

Summary Report: Future Lab 5 “Private Adaptation”

Title	How can individuals, households and companies contribute to adaptation? What are the opportunities and threats of private adaptation?
Short description	<p>In many European countries a national adaptation strategy (NAS) exists, which provides a strategic, governmental framework at national level for climate change adaptation. However, the implementation of adaptation measures mostly takes place at local and often private, individual level. In this future lab we aimed to gain a better understanding of private adaptation: where does it already take place, where is willingness, ability and capacity of individuals, households and companies to adapt, how can private adaptation relief public adaptation costs, where is it necessary to call for regulations/restrictions to avoid trade-offs, where are barriers for private adaptation and how can good adaptation governance foster further private adaptation actions.¹</p>
Main findings	<p>First, the definition of private adaptation was discussed, because a clear distinction between purely private (without any public intervention) and public adaptation is not really possible. The participants agreed that there is a continuum between private and public adaptation and defined private adaptation as (mostly) privately financed or implemented by private actors like households, farmers, lift operators, hotel keepers, etc. It was also discussed, if private adaptation is per definition always autonomous and spontaneous or if there are also cases of strategic, planned private adaptation. The participants claimed that there are foresight actions of particularly well-informed private actors, too (e.g. insurances, farmers/foresters using climate model data).</p> <p>The participants agreed that private adaptation exists and already takes place. Some examples of private adaptation were given such as households that install PV systems in order to improve their energy autonomy, city gardening to be more self-sustained, or farmers who already react to effects of climate change. The question was raised, how such adaptation measures could be governed to be more planned and sustainable in the long run and how failures in the past (such as dispersed settlement patterns, sealing or energy-intensive buildings) hamper private adaptation.</p> <p>A research project (ICARUS) described by an Italian participant showed that an effective way to bridge the gap between private action and political strategies is to better integrate knowledge and needs of private actors bottom-up into policy. The Italian research team conducted a survey among farmers and asked them about their</p>

¹ The future lab was inspired by the just started Austrian KLIEN/ACRP project PATCH:ES (Private Adaptation Threats and Chances: Enhancing Synergies with the NAS implementation). More information will soon be available by the end of 2014 under anpassung.ccca.at or via martin.koenig@umweltbundesamt.at.

	<p>adaptation strategies, preferences and needs. After this first step, they introduced tools which were accepted and used because the awareness was already raised.</p> <p>Recommendations out of the ICARUS project (IWRM for Climate Change Adaptation in Rural Social Ecosystems in Southern Europe): more bottom-up transfer from private actors' needs and preferences into policy would make policy more efficient and decision support tools gain in applicability, if practitioners e.g. farmers are involved in building up decision support/priorisation tools and applications. With respect to research, these experiences call for participatory or transdisciplinary research designs.</p> <p>How to reach private actors? Target group-specific assessment tools like the carbon-footprint tool (which already exists for mitigation) could also be helpful for private adaptation. However, it is often a problem to bring the tools to the people. First, private actors must be aware of need for action. In some cases also pressure (governmental intervention) is necessary. Sometimes it is also civil society/NGOs starting with environmental protection actions. If you want to reach the citizens you have to consider habits, values and beliefs meaning that different strategies/concepts/solution options for different groups of people are needed.</p> <p>When talking about barriers for private adaptation, the discussion centred on the issues of governance framework as well as information, education and communication.</p> <p>Good governance is deemed useful to foster private adaptation. E.g. funding can help to make (politically desired) investments more likely. Many technologies/machines/installations have a certain path dependency, which reduces the potential of adaptation. In this case funding lowers the barrier and can trigger changes. Regulations were discussed controversially. On the one hand, they can force people and companies to make a change; on the other hand they are often too rigid to allow innovative solutions (like new insulation materials or alternative building styles).</p> <p>Bringing political strategies to the ground is often a question of communication. It needs coordination (and sometimes also translation) between administration, planners, technicians and private actors (trans-disciplinary). And it needs networking of different planning fields and sectors (cross-sectorial). Private actors often do not identify with political strategies due to a lack of information or a lack of awareness (→ not ready to take up and use information).</p> <p>A bottom-up approach to implement adaptation with close stakeholder/implementer's involvement seems much more promising than trying to 'cascade down' NAS measures to the private sphere. A new key word for such sort of bottom-up adaptation could be 'grass-root adaptation'.</p> <p>Need for CC adaption is not easy to communicate because it is a rather complex, unattractive concept lacking positive messages. There are no positive feelings associated with CC and adaptation. When talking to people it could help to connect CC adaptation closer to 'quality of life'. Then most people feel affected, including his/her family and the future of the children. This can open their mind for information.</p>
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