

The Importance of Local-led Climate Adaptation in Yukon Communities: Mobilizing enablers & addressing barriers through a shift in governance

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CLIMATE ADAPTATION + RESILIENCE LAB



OUTLINE

- 1) Research Problem
- 2) Research Objectives
- 3) Methods
- 4) Findings
- 5) Discussion
- 6) Conclusion

“Look around you. We are smack dab in the middle of boreal forest... we’re watching the rest of Canada burn and wondering when’s it our turn.” (DC6)





RESEARCH PROBLEM

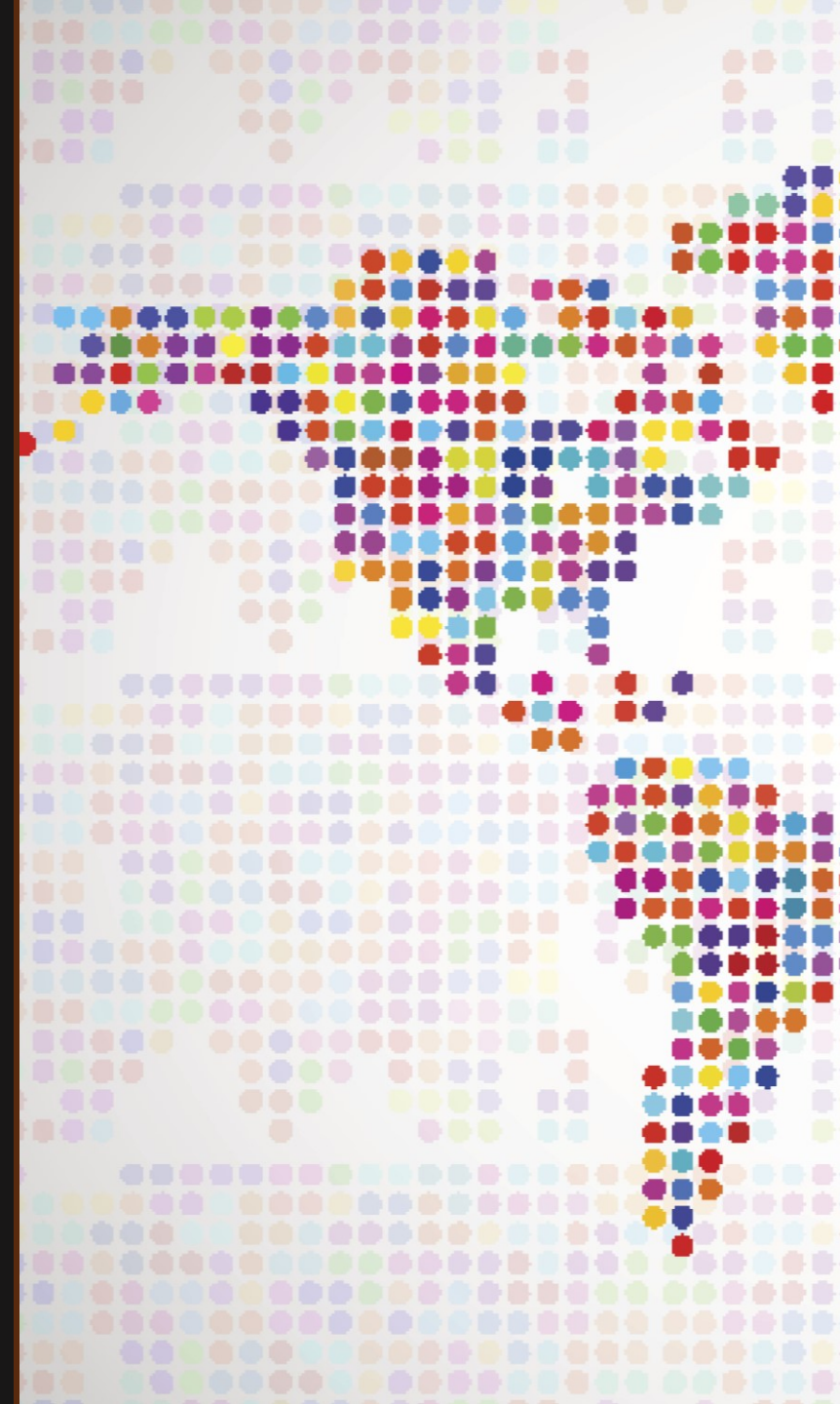
- Climate stressors are worsening
- The need to adapt is growing

RESEARCH PROBLEM

- Current approach to adaptation: top down governance
- Local governments are responsible for implementation but face a range of internal and external barriers
- External barriers, such as the interaction between local and higher levels of government, have gained recent attention

RESEARCH GAP

- Studies of barriers and government interactions focus on interactions between national and state/provincial governments and local governments, with less attention paid to territorial levels of government.



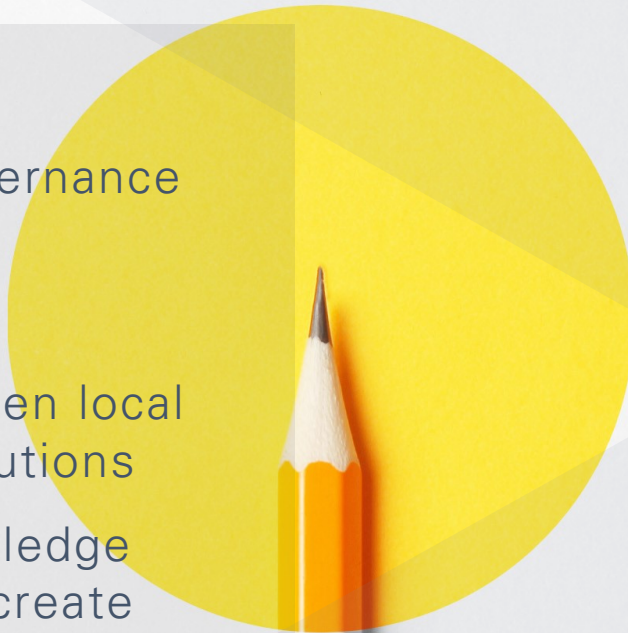
RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

We aim to:

- Bridge a gap in adaptation governance literature

Research Objectives:

- Explore the relationship between local and territorial actors and institutions
- Examine how power and knowledge emerge within governance to create adaptation enablers and/or barriers



RESEARCH METHODS

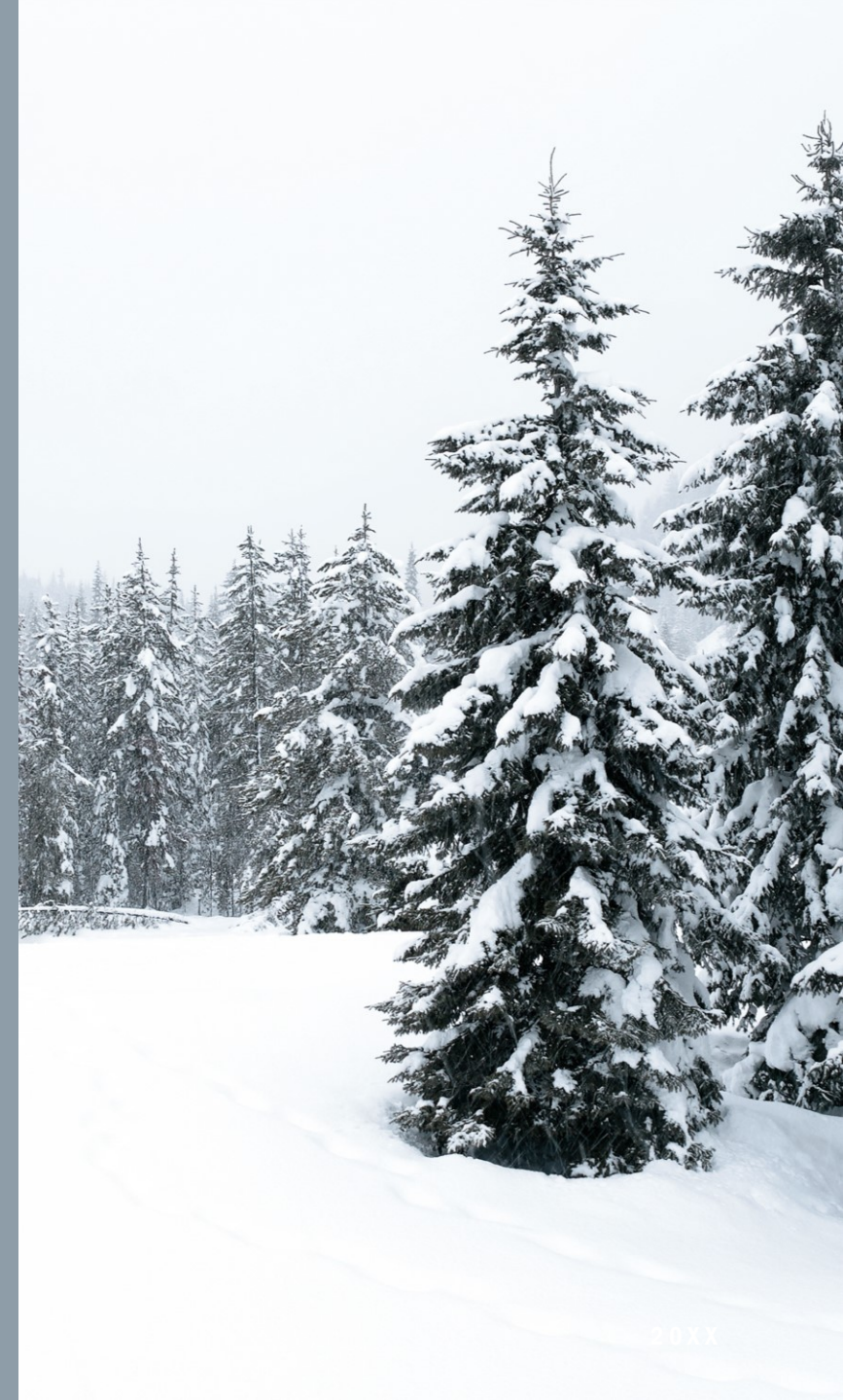
- **Case Study Approach**
 - Whitehorse
 - Dawson City
 - Haines Junction
- **Qualitative Methods**
 - Semi-structured interviews
 - Review of strategic planning documents
 - Field observation



FINDINGS

Case study communities have initiated the process of adaptation planning, **BUT**, implementation lags.

- Climate Stressors and Response
- Governance Approach
- Role of Local and Territorial Governments





CLIMATE STRESSORS AND RESPONSE

Climate Stressors

- Flood
- Wildfire
- Permafrost Thaw



CLIMATE STRESSORS AND RESPONSE

Adaptation is:

- Mainstreamed throughout planning documents 😊
- Addressed in a broad and non-committal manner 😞
- Lacking detail 😞
- Not featured in granular plans and regulations 😞
- Outweighed by mitigation 😞

GOVERNANCE APPROACH TO ADAPTATION

TOP-DOWN GOVERNANCE

- Passing down of knowledge and responsibility from the Territory
- Focus on mitigation
- Local governments strongly reliant on the Territory
- Lack of collaboration and consideration of local contexts

“I think that when you do something that's not out of your own desire to make change and have the plan, then you're less likely to follow it.” (DC2)

“We need to be more self-sufficient, not just in our own individual operations as a municipality, but we also need to be more self-sufficient in our thinking... We're always willing to say, the Yukon government is going to look after that.” (HJ3)

ROLE OF LOCAL AND TERRITORIAL GOVERNMENTS

Territory:

- Provision of policy guidance, support tools, funding, etc.
- Support provided for mitigation

Local Governments:

- Adaptation policy conception and implementation
- Strong local commitment to and awareness of climate change and response

Confusion over adaptation roles

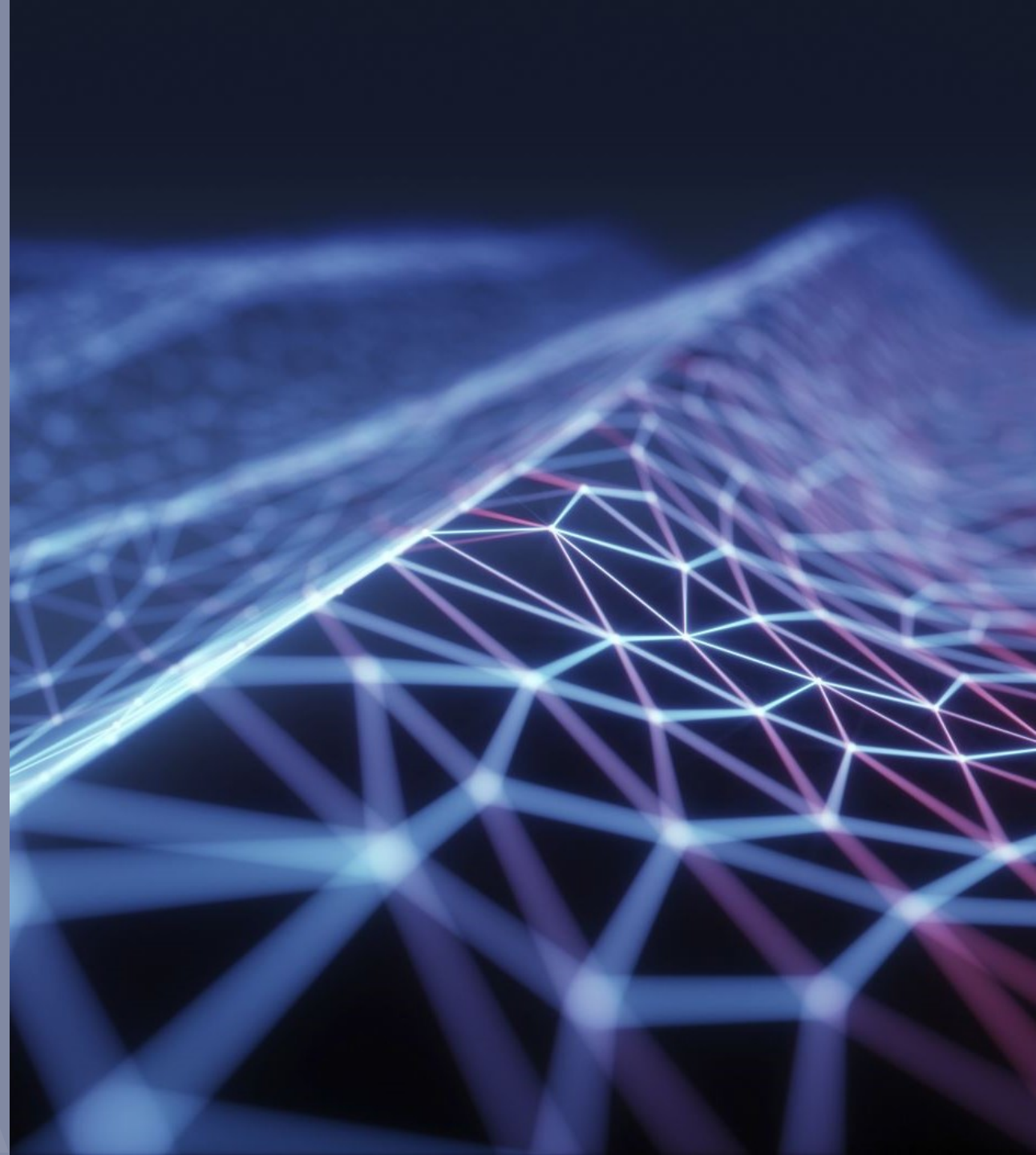
- “nobody maintains the dyke, nobody wants to take ownership of it.” (DC4)
- Who’s job is that anyways??

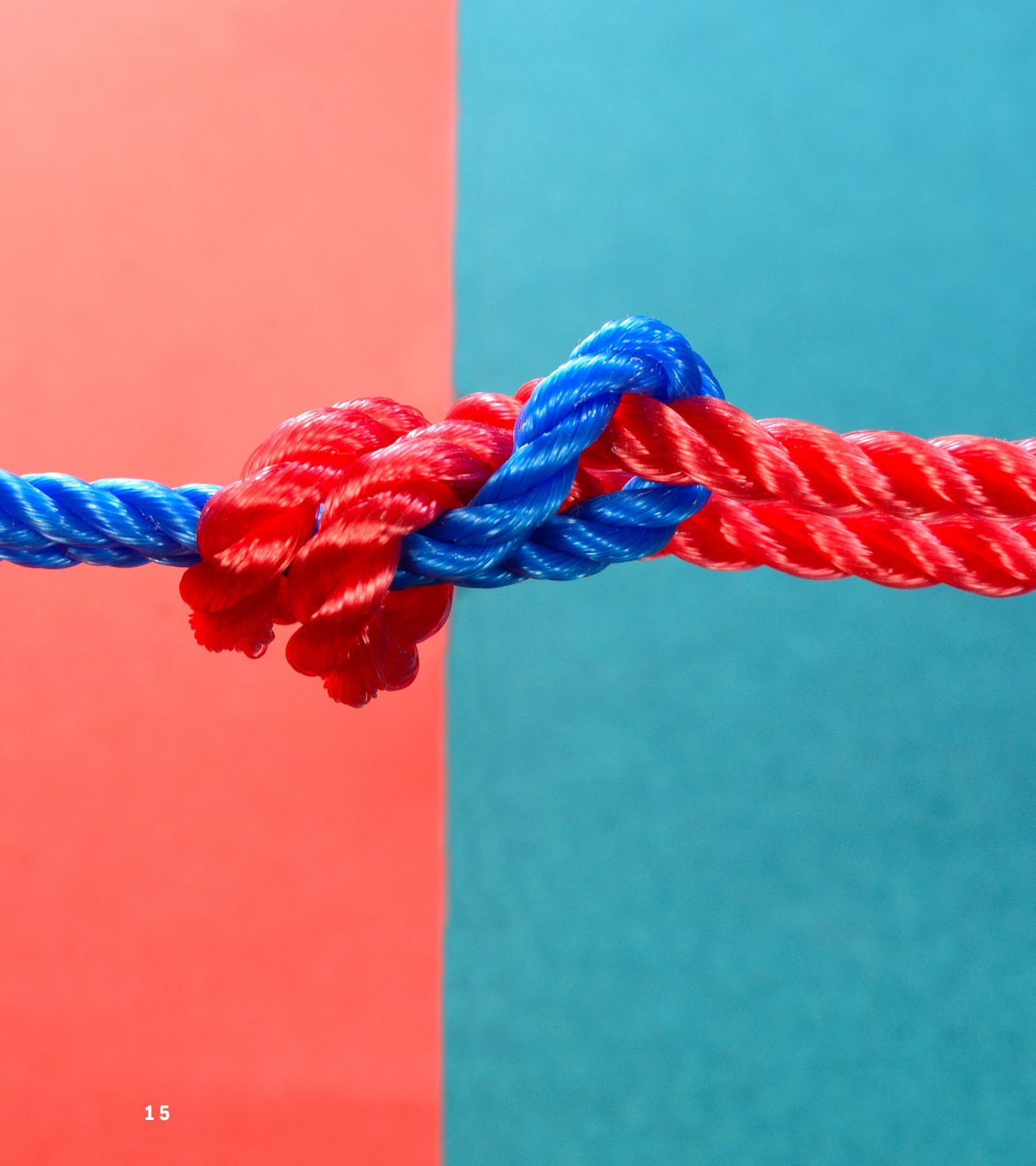


DISCUSSION

Evolutionary Governance Theory

- Actors
- Institutions
- Power
- Knowledge





ACTORS

Enablers

- Local actors are highly aware of environmental changes and committed to climate action

Barriers

- Interdependencies between actors stall adaptation progress



INSTITUTIONS

Enablers Local institutions mainstream adaptation policies throughout

Barriers Local institutions lack detail, committal language and contextual information

Territorial institutions may be creating goal dependencies



MOVING FORWARD

Shift in governance towards local led adaptation and top down support

1. Role delineation
2. Strengthen institutions
3. Empowerment of local actors

CONCLUSION

Flexible governance approaches to adaptation are key moving forward





THANK YOU

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