

Managing private and public adaptation to climate change

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New research has found that individuals and the private sector have an important role to play in the provision of public policies to help society adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Writing in the journal [Global Environmental Change](#), Dr Emma Tompkins and Hallie Eakin from the University of Southampton, say that public investments alone cannot reduce our vulnerability to [climate change](#).

Their research shows evidence of individuals, households, firms and corporations are deliberately supporting the wider public to adapt to climate change by incurring the social costs of the adaptation themselves. This apparently altruistic behaviour is both surprising, and of interest to governments who (given the current financial conditions) may have to rely on private actors (individuals, households, firms and corporations) to enable widespread adaptation to climate change. Adaptations are the processes and actions that enable people to cope better with increasingly challenging weather and climatic conditions – they can play an important role in improving society's climate resilience.

More specifically, Tompkins and Eakin's research found that to generate these public benefits a range of institutional mechanisms are required. This special case of adaptation has been neglected in climate policy so far.

Dr Emma Tompkins, a Reader in Environment and Development at the

University of Southampton, says: "Adaptation to climate change is already occurring, it is being delivered by public and private actors, yet there has been little analysis of this underexplored area, where individuals and private sector groups provide support for public adaptations but see no benefit from the adaptations themselves.

"Actions by individuals and the [private sector](#) will undoubtedly be critical in facilitating public adaptation to climate change. For example, homeowners' decisions to have grassy gardens instead of paved decks can have wider adaptation benefits by enhancing drainage and reducing the risk of urban floods. However, scaling up such activities requires institutional mechanisms such as social contracts, modified sustainability reporting, or new forms of payments and charges for adaptation service provision. "

Provided by University of Southampton

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