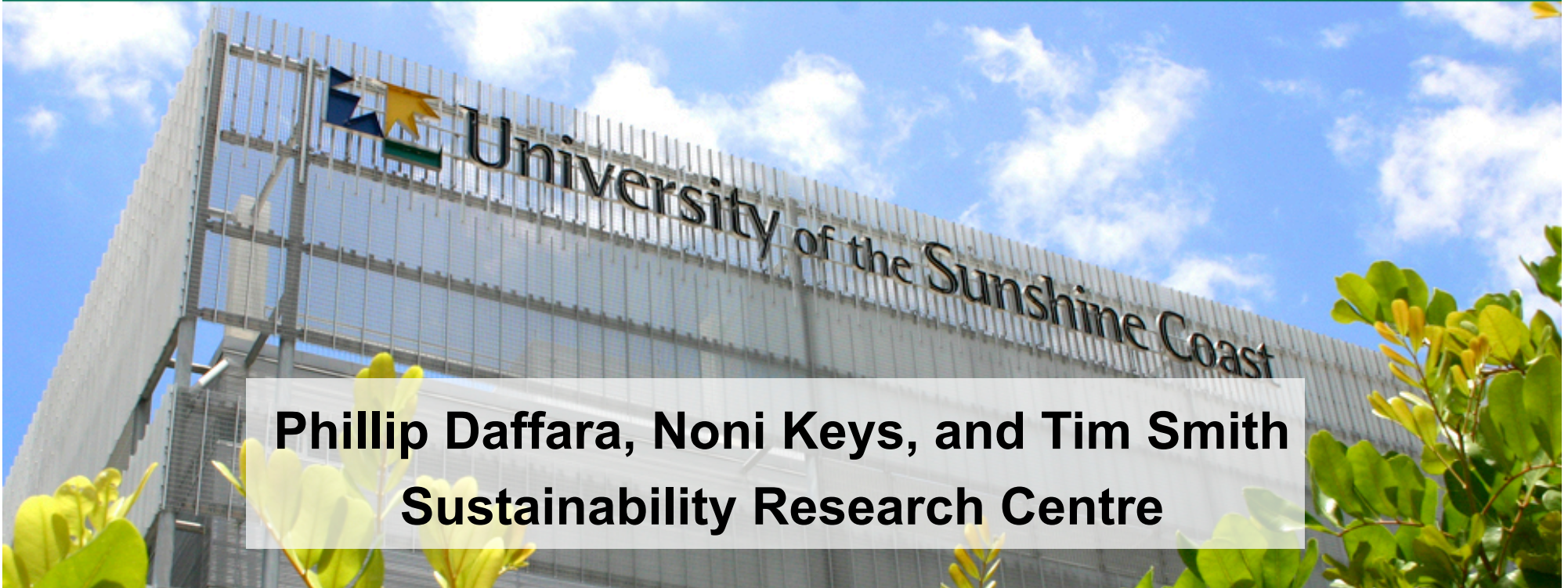


The nature and utility of adaptive capacity research



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Objectives:

- assess the interpretation and approach to adaptive capacity research among the range of disciplines;
- critique case studies in which an attempt is made to assess adaptive capacity of a community, region or sector;
- assess the utility of the concept of adaptive capacity for decision-making on adaptation policy and planning and;
- develop recommendations to improve synergies between climate change adaptation researchers and decision makers.

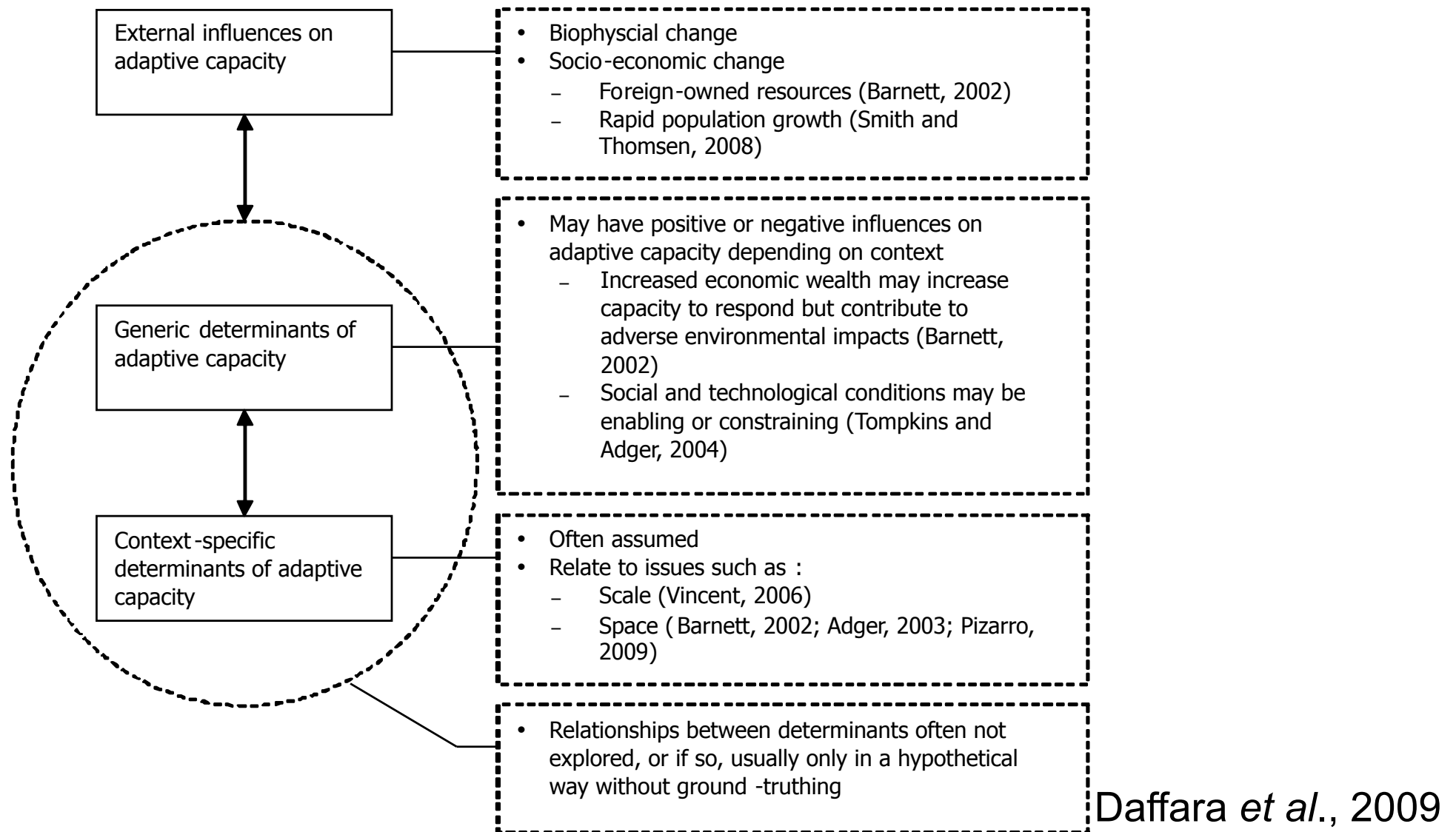
Methods

- Report 1:
 - Literature review
- Report 2:
 - Online survey of researchers and decision makers
 - Key informant interviews

Respondents

- Online survey:
 - 39 networks were targeted
 - international research centres and institutes,
 - non-government organisations,
 - government agencies that focus on adaptations to climate change, and
 - the 8 NCCARF Adaptation Research Networks
 - 299 respondents
- Key informant interviews:
 - 40 key informants were invited to participate (25 researchers and 15 decision makers);
 - 19 informants agreed to be interviewed (15 researchers and 4 decision makers);
 - Respondents were from Australia (15), UK (2), USA (1) and Central Europe (1) and represented a variety of spatial scales of activity

Conceptual model of adaptive capacity



Findings from online survey

- Little difference in the conceptualisation of adaptive capacity among researchers from a range of disciplines (anthropocentric conceptions);
- All disciplines shared the dominant belief that power/agency to create the future lies both internally and externally; and
- Only 39% of researchers believed that current adaptive capacity programs are partly effective

Usefulness of the concept of adaptive capacity among policy makers

| <i>Choices</i> | <i>Absolute frequency</i> | <i>Relative frequency</i> |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Very useful | 19 | 34.5% |
| Useful | 17 | 31.0% |
| Somewhat useful | 11 | 20.0% |
| Neutral | 4 | 7.3% |
| Somewhat not useful | 2 | 3.6% |
| Not applicable | 2 | 3.6% |
| Total (policy makers only) | 55 | 100% |

Findings from key informant interviews

- Findings supported the literature review regarding the proposition that trans-disciplinary research methods and diverse ways of knowing are needed to understand adaptive capacity; and
- The key informants' comments about knowledge gaps put the greatest emphasis on the need to focus on context-specific research; as well as, the socio-cognitive factors of adaptive capacity.

Summary of knowledge gaps

Knowledge gaps identified from the literature review and key informant interviews

- Adaptive capacity assessments.
- Adaptation option assessments – monitoring performance.
- Socio-cognitive factors of adaptive capacity across scales from the individual to the collective.
- Adaptive capacity building effects from action research.
- Systems approaches to adaptive capacity interdependencies.

Knowledge gaps identified from the literature review

- Evolving approaches and methodologies for adaptive capacity research.
- Holistic approaches - methods to integrate Indigenous knowledge (past and current adaptive practices) with *contemporary* adaptive science.

Knowledge gaps identified from the key informant interviews

- Understanding the generic determinants of adaptive capacity – particularly understanding individual agency within social systems.
- Understanding barriers to adaptive capacity – particularly related to governance and policy development.
- Identifying vulnerability across scales.
- Understanding peoples (cohorts) different adaptive capacities.
- Understanding ecological systems.

Inter-generational equity

Water

Biodiversity

Consumption

Globalisation

Population

Poverty

Waste

Pollution

Intra-generational equity

“As for the future, your task is not to foresee it
but to enable it”

Antoine De Saint-Exupery

Saint-Exupery, A de 1952, *The Wisdom of the Sands*, Hollis & Carter, London (UK Edition).