how much stakeholder buy-in the NAP (700 organisations attended workshops + 2 informal consultations);
- Lack of transparent allocation of responsibilities and substantive and concrete policies, measures, and solutions.



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# Thank you

E-mail: [s.dessai@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:s.dessai@leeds.ac.uk)

