

The role of metropolitan regional institutions in the governance of climate adaptation: evidence from three European cases

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Wildfires in France during the drought, August 2022

Source: NYT



Heatwave in Milan, June 2022

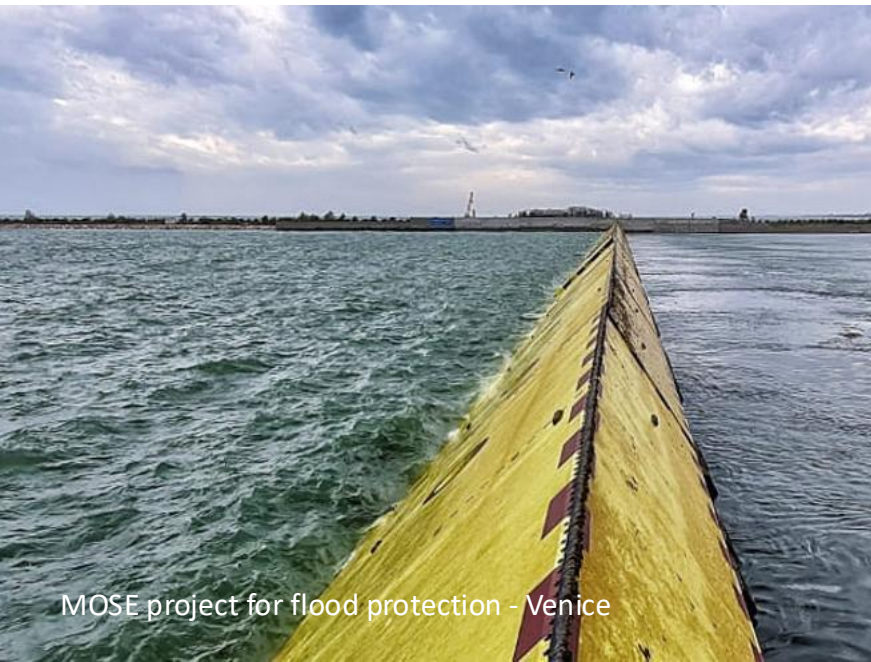
Source: ESA

Land surface temperature
19 June 2022

Cities are increasingly dealing with effects of climate change

As the effects of climate change are increasingly felt in cities around the world, **initiatives to prepare and adapt to climate impacts are more and more part of urban agendas.**

Municipal information and assistance campaign against heat stress - Pescara



MOSE project for flood protection - Venice

Local and regional governments are responding with a variety of approaches: stand-alone strategies, plans, integrating adaptation in other policy sectors, taking a variety of hard and soft measures.



What about the metropolitan scale?

As large urban areas comprising a core city (or multiple) and its commuting zone, **metropolitan areas are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change** due to concentration of population, built environment, critical infrastructure, human activities.

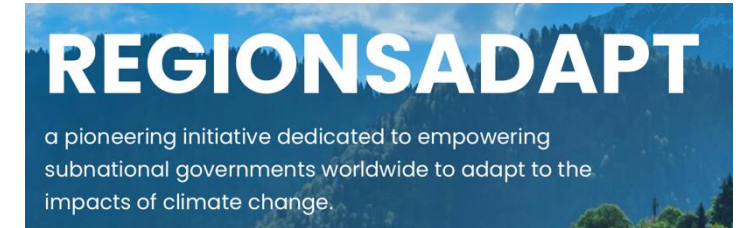


1. **Metropolitan-level authorities and institutions are starting to have a role in climate adaptation**
2. They are **producing own strategies and policies** or integrating adaptation in other sectors, using a range of formal/informal arrangements between different actors (e.g., networks, associations)
3. These policymaking processes are often **led by metropolitan governments** or metropolitan (sectoral) agencies **but can also be the result of more informal or flexible inter-municipal arrangements**, often also involving other actors such as private stakeholders and civil society.

Policy frameworks and tools for metropolitan and regional adaptation

Efforts to support adaptation planning at the metropolitan regional scale are also put forward by **transnational organizations and institutions**:

- **Supporting regional adaptation is one of the 5 EU Missions**, ambitious goals to achieve by 2030
- Paris Agreement established the **Global Goal on Adaptation**, which has recognized the role of subnational actors
- **Regions4**, a global network representing subnational governments in climate fora such as the UNFCCC and organizing advocacy, networking, and capacity building initiatives
- Many **national governments** are setting up **climate adaptation online platforms** (modeled after the EU-level Climate-ADAPT) to share information, case studies, regulatory frameworks and guidelines – your country may have one!



**Swedish Portal
for Climate Change Adaptation**



Typical cycle for regional/metropolitan adaptation planning



Regional Adaptation Support Tool (EC & EEA)

Some key points:

- Adaptation policies should be based on comprehensive **assessment of climate risks and vulnerabilities** – every place is different!
- **Mainstreaming** and connection with other policies: **climate adaptation should not be treated as a stand-alone policy** but more as a consideration relevant to each policy or plan!
- **Monitoring and evaluation is essential** to adjust adaptation efforts to changing conditions and to understand what works and how – however **it is not as widespread as it should!**

A stylized, multi-colored map of a metropolitan area. The map features a central river flowing from the top center towards the bottom right. The surrounding land is divided into various colored zones: a large blue area in the top left, a tan area in the center, a red area in the bottom left, and a green area in the bottom right. The map is overlaid with a white text box containing the title. The overall style is that of a vector-based map with bold outlines and flat colors.

Challenges faced by metropolitan areas in planning for adaptation

Political and institutional barriers for metropolitan areas

Metropolitan areas and their governance organizations often face challenges related to:

- Administrative fragmentation
- Lack of extensive statutory powers
- Lack of fiscal autonomy by metropolitan authorities
- Overlapping jurisdictions between municipal, metropolitan, provincial, and regional governments



However

This should not discourage you: there is a renewed interest in the subnational territorial scale → **subnational actors are also an increasingly important part of international climate governance**, particularly since the 2015 Paris Agreement.

Intra-metropolitan differences and divergences

There are significant **differences between municipalities**, including their varying needs and differences in terms of resources and capacity to deal with adaptation independently.

- Support from higher levels of government has in fact been shown to be of particular importance to smaller and mid-sized municipalities, which may have less access to resources or capacity to pursue them on their own.

Coordination and **cooperation between metropolitan cores and hinterlands on adaptation is often lacking:**

- This specific type of coordination **could be fostered by metropolitan institutions** in the context of broader, regional-scale, agreements.

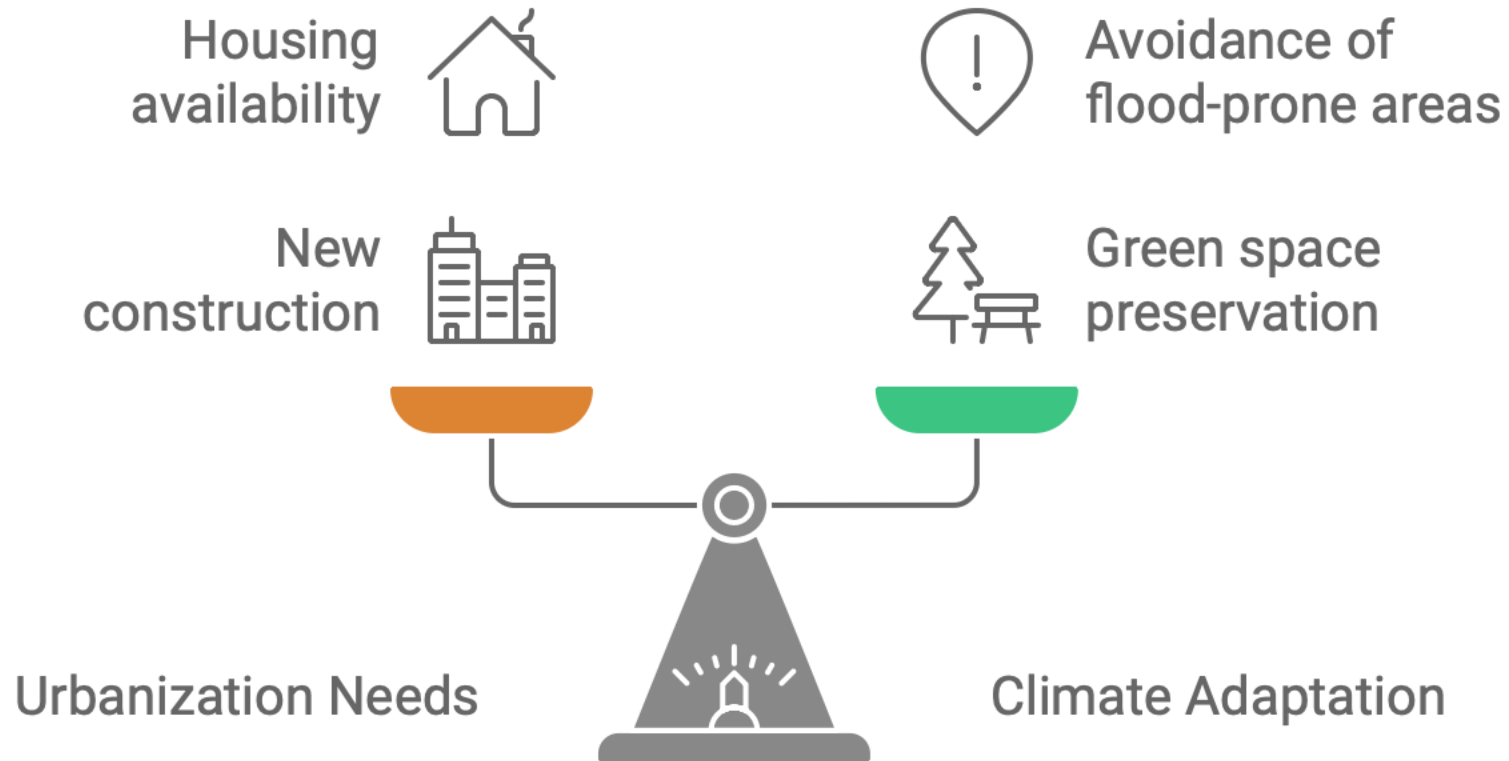


Large Municipality



Small Municipality

Presence of competing priorities

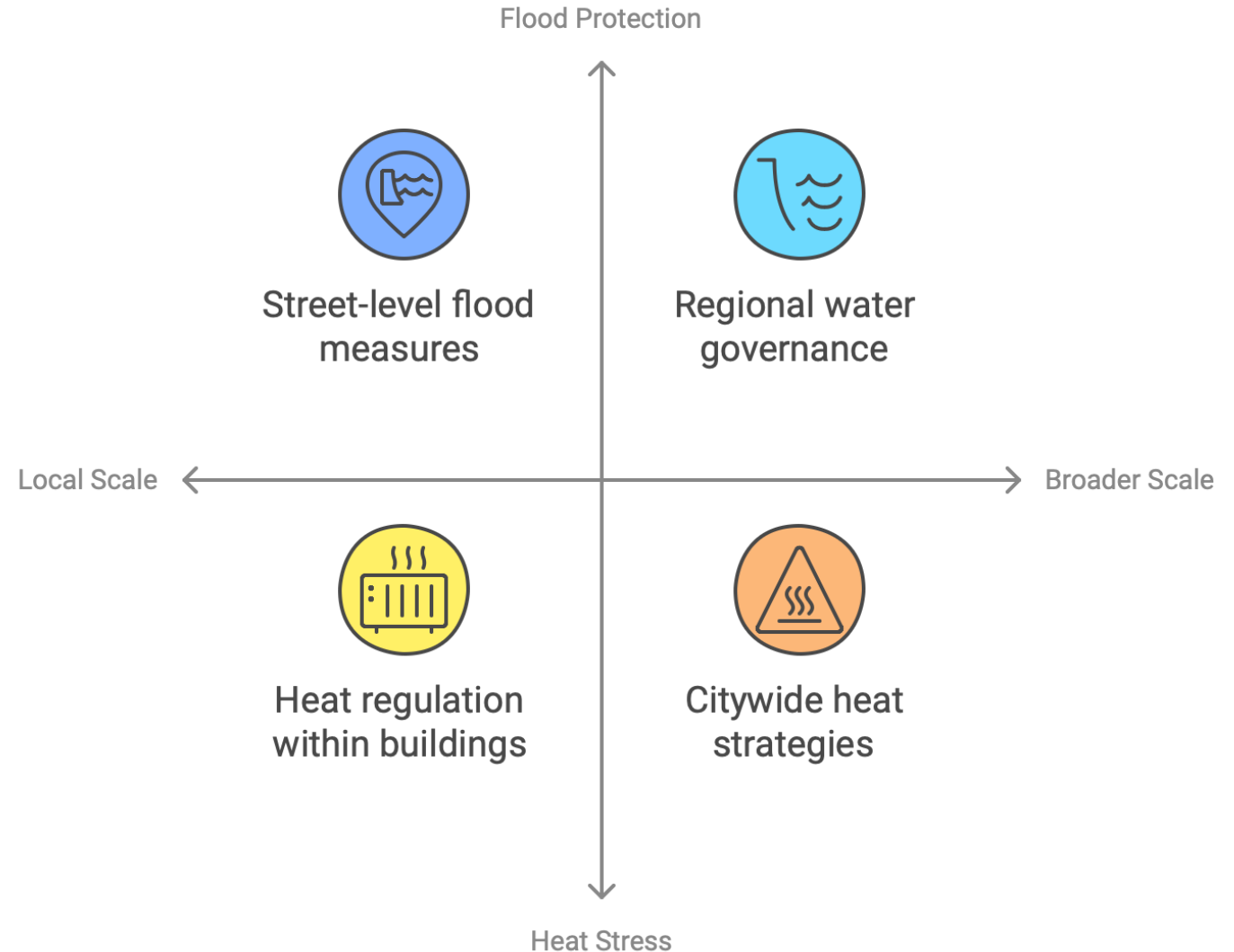


Challenges in balancing urbanization and adaptation needs

Different geographical scopes

Different issues related to climate adaptation can have **different geographical scopes** depending on the phenomenon and approach, even within the metropolitan area.

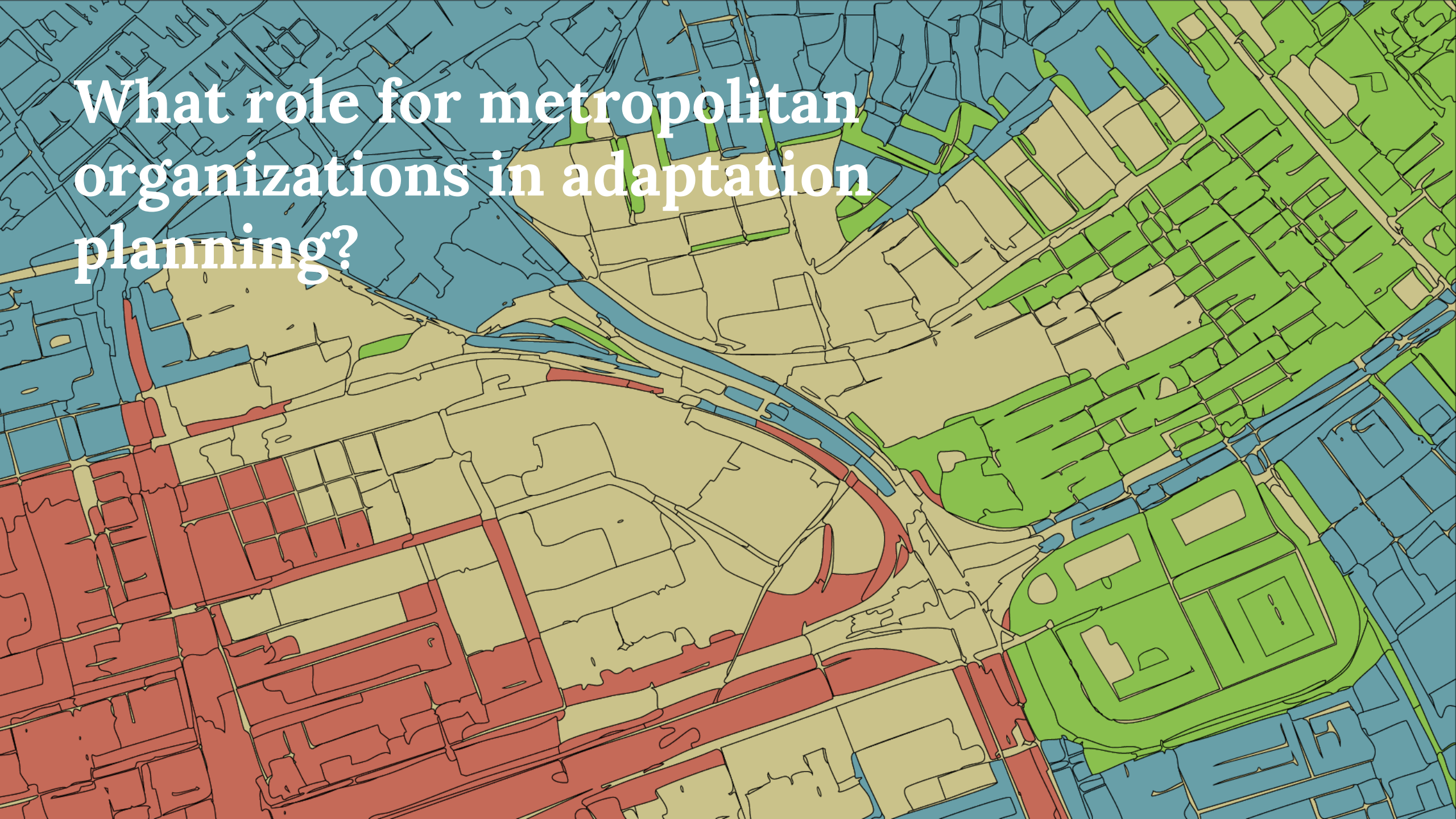
- Different governance structures and **flexible arrangements** should be therefore considered.
- However, not much evidence of this from the results → **room for improvement and innovation**



Under-considered municipal perspectives

Problem for municipalities	Potential role for metropolitan institutions
Lack of resources (and time) to dedicate to adaptation initiatives due to understaffing, and consequent reliance on outsourcing, especially for smaller municipalities	Strengthen planning support, alleviating the burden for municipalities (e.g., providing basic data for free to all)
Practical concerns on availability and usability of data , including issue of lack of time to develop analyses	Consider direct usability and applicability of analyses by municipalities, to avoid perpetuation of information barriers (including examples of adaptation measures)
Lack of clarity regarding the distribution of responsibilities among different actors: both a legal and political challenge, e.g. difficulties in engaging with property owners	Be sensitive to municipalities' needs and legal and organizational capacities: roles should be clearly and realistically defined

What role for metropolitan
organizations in adaptation
planning?



Roles of metropolitan institutions in climate adaptation

Overall, the research has confirmed that, across different governance systems, there is both the **need** and the space **for metropolitan institutions to have a role** in climate adaptation governance. **Despite differences** in metropolitan governance models and adaptation governance systems, the results show 3 main roles adopted by all analyzed institutions.

Specifically, these are:

- 1. Agenda-setting:** providing direction and guidance to municipalities and other actors operating in the metropolitan region.
- 2. Connection:** facilitating the creation of relations between actors involved in adaptation policymaking at different scales and for several purposes.
- 3. Brokerage:** providing necessary knowledge or resources by way of the intermediate position held.

1. Agenda setting

Putting metropolitan/regional climate adaptation **on the political agenda** and **supporting other actors** in doing so.

Some examples:

- **Mainstreaming** adaptation considerations in **existing planning tools** (e.g. Territorial Plan of the Metropolitan City of Milan), to which municipalities must adhere.
- **Building a common knowledge base** to frame and situate the problem of adaptation in the region for the benefit of all stakeholders, such as climate impact and vulnerability analyses, which can be included in a regional adaptation strategy or plan.
- Developing and providing **specific and tangible examples of climate adaptation measures** that are appropriate to the region, for instance by implementing **pilot projects** or having specific guidelines, in order to promote independent uptake of similar measures by other actors, such as municipalities.

2. Connection

By way of their **intermediate position** in the governmental ladder, as well as their varied institutional nature and organization, metropolitan institutions are well-situated to facilitate the development of relations between actors participating in climate adaptation governance, to **create a more integrated metropolitan adaptation governance system**.

Some examples:

- Facilitating **territorial dialogue** on the topic, by fostering peer-to-peer exchange and inter-municipal coordination → e.g., hosting meetings for local administrators
- Connecting the region to **other levels of government**, functioning as a sort of aggregator of territorial needs or demands, also in partnership with other metropolitan institutions or regions. This connection can also work to **upscale any successful experimental measures** adopted at the metropolitan scale.
- Organizing and **hosting exchange between technical actors and administrations**, e.g., involving universities and researchers, but possibly also other knowledge holders, as well as national institutions, water companies, for support in developing solutions that are evidence-based and respond to local adaptation needs, as well as implementation.

3. Brokerage

Metropolitan institutions can also mobilize their **intermediary position to provide necessary resources or services and manage them more efficiently**, e.g. elaborating and distributing climate impacts data and vulnerability analyses for the region or supporting the uptake of adaptation measures with funding.

Some examples:

- Distributing **financial resources** or set up **mechanisms to support municipalities in pursuing them**, for instance through partnerships to participate in funding calls.
- Elaborate and **distribute climate impacts data and vulnerability analyses for the region**, with an emphasis of **direct usability** of this information by the target actors, namely municipalities.
- **Hosting services** that can be better managed at a higher scale for greater efficiency (e.g., centralized climate and territorial data management), since currently many municipalities are not equipped to manage them on their own, with consequent lack of uptake.
- Mobilizing own knowledge base to provide **awareness-raising activities and training** for administrators and planning professionals.

Final remarks

- **Metropolitan organizations can be involved in climate adaptation at different levels**, from providing strategic guidance to actually implementing solutions, depending also on their legal powers.
- One key question to consider is **how can you support other regional actors**, namely municipalities, **in their efforts**? What is directly in your power to influence?
- Working on adaptation in your organization **will involve cross-sectoral and cross-department work**: addressing complex problems such as climate change adaptation requires time and effort, but it pays off in terms of overall policy coherence and impact!
- **Involving municipalities and other actors** also requires time and coordination efforts, but in absence of any other authority charged with this responsibility, metropolitan organizations have a great opportunity to have an impact.

Reading suggestions / resources

- **Climate-ADAPT** (EU platform for adaptation), section on regional and local governments <https://climate-adapt.eea.europa.eu/en/mission/the-mission/regions-and-local-authorities>
- **RegionsAdapt**, adaptation initiative by Regions4 <https://regions4.org/regionsadapt/>
- Look for **national adaptation online platforms**

Thank you!

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