

# Governance of social conflicts in climate adaptation

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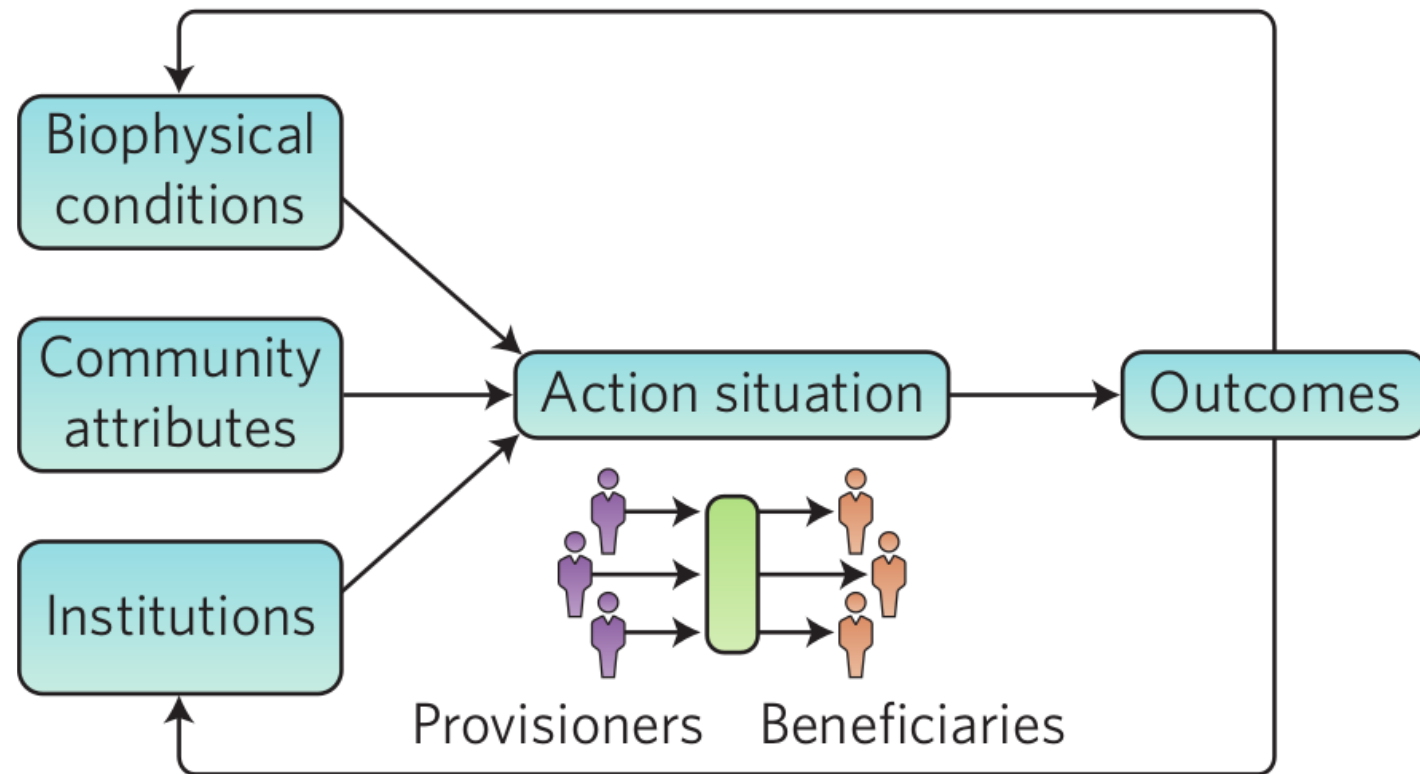
# Adaptation governance

- Widely used concept
- Often used in a non-scientific/technical sense
- A lot of descriptive research (Biesbroek et al., 2013; Eisenack et al., 2014):
  - e.g. the adaptation barriers literature
  - Lack of theory/understanding why barriers arise and how they can be overcome
- Research traditions in a variety of distinct disciplines offer deep theoretical understanding
  - Commons literature (Public goods, common pool resources)
  - In particular the realist-materialist branch of this literature (New institutional economics, Elinor Ostrom)

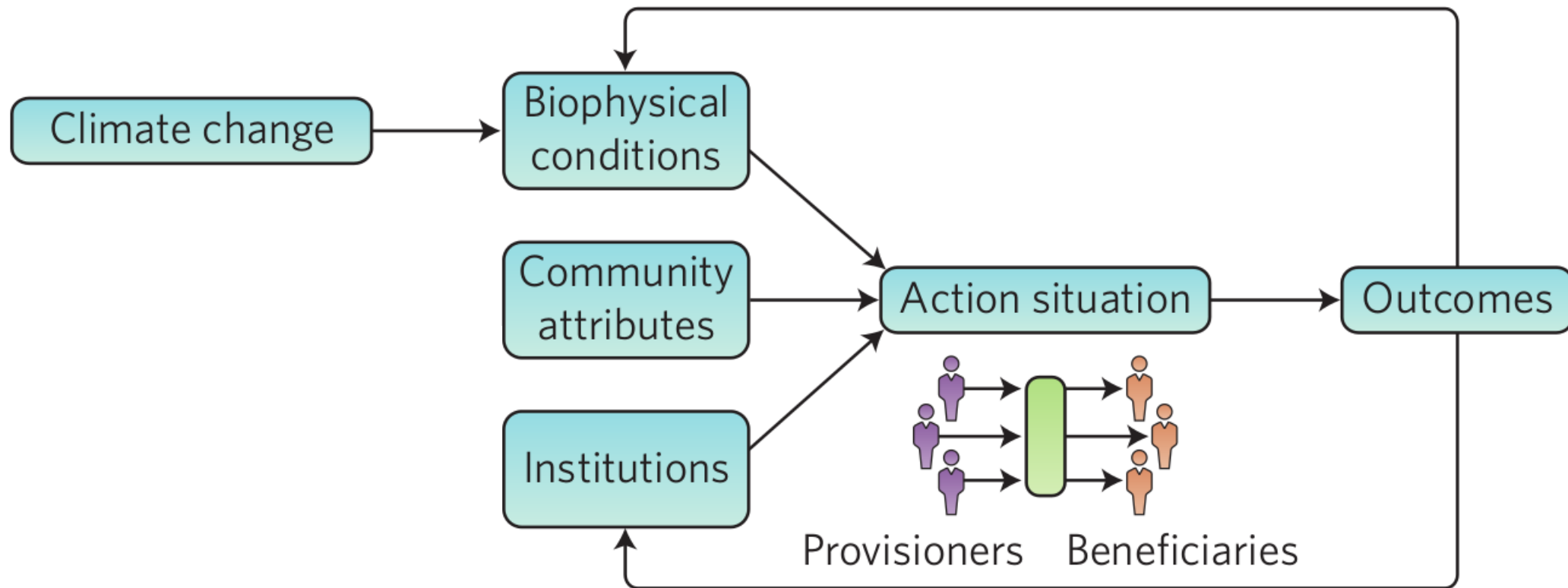
# Governance in the commons literature

- Social conflicts = actors **inter-depend** and have **conflicting interests**
  - e.g. public good provisioning, common-pool resources, externalities, etc.
- Social conflicts are paramount in environmental issues and adaptation
  - Common environment → interdependencies between actors
- Governance is the “effort to craft order, thereby to mitigate conflict and realize mutual gains” (Williamson 1996).
- Different kinds of interdependencies require and/or lead to different kinds of governance arrangements and policy prescriptions
  - Discriminating alignment (Williamson 1991), institutional fit (Young 2008)

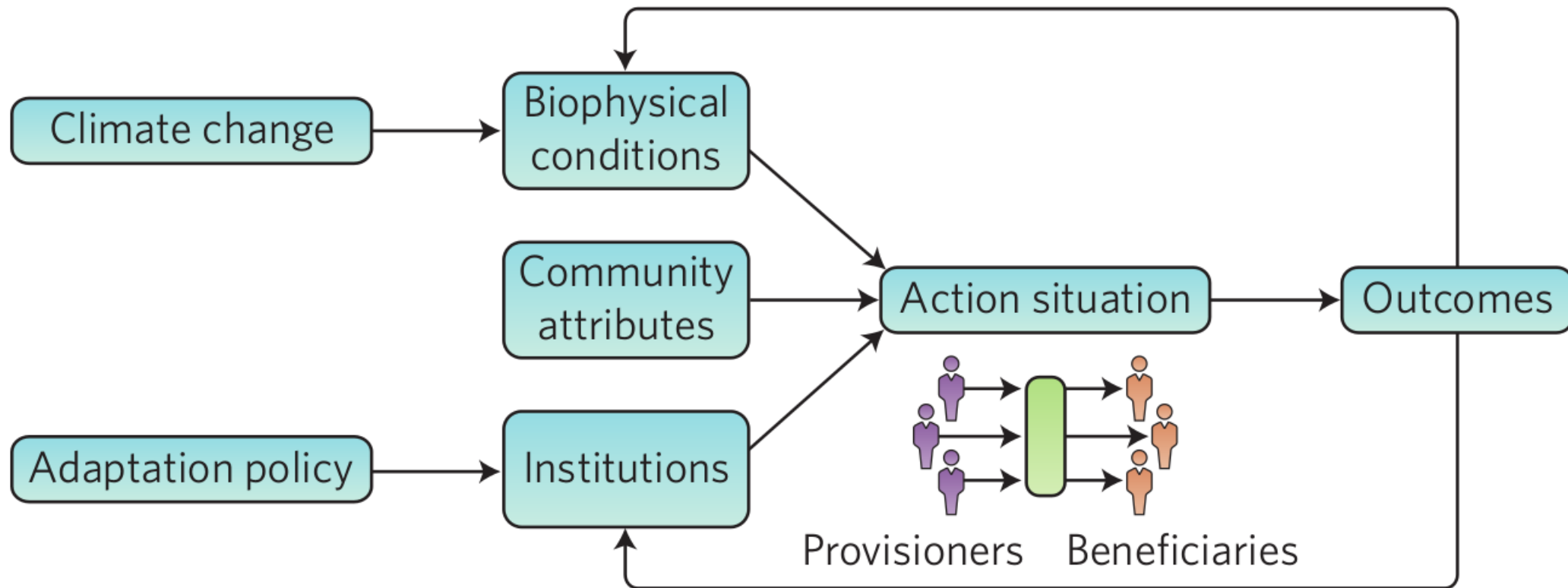
# Materialist-realist adaptation governance framework



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Interdependencies



Material incentives



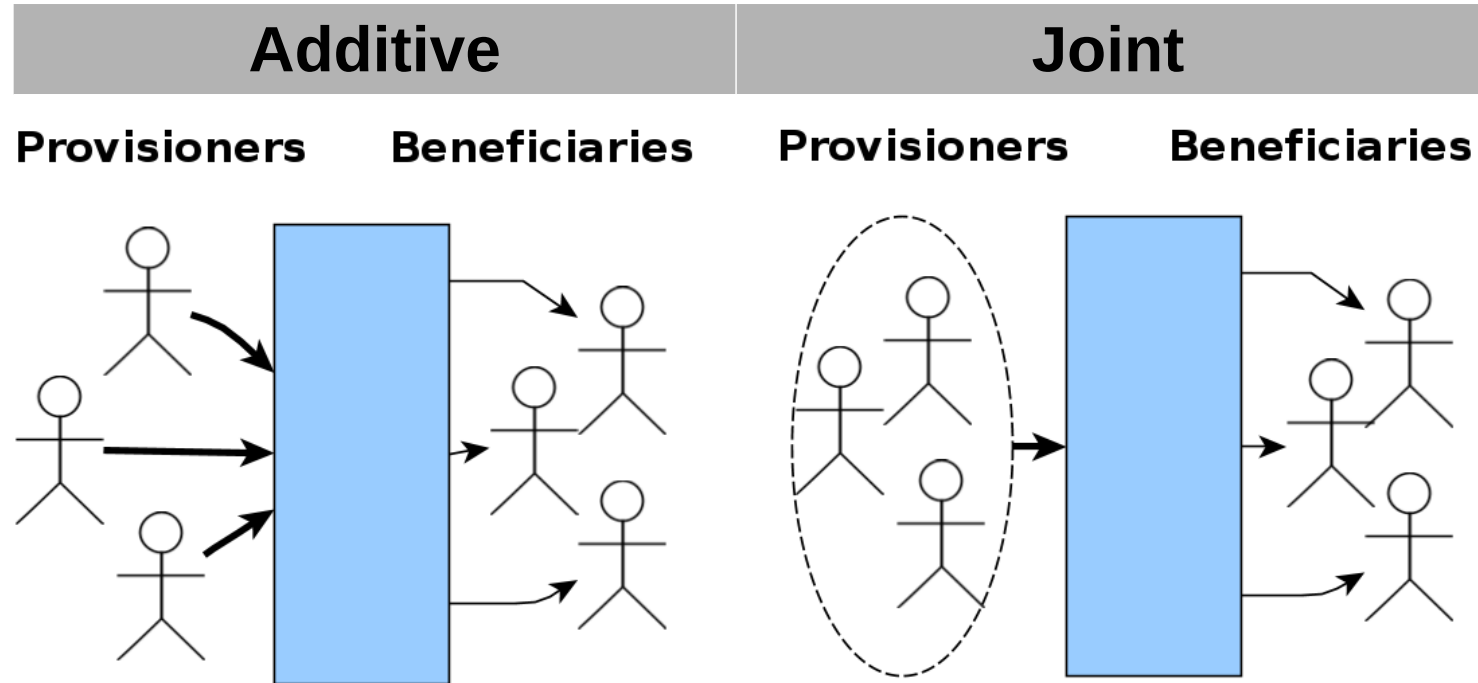
Likelihood of internal  
solutions



Policy instruments

Action  
situation

# One way interdependence



- Internal solutions very unlikely, because providers have no material incentives for contributing → external (policy) intervention necessary
- Additive → payment for adaptation services
- Joint → Single actor can destroy the adaptation good → high bargaining power → regulation



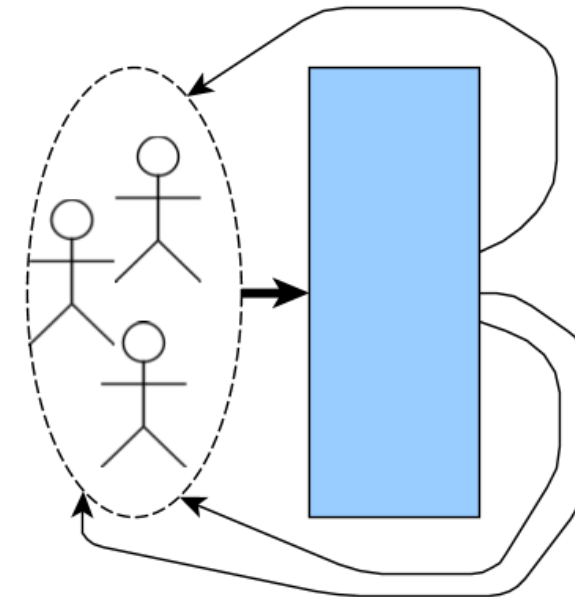
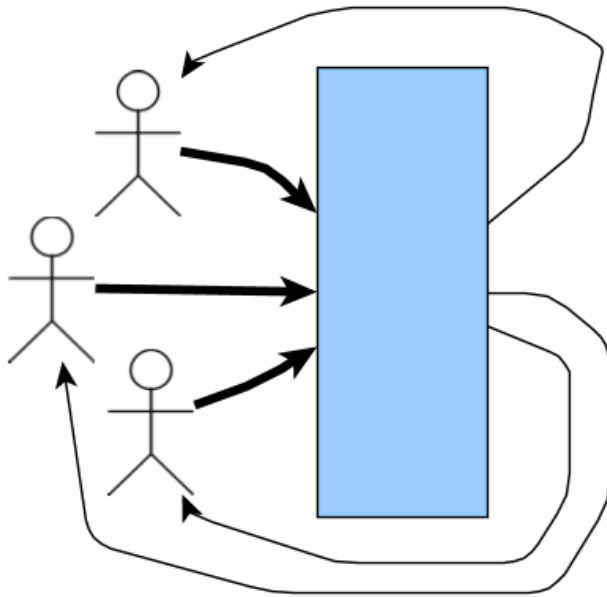
# Two-way interdependence supply-side provisioning

**Additive**

**Joint**

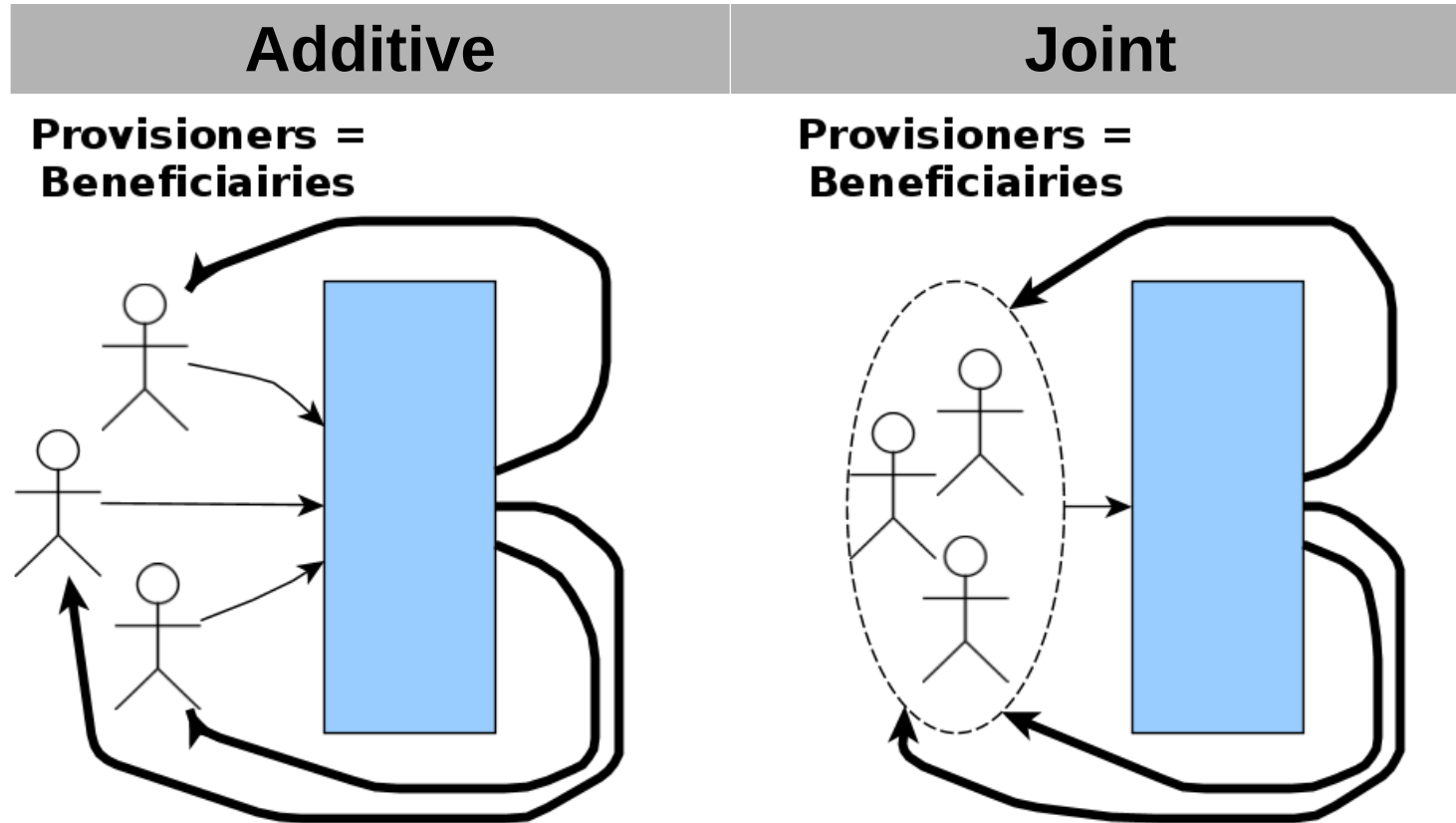
**Provisioners =  
Beneficiaries**

**Provisioners =  
Beneficiaries**



- Internal solutions possible, because providers have material incentives for contributing
- Additive: free-riding incentives → economic instruments, regulation
- Joint: no free-riding incentives → building trust → communication instruments

# Two-way interdependence demand-side provisioning



- Internal solutions possible
- Additive: strong over-use incentives → internal solutions more unlikely → economic incentives
- Joint: weaker over-use incentive → trust → information sharing on use

# Contextual variables

- Material
  - Heterogeneity in endowments
    - Very low → social norms, trust
    - Very high → one Olsonian actor may provide the adaptation good irrespective of whether others contribute
  - Uncertainty of effectiveness of adaptation good
  - ...
- Ideational
  - Networks (Berkes 2007)
  - Social capital (Adger 2003)
  - Dominant discourses (Bisaro 2015)
  - ...

# Conclusions

- The realist-materialist commons literature offers a wealth of empirical and theoretical insights for understanding which governance arrangements “fit” a given adaptation situation.
- Focuses on material incentives arising through environment-related interdependencies between actors
- This is not to say that ideational aspects are less relevant, but the material aspects are specifically relevant for climate change adaptation, because climate change impacts the environment and hence the material incentives.
- For practice: Adaptation tipping points
- For research: The framework presented provides an entry-point for well-structured comparative case study research, which is needed for advancing the field.

# Thanks!

PERSPECTIVE

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nature  
climate change

## Governance of social dilemmas in climate change adaptation

Alexander Bisaro<sup>1\*</sup> and Jochen Hinkel<sup>1,2</sup>

**In the field of adaptation governance research, current discussion on the barriers to adaptation shows that theoretical explanations for why institutions emerge and how they enable or constrain adaptation are underdeveloped. In this Perspective, we show that there is a significant opportunity to advance the understanding of adaptation governance by integrating insights that have been developed in the extensive commons literature on the institutions that work to overcome social conflicts or**