



A problem-oriented approach to understanding adaptation: lessons learnt from Alpine Shire, Victoria Australia.

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Climate change is gaining attention as a significant strategic issue for localities that rely on their business sectors for economic viability. For businesses in the tourism sector, considerable research effort has sought to characterise the vulnerability to the likely impacts of future climate change through scenarios or 'end-point' approaches (Kelly & Adger, 2000). Whilst useful, there are few demonstrable case studies that complement such work with a 'start-point' approach that seeks to explore contextual vulnerability (O'Brien et al., 2007). This broader approach is inclusive of climate change as a process operating within a biophysical system and allows recognition of the complex interactions that occur in the coupled human-environmental system.

A problem-oriented and interdisciplinary approach was employed at Alpine Shire, in northeast Victoria Australia, to explore the concept of contextual vulnerability and adaptability to stressors that include, but are not limited to climatic change. Using a policy sciences approach, the objective was to identify factors that influence existing vulnerabilities and that might consequently act as barriers to effective adaptation for the Shire's business community involved in the tourism sector. Analyses of results suggest that many threats, including the effects climate change, compete for the resources, strategy and direction of local tourism management bodies. Further analysis of conditioning factors revealed that many complex and interacting factors define the vulnerability and adaptive capacity of the Shire's tourism sector to the challenges of global change, which collectively have more immediate implications for policy and planning than long-term future climate change scenarios. An approximation of the common interest, i.e. enhancing capacity in business acumen amongst tourism operators, would facilitate adaptability and sustainability through the enhancement of social capital in this business community.

Kelly, P. M., & Adger, W. N. (2000). Theory and practice in assessing vulnerability to climatic change and facilitating adaptation. *Climatic Change*, 47, 325-352.

O'Brien, K., Eriksen, S., Nygaard, L. P., & Schjolden, A. (2007). Why different interpretations of vulnerability matter in climate change discourses. *Climate Policy*, 7, 73-88.