



The Adaptation-Mitigation Divide at the local scale

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Overview

- A brief introduction to myself
- An overview of PCAN and its aims
- The Adaptation-Mitigation divide
- A new place-based model for climate action
- Q&A
- Introducing PCAN fellowship research which hopes to work with local authorities in Scotland
- Sandbox focus group
- Summary reports and future engagement possibilities

My Background

- Urban geographer
- 3 interrelated areas of interest:
 - The local politics of climate change and sustainability
 - Legal strategies for place-making
 - International lesson-drawing, particularly from the global south
- Currently involved in projects with Edinburgh City Council (20-minute neighbourhoods) and with the Scottish Government (Self-Build housing)

- Doctoral Research with local government in Lusaka and Sacramento
- Post-Doctoral Research with local government in Edinburgh and Shanghai
- Failure of top-down policy on sustainability and climate change and the embrace of grassroots strategies of change and renewal
- Local governments the most dynamic and adaptable organisations on the planet





**PLACE-BASED
CLIMATE ACTION
NETWORK**

**EDINBURGH
CLIMATE
COMMISSION**

- Network of universities and local authority partnerships seeking to accelerate climate action ‘on the ground’
- Multi-stakeholder Climate ‘Commissions’ in Belfast, Edinburgh and Leeds
- Thematic platforms on finance and business engagement
- Recently established platform on adaptation
- But what does ‘place’ mean? What counts (and does not count) as ‘place’?
- Important to avoid top-down models that see all places as the same: The focus on place as a scale detracts from the differences between places

Questions about local governance and climate change

Why local solutions to a global problem?

Are the required powers available at the local level?

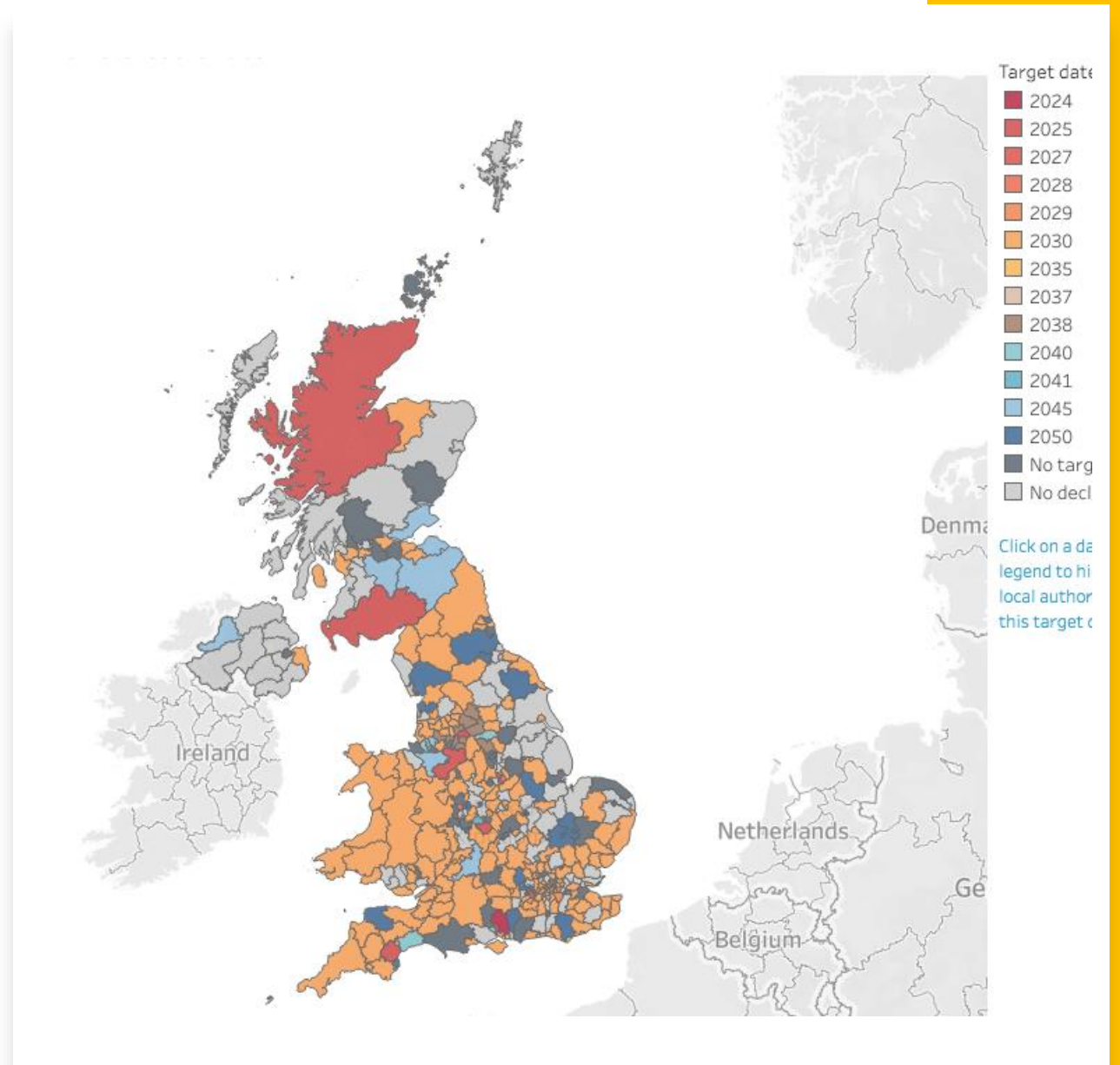
Why the emphasis on mitigation?

What would the impact of actions at this scale be?

Who is set to benefit from these actions?

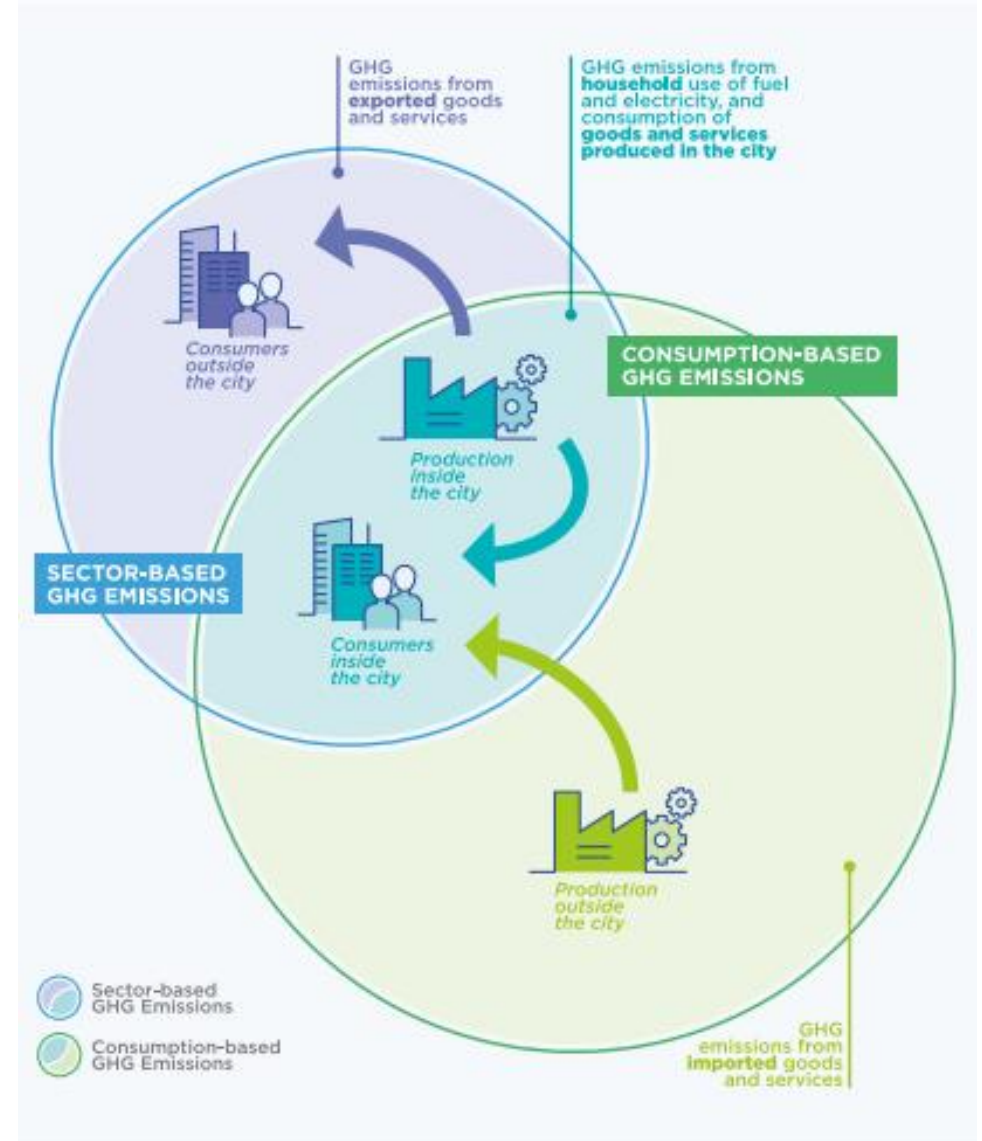
The devolution of emission reduction policies

- How should we be responding to an 'emergency'?
- Declarations caught between being a call for help by local authorities and a commitment to 'do their bit'
- What are the local levers for mitigation action?
- Mitigation perhaps a redundant concept at the local scale:
 1. Impacts are already being felt
 2. The problem has already been identified, now we need to adapt our lives accordingly.



Adaptation makes more sense for the local scale

- Air Pollution is a far greater burden on local government than CO2
- Green Space and Tree Planting: offsetting or adaptation?
- ‘Scope 3’ emissions connect closely to behaviour changes that coalesce at the local scale and overlap with themes of adaptation.
- Addressing these problems offers clear feedback loops for acting



Beyond an and/or Approach

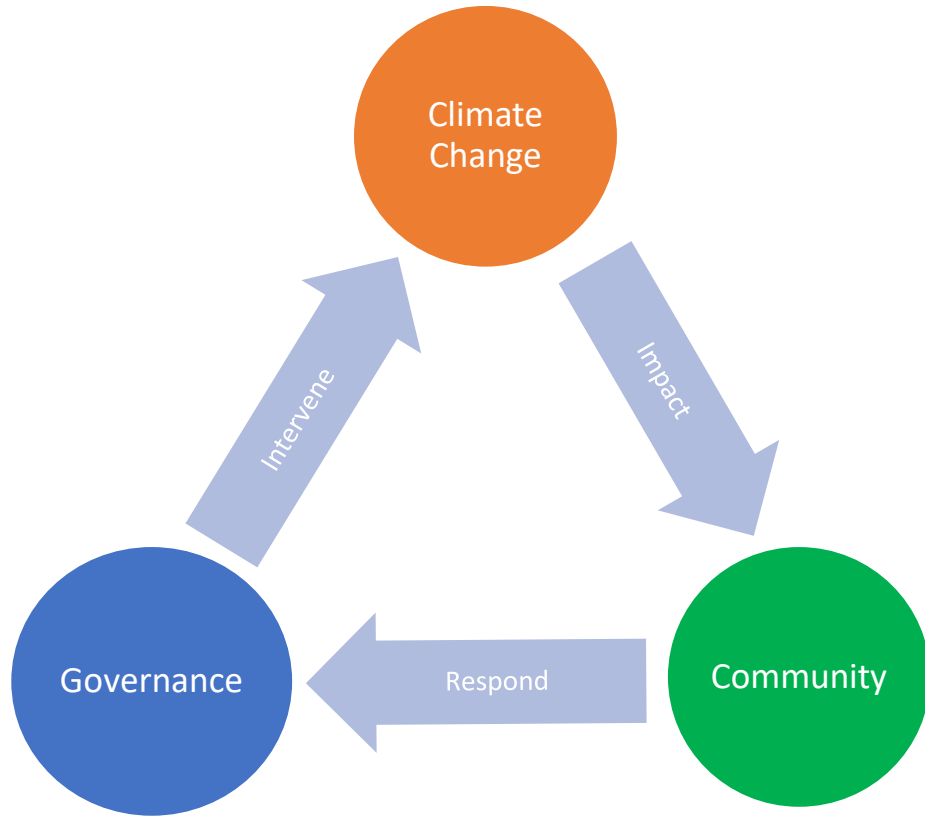
- Adaptation AS Mitigation
- Devolve climate change decision making to individuals and communities
- Give more stakeholders the capacity to act (less systemic)
- Creating space and opportunities for adaptive capacity through innovation diffusion and collaboration (Lane et al. 2020)
- Facilitating adaptive places can lead to reduced emissions (shorter travel distances, communal energy production and consumption, appreciation for future needs)



Rethinking Mitigation and Adaptation

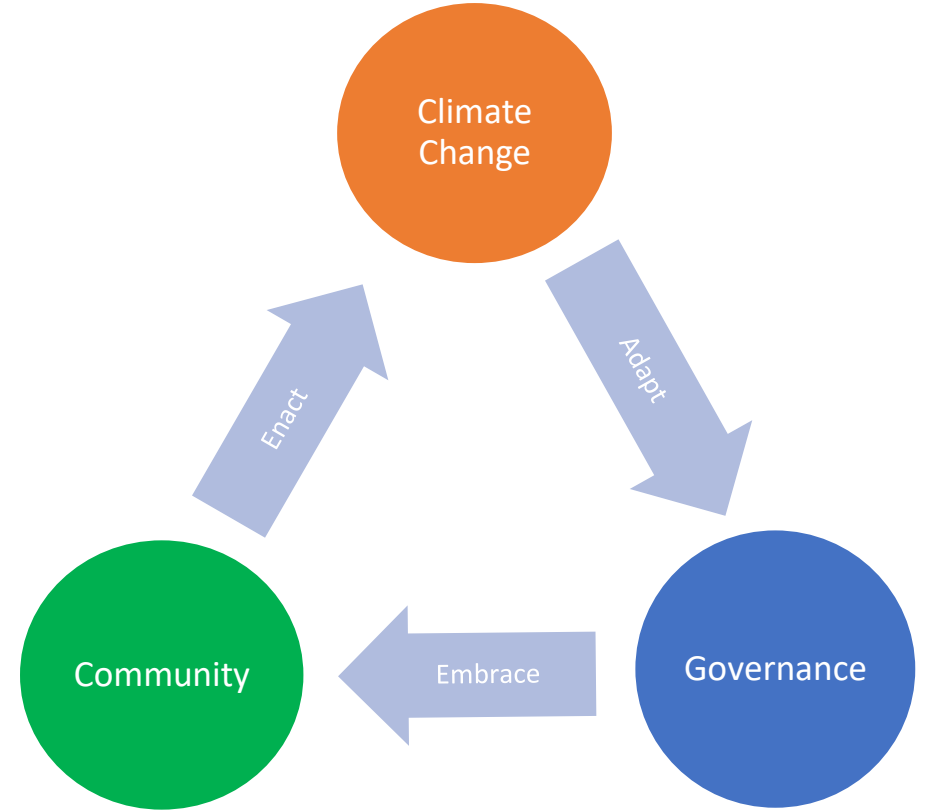
- Mainstream mitigation is framed as encouraging people to do less of certain things (e.g less travelling, less energy use)
- Mainstream adaptation is framed as a need for governments to do more of certain things (e.g planning and building new infrastructure)
- What if local approaches looked at this in the opposite way?
- Local authorities as place-based stakeholders:
 - Community wealth building + Adaptive space facilitation
 - Adaptation as Planning *with* (rather than *for*) Climate Change?

Current approach



Siloed / Derived from mitigation thinking

Alternative approach



Systemic / Starts with adaptation



Questions?



PCAN Fellowship Project

Place and Adaptation: Systemic changes in local governance post-covid



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Exploring Systemic Change in Practice

- What would a re-framing of local government's responsibility when it comes to adaptation look like in practice?
- How can we avoid maladaptation and lock-in by taking a more enabling approach to adaptation governance focused on allowing constant change and renewal?

Project Themes

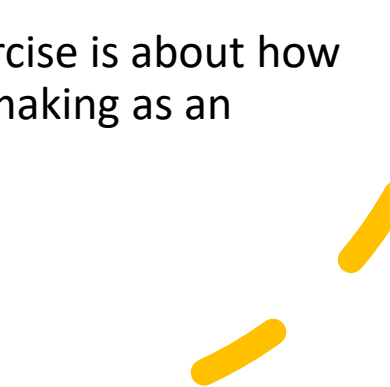
- I am not focusing on barriers TO adaptation whereby we define adaptation and then identify barriers to it (Moser and Ekstrom 2010), but our ongoing resistance to uncertainty
- I am also not focussing on strategic council 'priorities', but on the way adaptation is a part of everyday decision making across local authority activities
- Land use as something local government has real control over.
- So I want to examine some of the least adaptable outputs of our existing system and reflect on how we can resist these outputs in the future
- Finally, opportunities to learn from COVID-19 where adaptation has been necessary.

Anti-Adaptive Neighbourhoods (AAN's)

- Jane Jacobs – Pioneering American Urban Theorist and planner
- AAN's as a modern, 20th century phenomenon - top-down approaches to neighbourhood design and delivery
- Legacy council housing: cycles of demolish, relocate, rebuild
- New Build Developer Estates: Continue to promote high emission lifestyles
- AAN's prevent places from doing what they do best...adapt to uncertainty



This is where
I need your
help!

- And your job is (hopefully) a simple one!
 - I am going to paint a picture of a more adaptive approach to placemaking, and you are going to tell me why I am being a typical academic detached from real-world reality...!
 - And this might be because:
 - You are already doing the things I am suggesting
 - The anti-adaptive story I have presented is not something you recognize or agree with
 - You feel this is beyond your remit as someone who focuses on climate change
 - You see real barriers to the more adaptive picture I am painting
 - And don't worry if you are not a planner, this exercise is about how those involved in climate change perceive place-making as an opportunity for change (or not!)
 - Focus group and Miro Board
https://miro.com/app/board/o9J_ITeREnc=/
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Anti-Adaptive

Climate Change Action

Adaptive

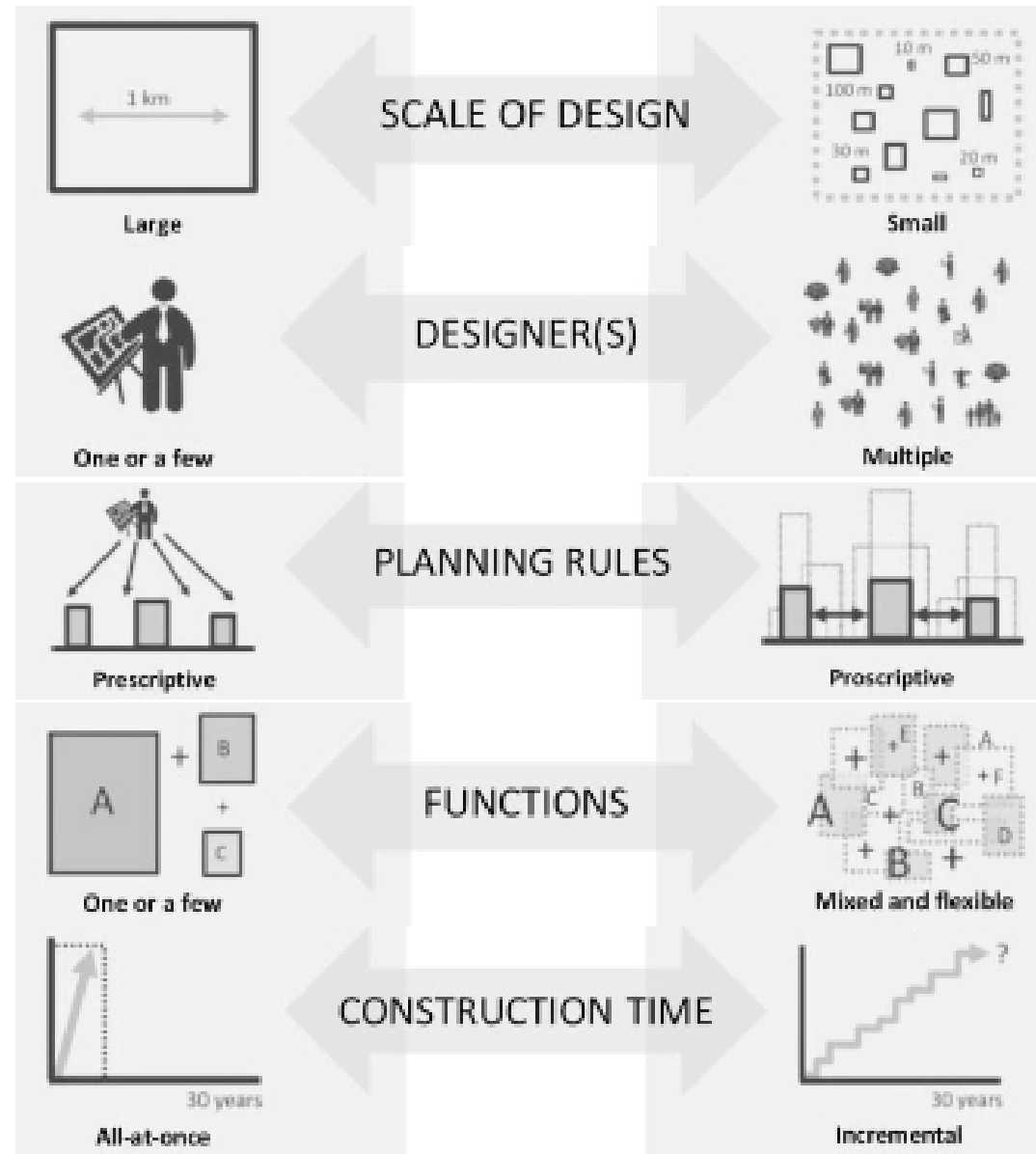
Entire neighbourhoods designed at once

Tender for single architect / design contractor

Land use regulations imposed on individual parcels

Separation of uses / difficult to change uses in the future

Development built out on predetermined timescales



Design delivered 1 parcel at a time

Current and future residents are the designers

We only assess the appropriateness of land use at the point of delivery

We allow constantly changing land uses

We no longer set delivery timescales

Next Steps

- Summary briefing from today's session
- Ongoing feedback welcomed
- Hope to carry out more engaged work alongside 1 or 2 local authorities interested in being involved with the research
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