

# The role of political commitment in organising municipal responses to climate adaptation: the dedicated approach versus the mainstreaming approach

## Introduction

This paper aims to develop the conceptual understanding of political commitment in two approaches to organise municipal responses to climate adaptation: the dedicated approach and the mainstreaming approach. The dedicated approach is based on direct political commitment to climate adaptation. This implies political agenda-setting, resource allocation and clear policy objectives to address climate adaptation which leads to a fast implementation due to political pressure and new structures (McCarney et al. 2011). The mainstreaming approach is based on indirect political commitment: climate adaptation ‘piggybacks’ on the established commitment of policy domains in which it is integrated. Here, institutional entrepreneurs and framing are necessary to establish policy synergies and to mobilize actors and resources. (Wejs et al. 2013). An implication is that the implementation is erratic, as entrepreneurs have to pioneer within existing structures.

## Comparative case study research

- Two Dutch cities, Amsterdam and Rotterdam, are used as cases for the dedicated and mainstreaming approach, to illustrate and refine our propositions on the role and implications of political commitment.
- This selection is based on earlier observations in which we perceived that the city of Rotterdam generally seems to follow a dedicated approach and the city of Amsterdam a more mainstreaming approach. Both approaches have led to perceivable municipal responses to climate adaptation.
- In both cities, the major documents in the policy domains of spatial planning, climate and water management as well as the municipal political agendas for 2010-2014 were analysed. Additionally, 28 semi-structured interviews with policymakers working in the same policy domains were done.

## Analytical framework

	The dedicated approach	The mainstreaming approach
<b>Political commitment</b>	direct	indirect
<b>Conditions</b>		
agenda	political agenda	policy agenda
framing	main objective	added value
resources	special bureau	institutional entrepreneurs
<b>policy design</b>	specific policy	policy integration
<b>implementation</b>	conformance	performance
<b>Implications</b>	fast / (in)effective	erratic / deliberate

Figure 1: political commitment in the dedicated approach

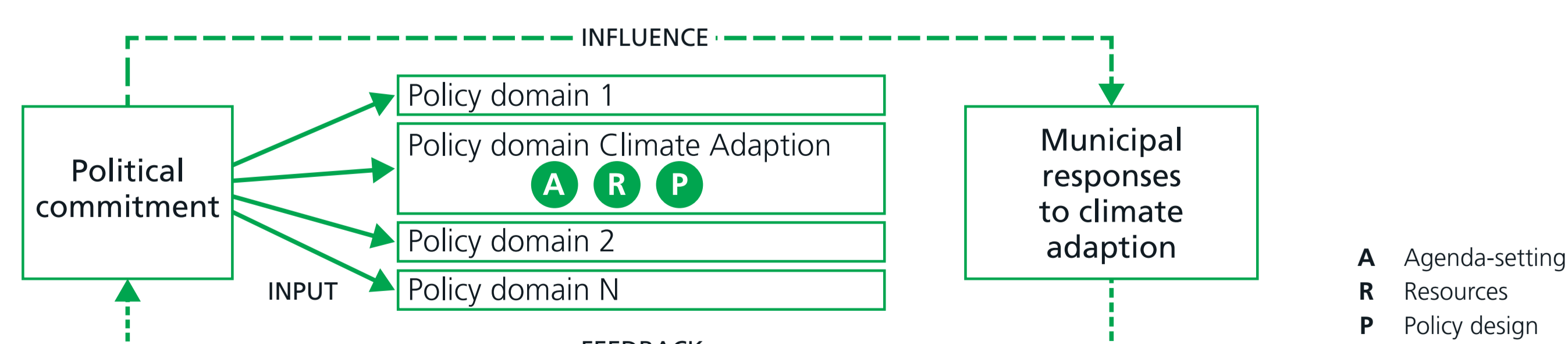
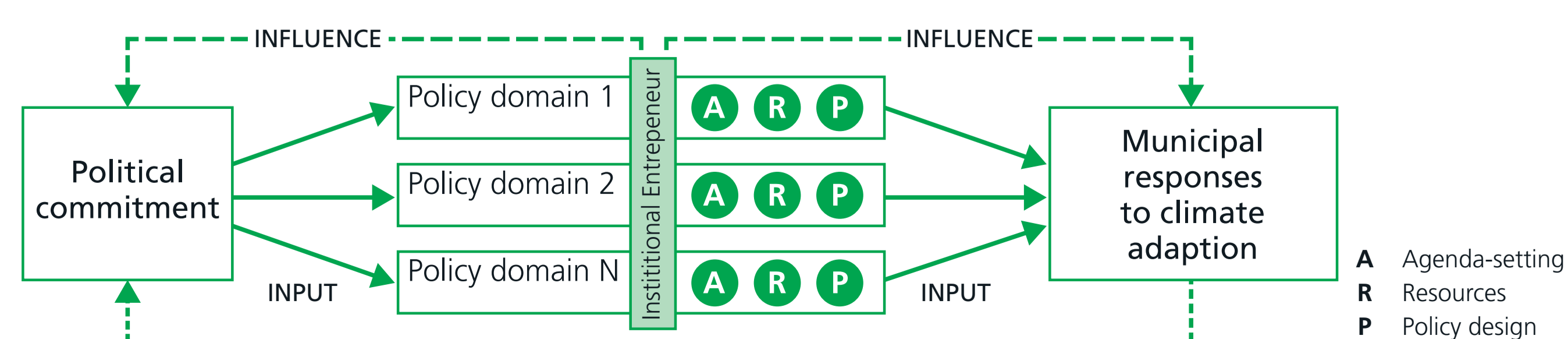


Figure 2: political commitment in the mainstreaming approach



## Results

	Rotterdam	Amsterdam
<b>Agenda-setting</b>	Political agenda: Rotterdam Climate Initiative (RCI) as guideline for sustainable development	Policy agenda: water management/ climate adaptation
<b>Framing</b>	Main objective: the need for smart water management to keep the city safe, livable and accessible	Added value: with a compact and sustainable city belongs a well-maintained water system
<b>Resource allocation</b>	Special bureau: Program Bureau of Sustainability Specific budgets: for pilot projects (e.g. water plaza)	Institutional entrepreneurs: climate-related responses by individuals within different policy departments Limited budget: pilot projects organised based on ‘existing’ budgets
<b>Policy design</b>	Specific policy: Rotterdam Adaptation Strategy (RAS)	Policy integration: climate adaptation integrated in strategic policy documents of spatial planning and water management
<b>Implementation</b>	Conformance: fast, possible postponement of relevant decisions e.g. regarding maintenance	Performance: no planned outcomes, deliberate decision making

## Conclusions

Based on our findings, we argue that both approaches are needed in organising municipal responses since the two approaches could benefit from each other’s strengths. The dedicated approach can result in ineffective implementation and could therefore benefit from more deliberate implementation generated by strategic framing and the network skills of institutional entrepreneurs – both associated with mainstreaming. On the other hand, the mainstreaming approach is in need of new structures – associated with the dedicated approach – or at least a change in existing structures in order to counter erratic implementation. Thus far, this need for a change in organisational structures in relation to the mainstreaming approach has barely been acknowledged in literature. It will be relevant to explore how existing structures can be changed where there is only indirect political commitment, as this can be the case in the mainstreaming approach.

## References

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