

## The dimensions of adaptation

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Adaptation to environmental risks and opportunities is an ubiquitous and ever existing social practice. In past schools of thinking, the issue of the influence of climate on society was subject to broad concepts of environmental determinism. People were thought to be in equilibrium with "their" climate. In modern times the issue has resurfaced as the more practical question how a changing climate would influence social and economic conditions. What is the impact of changing climate, and how would, or should, societies respond properly? One option is to adapt to risks, opportunities and changes.

The concept of adaptation has at least two dimensions. One is the role of adaptation, in comparison to that of mitigation, in the **public and the scientific debate**. To what extent is this debate determined by scientific issues and to what extent by social and cultural constructions? The other dimension is made up of practical considerations - which **adaptation options** exist? These considerations have something to do with specific time periods, regionally specific changes. Scenarios, downscaling, regional detection and attribution, vulnerability, communication are key concepts in this context.

See also: Hans von Storch, 2004: On adaptation. An essay about our perceptions and responses to the concern of anthropogenic climate change. <http://coast.gkss.de/staff/storch/pdf/engelberg.doc>. Academia Engelberg, 29.9. - 1.10.2004, Engelberg, Switzerland,