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The techno-finance fix: A critical analysis of international and regional environmental policy documents and their implications for planning

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ABSTRACT

This article is concerned with the interaction of international, regional and national policy on climate change and sustainability, and the implications of these policy dimensions for planning. With the scientific consensus pointing to unequivocal human influence on the ecosystem, the issue of how best to manage climate change and ecological sustainability is arguably now a matter for economic, political, policy and planning domains. However, despite the warnings of scientists that 'business as usual' economic accumulation is no longer an option, this analysis of international and regional policy suggests that in the main, solutions are proffered that merely shift forms of capital accumulation and enforce 'business as usual', rather than providing transformative trajectories to plan for climate change adaptation and mitigation.

This article traces key documents from an international level including United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports, to EU regional policy, and sectoral policy at a sample national level. This is with a view to providing a theoretical backdrop, and a summary of selected relevant documentation that planners may be required to consider with respect to climate change issues. This article may therefore be considered in part, as a 'map' of the policy landscape for planners, highlighting the policy tensions and the conflicts that exist between international, regional and national levels of policymaking. These tensions largely lie between the areas of economic and ecological stability, and usually fail to reconcile contradictions between economic growth and protection of the ecosystem.

The article introduces the concept of the 'techno-finance fix' to analyse and critique the dominant solutions to climate change. These solutions involve a dovetailing of a hope in emergent, new and not-yet-existing technologies, with a hope that the markets will fund the correct types of technological innovation deemed necessary to mitigate climate change. Therefore, the implications for planning involve an imperative to respond to climate change, and knowledge in the key aspects of climate change policy. However, the response at a planning level depends on which dominant narratives are being forwarded from the top down at a multi-layered policy level. This work therefore suggests that the 'techno-finance fix' is a dominant approach to climate change mitigation and adaptation, and that planning for climate change is thus informed by this dominant narrative, to the marginalising of alternative solutions, including those outside the market or technology.

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1. Documents analysed and hierarchical structure proposed

1.1. Documents analysed

International [United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change \(1992\)](#)
Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change:
Summary for Policymakers from Working groups I (2013), II (2014a), III (2014b)
World Bank Turn Down the Heat:
Why a 4 °C Warmer World Must Be Avoided (2012)

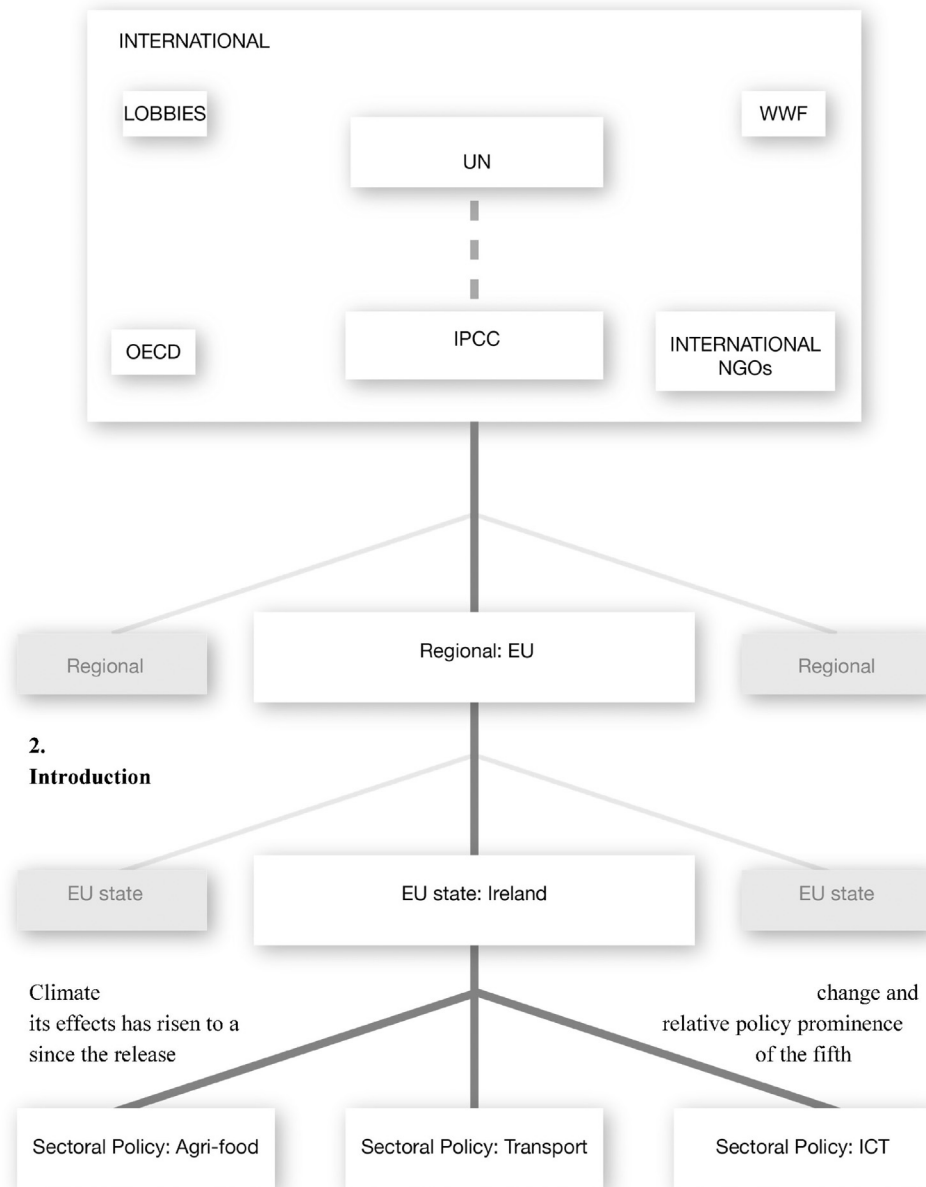
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Climate Extremes, Regional Impacts, and the Case for Resilience (2013)
 Confronting the New Climate Normal (2014)
 WWF Living Planet
 OECD Towards Green Growth (2011)
 United Nations Resilient People Resilient Planet (2012)
 Regional: EU Policies to Encourage Sustainable Consumption (European Commission/Bio Intelligence Service, 2012)
 7th Environmental Action Plan titled Living Well Within the Limits of Our Planet (European Commission, 2013)
 EEA Signals (European Environment Agency, 2014)
 European Council Conclusions on 2030 Climate and Energy Policy Framework (2014)
 National: Ireland Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Bill 2015

Sectoral: Food Harvest 2020 (Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, 2010)
 Agri-food Our Sustainable Future (Department of Environment, Transport and ICT, Community and Local Government, ND)
 ICT Smarter Travel (Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, 2009)
 Irish National Spatial Strategy
 Energy in Ireland 1990–2013 (Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland, 2014)

1.2. Hierarchical structure of proposed interplay of documents



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