

## From Blueprint to Footprint: Climate Change and the Challenge for Planning

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### **Introduction**

Climate change has emerged as a great challenge of our time. The rancorous debate about whether anthropogenic climate change is real is subsiding; the debate now pivots on how humanity might best respond to this challenge. In simple terms, there are two major dimensions to this response: reducing the amount of greenhouse gas emissions (mitigation) and adapting to the impacts of a changing climate (adaptation). Historically, the focus has been on the mitigation or reduction of the amount of greenhouse gas, with adaptation largely neglected.<sup>1</sup> However, more recently there is increasing recognition that adaptation to changing climatic conditions is a fundamental component of the policy equation at the international through to the local and individual scales.<sup>2</sup>

In this chapter, we argue for a rethink of the role of urban and regional planning in the adaptation challenge. Emerging challenges to planning require a move from a rational, comprehensive form of planning that tends to assume it has control over the process and outcome – a ‘blueprint’ – to a style of planning that comprises both fixed and flexible elements, which we call a ‘footprint’. The fixed elements – or the outline of the footprint – would include bold and broad policy and landscape futures over long time horizons with clear direction that supports integration across scales. More flexible elements of the footprint would take account of the scientific uncertainty inherent in climate change and enable greater emphasis to be placed on monitoring ecological change and flexibility in tactics and targets.

1 I Burton, L Bizikova, T Dickinson and Y Howard, ‘Integrating adaptation into policy: upscaling evidence from local to global’, *Climate Policy*, vol 7, 2007, pp 371-376.

2 W Adger, N Arnell and E Tompkins, ‘Successful adaptation to climate change across scales’, *Global Environmental Change*, vol 15(1), 2005, pp 77-86; G Lindseth, *Addressing climate adaptation and mitigation at the local and regional level: lessons for Norway*, Report 3/03, University of Oslo, 2003; and E Wilson, ‘Developing UK spatial planning policy to respond to climate change’, *Journal of Environmental Policy and Planning*, vol 8, 2006, pp 9-26.

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