

# Barriers to local level climate change adaptation amongst poor communities in Africa: What do we know and what does this mean for adaptation?

Findings from a literature review

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# What kinds of studies mentioned barriers to local adaptation?

- Diverse set of studies differing in focus, scale and approach.
  - Only a handful specifically set out to look at barriers - these considered mainly psychological, cultural barriers and cross-scale barriers.
  - Small-holder farmers dominated.
  - More rural than urban studies.
  - Barriers to autonomous adaptation more attention than planned.
- Studies on perceptions of climate change amongst local people often made mention of cognitive, cultural and informational factors that could act as constraints on weather forecast uptake and use.
- The majority of cases were from Southern Africa (39), followed by East Africa (17) and then West and Central Africa (14).

# What types of barriers emerged? Studies on small-holders

- Most were broadly relevant to improved agricultural production and rural development rather than CC specifically and have been explored outside of the climate change literature.
- The vast majority appear to be beyond poor farmers' control and a consequence of poverty, low levels of development, inappropriate policies and inadequate governance systems.

## Financial/ Technological

Poverty  
**Lack of credit and  
uneven access**  
Inability to afford  
inputs and new  
technologies

## Informational

Insufficient information  
on new technologies  
and alternative farming  
practices  
**Weather**  
Alternative crops  
**Lack of skills**

## Biophysical (overlaps with contextual)

Water availability  
**Shortage of land**  
Soil quality  
**Pest and diseases**  
Poor roads  
**Disintegrating  
infrastructure**

## Governance/ institutional

Insecure tenure  
**Poor market access**  
Corruption and  
inequitable access  
to support  
**Poor quality of  
seeds from  
government**  
Poor delivery of  
basic services

## Social and political

Theft, crime  
**Elite capture**  
Conflict  
**Poor organisational capacity**

# What types of barriers emerged? Specific studies on particular types of barriers

- Social and informational barriers to adaptation were less well-studied and there are less examples.

## Cognitive/ psychological

Risk perception  
Perceived abilities  
Beliefs systems  
(Gods will)  
Climate outside of  
one's control  
Lack of confidence  
Underestimation of  
severity of changes

## Cultural Identity

Entrenchment of normal ways of  
doing things

## Institutional

Elite capture  
Poor survival of institutions without social  
roots  
Neglect of institutional requirements for  
new technology  
Restrictive institutions and norms  
(gender)  
Political and financial power of some  
groups  
Exclusion from decision making

## Informational

Semantics and  
language  
Framings  
Neglect of IK  
Mismatches between  
local and scientific  
knowledge - mistrust

# What types of barriers emerged? Studies highlighting barriers related to poorly planned and governed externally supported adaptation

External support that disregards the logic of people's own adaptation strategies

**Too much focus on technical skills and failure to address critical social factors**

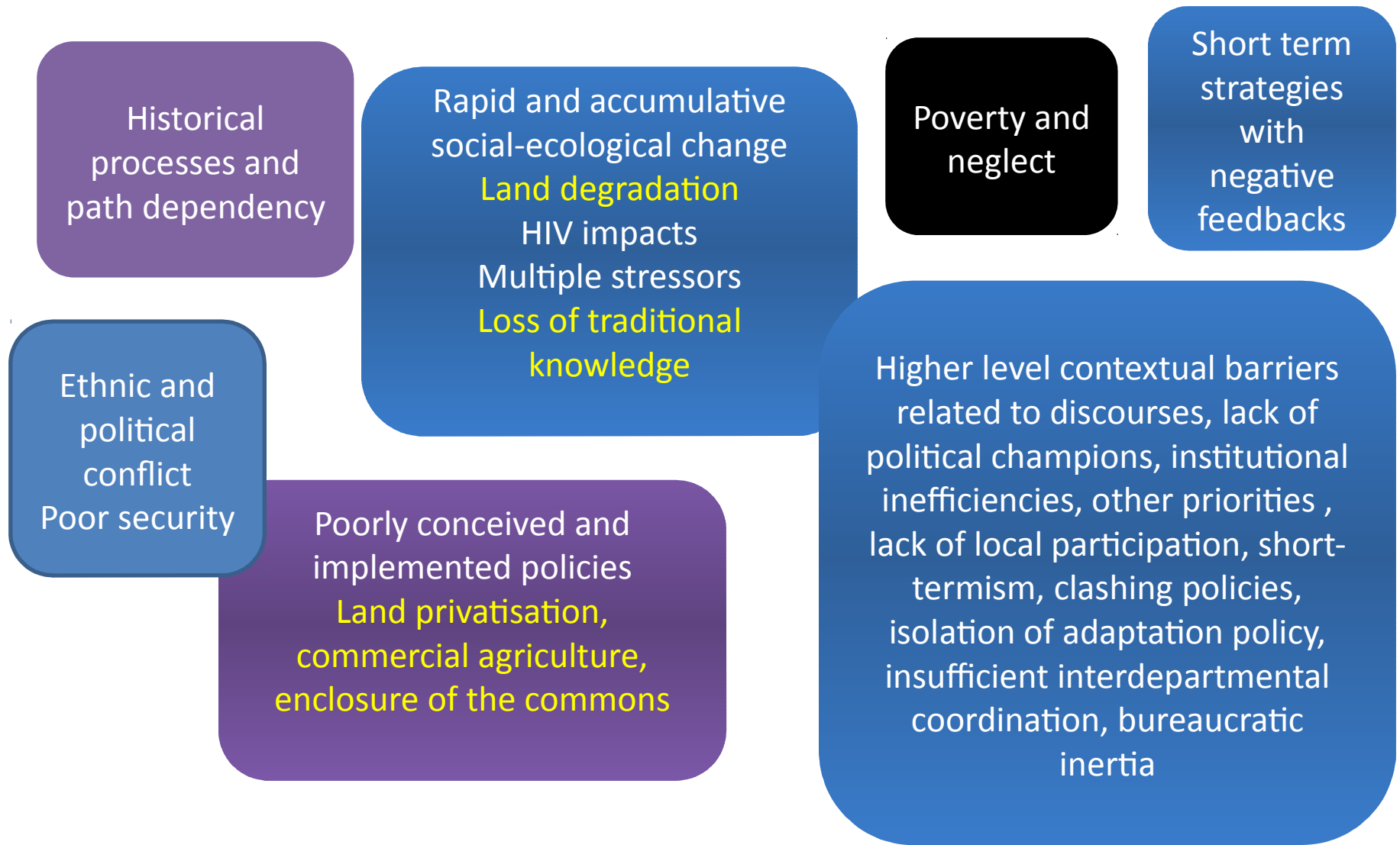
Little attention given to building local agency and innovation, opportunities for learning

**Neglect of more inclusive processes of dialogue and negotiation**

Poor attention to local values and what is valued

# What types of barriers emerged? 'Contextual' barriers

- A category we introduced that considers context and start point vulnerability as a barrier



# Where were the gaps and what future research is needed?

- While most studies identified several barriers, appreciation of their interactions and compounded impacts on adaptation remains scarce.
  - How do barriers act together to hinder adaptation and can they in concert pose limits for some people?
  - How can addressing barriers at a higher level may remove obstacles at a lower level or alternatively amplify them?
  - Do some adaptation options have more barriers than others and why?
- Urgency for attention to political and structural barriers at higher spatial and institutional levels as well as to social barriers at the local level.
  - Limited material from Africa on the role of worldviews, values and sense of place and identity in influencing adaptation. – needs work.
  - The role of conflicts, vested interests and power relations in blocking adaptation, especially for the most marginalized, needs further study.
- Limited effort to organize barriers around how they hinder specific types of adaptation actions such as diversification, pooling, migration or intensification, etc. Need better understanding between barriers and adaptation and adaptive capacity.
  - What barriers emerge around specific types of adaptation strategies?

# Where were the gaps and what future research is needed?

- Need to understand the heterogeneity of impacts from barriers on different sectors of society better (gender, age, class, and ethnicity).
  - How does successful adaptation among more privileged members of society impinge on adaptation choices of the more marginalized?
  - What types of support are needed to help the most vulnerable to adapt?
- We have limited understanding of the role of trade-offs in adaptation decision making, and how choices of options is influenced by factors such as lack of information, cognitive barriers (preferences, aversion to certain options, priorities), institutional barriers (who has a voice) and financial factors (costs).
  - Need to understand how barriers influence trade-offs/choices between different adaptation approaches and options and how this impacts the most vulnerable.
- How does understanding contextual barriers influence thinking about adaptation strategies and building adaptive capacity.
  - What adaptation options are more likely to be accepted in particular contexts?
  - Given the occurrence of poverty traps in Africa, how might adaptive social protection programmes remove barriers for the most disadvantaged?
  - In what situations/conditions are particular barriers are likely to emerge?
- Little work on overcoming barriers and on enablers.
  - When exploring enablers for adaptation, what situations and conditions allow adaptation to happen and for whom?

# Thank you

